

***Macbeth* in Context:  
Putting the Scottish Back into 'the Scottish Play'**

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## ABSTRACT

*Macbeth* in Context: Putting the Scottish back into 'the Scottish Play' is an examination of the historical context in which the play *Macbeth* was written, the process of conceptualizing a production for the Frederic Wood Theatre, and the journey of getting it to the stage.

*Macbeth* is a Scottish play, written for a Scottish King, and containing Scottish characters and culture. It is my intention to illuminate why the play was written, and detail my conceptualization for presenting a truly Scottish production of *Macbeth*.

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my parents; my mum Veronica and the memory of my father John, who always gave me everything I needed and much, much, more- but especially love.

# CHAPTER ONE

## By The Book...

*The Tragedy of Macbeth* was first published in the First Folio of 1623, several years after Shakespeare's death, and seventeen years after the play was first performed. It is by far the shortest of the tragedies, taking up only 21 Folio pages (compared with 30 for *Othello* and 31 for *Hamlet*). The text was printed from the prompt-book; a working copy of the script that would have been used by a stage manager or theatre company of the period that included entrances, exits, cuts, and other stage business. This is relevant in that there is much speculation among scholars as to the accuracy and authorship of sections of the play, some even suggesting that there are missing scenes and actor-added interpolations. That being said, while other of Shakespeare's plays were printed in quarto, the First Folio is the sole and primary source for the text of *Macbeth*. Much may be also learned, however, by examining the context in which the play was written.

There are many peculiar facets to *Macbeth* which are a direct result of the circumstances under which it was written. While a writer's location and era greatly influence almost all written works, the conditions for William Shakespeare (and his theatre company "the King's Men") in the years 1603-1606 led to a perfect storm of elements that resulted in this unique creation. A storm that included, among other things, the introduction of a new (and foreign) king, a plague-ravaged city, frightening scandals, unkind prevailing attitudes about foreigners, and the simple need for an artist to create and survive. A storm that would create a play known for its uniquely Scottish nature- though many productions would, in the course of the play's history, embrace many of its other themes. It is its very Scottish-ness, however, that drew me to this dark and wonderful play.

## **The Times~ “So foul and fair...”**

By 1603 William Shakespeare was a well known and respected playwright in London. As a member of the “Lord Chamberlain's Men” he had already written (and enjoyed the success of) history plays (*Henry IV parts 1 and 2, Richard III, and Henry V, and others*), comedies (*Two Gentleman of Verona, The Merry Wives of Windsor, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Twelfth Night, and others*), and tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet, and others.*) In the waning years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century these well-known plays were being published in quarto form for a thirsty and admiring public and his company had built the popular Globe theatre on the banks of the River Thames. Shakespeare the actor/playwright, his company, and theatre in general were flourishing.

In the year 1603, however, things changed. Queen Elizabeth I, who had ruled for 45 years as monarch of England, passed away on March 24<sup>th</sup>. She had been a popular ruler and her reign, known as the Elizabethan era, was most famous for the flourishing of the English drama and such playwrights as Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare. She was succeeded by King James I (King James VI of Scotland) who became the ruler of England, Ireland, and Scotland.

As London welcomed James to the throne, it was also visited by the unwelcome return of a much darker visitor: the plague. The Black Death had visited London four times since 1550, the most recent being in 1592-1593. The outbreaks of 1592-1593 and 1603 killed almost a quarter of the population of London. As was the custom, the theatres were closed at these times, and it seems likely that Shakespeare would have been able to afford leaving the city for the relative safety of the countryside. Despite this forced hiatus, Shakespeare and his company were still able to prosper. “On 19 May King James bestowed the title of 'Kings Men' on the hitherto Chamberlain's Company and

made a gift of £30 to the company for “Mayntenance and releife, being prohibited to present any playes publiquellie in or neere London by reason of the plague'. (Farley-Hills, pg. 136)

Being unable to perform for the public but with a new patron and fan, it is easy to assume that the King's Men would naturally then perform at court- and what better entertainment for a Scottish King than a Scottish Play?

“When Scotland's King James became England's King James in March 1603, his accession made a Shakespearean Scottish play commercially viable and creatively attractive. King James and his Scottishness created an occasion, and at some point Shakespeare and the King's Men apparently seized the popular, commercial moment...” (Braunmuller, pg. 8)

The evidence for this play being written for the court of James I may be found in the subject matter, story, and themes of *Macbeth*. This must be then be coupled with the King's clear support for theatre in general. In his book *Basilikon Doron* the King states:

“For I cannot see what greater superstition can be in making playes, and lawfull games in Maie, and good cheere at Christmas, then in eating fish in Lent... And as this forme of contenting the peoples mindes, hath beene used in all well governed Republicks: so will it make you to performe in your government that olde good sentence, Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci”

The Latin quote at the end of the passage is translated: 'He has gained every point who has mixed the useful and the agreeable' (Horace). It would seem that Shakespeare took this proverb to heart, and in writing *Macbeth* combined the useful (pleasing his king, and thus filling his purse) and the agreeable (pleasing his audience, and thus filling his purse). In order to make a play that would appeal to both, Shakespeare found a story that could include many of the King's interests, crafted it into a thrilling story, then added occasional (of the moment) flourishes to appeal to his wider audience.

## The Useful~ “Good artists borrow. Great artists steal.”

It is clear that in developing the play, Shakespeare almost exclusively used *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. Holinshed's Chronicles was compiled in three volumes (one for each of the nations mentioned) and was published in 1577 and again in 1587- the latter of which served as the source for many of Shakespeare's works. By modern standards it is by no means a strict 'history' in modern terms as it includes rumors, gossip, and stories of an apocryphal nature. “...A loose collection of gossip, tales and fantasies, so the material he was using was already seriously flawed from a historical perspective” (Harlan, pg. 1) The very inclusion of the prophesying weird sisters, for example, suggests that this is a collection of myths mixed in with the lineage of the kings and other significant figures of history. They are excellent stories, however, and a rich mine for the immensely talented Shakespeare.

Shakespeare used Holinshed's Chronicles as a source for many if not the majority of his plays including *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Richard II*, *Cymbaline*, and *Henry V*, among others. Simply reading the start of the story as told by Holinshed illustrates how closely the play follows the material:

“Leir the sonne of Baldud, was admitted ruler ouer the Britaines, in the yeere of the world 3105, at what time Ioas raigned as yet in Iuda. This Leir was a prince of right noble demeanor, gouerning his land and subiects in great wealth. He made the towne of Caerlier nowe called Leicester, which standeth vpon the riuier of Sore. It is written that he had by his wife three daughters without other issue, whose names were Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla, which daughters he greatly loued, but specially Cordeilla the yoongest farre aboue the two elder. When this Leir therefore was come to great yeeres, & began to waxe vnweldie through age, he thought to vnderstand the affections of his daughters towards him, and preferre hir whome he best loued, to the succession ouer the kingdome. Wherypon he first asked Gonorilla the eldest, how well shee loued him: who calling hir gods to record, protested, that she loued him more than hir owne life, which by right and reason shoulde be most deere vnto hir. With which answer

the father being well pleased, turned to the second, and demanded of hir how well she loued him: who answered (confirming hir saiengs with great othes) that she loued him more than tounge could expresse, and farre aboue all other creatures of the world. Then called he his yoongest daughter Cordeilla before him, and asked of hir what account she made of him:”

This account, to those familiar with Shakespeare's *Tragedy of King Lear*, is an almost blow by blow account of the plot of the play right down to the names (though some spellings have been changed, no doubt to protect us from the unfortunately humorous “Gonorilla”).

Not only would Shakespeare borrow story lines and characters from Holinshed, but on occasion he would purloin actual dialogue. For example, compare this excerpt from Holinshed with the dialogue of *Richard II*:

Holinshed:

The proclamation ended, another herald cried: “Behold here Henry of Lancaster Duke of Hereford, appellant, which is entered into the lists royal to do his devoir against Thomas Mowbray Duke of Norfolk, defendant, upon pain to be found false and recreant!”

Shakespeare:

Harry of Hereford, Lancaster, and Derby,  
Stands here for God, his sovereign, and himself,  
On pain to be found false and recreant,  
To Prove the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray,  
A traitor to his God, his king, and him,  
And dares him to set forward to the fight. (Richard II Act I, Sc. 3)

For *Macbeth* Shakespeare would borrow even more heavily from the Chronicles than previous efforts. In fact many scholars attribute almost the entire story of *Macbeth* to them. “Holinshed alone seems to have provided Shakespeare with the raw material of the story of *Macbeth*.” (Barnet, pg. 136)

The first question is why choose the story of King Macbeth as opposed to any of the myriad of other

Scottish kings who were murdered? Indeed the royal line of Scotland was a long and exceedingly bloody one. In a famous outburst during a 1607 Parliamentary debate over union with Scotland, “the English member of Parliament Sir Christopher Piggott said that 'the Scots have not suffered above two kings to die in their beds, these two hundred years. Our king (James) hath hardly escaped them; they have attempted [to murder] him'” (Carroll, pg. 120) Piggott ended up imprisoned in the tower for his breach of decorum, but it brings up an interesting point. The very fact that Scotland had endured a bloody past and that King James had survived made his story that much more glorious. The story of Macbeth and King Duncan, however, was special in that it also included the personage of Banquo, an ancestor of King James and a key figure in his lineage as king. Including him in this new Scottish play could only please his sovereign. And by showcasing the treachery against past kings, and the miserable fate of those who attempted regicide (as indeed conspirators had, several times, against James) Shakespeare could not only tell a ripping yarn (so to speak), but also compliment his generous patron and king. Some changes would have to be made, of course, as Shakespeare did with many of his history plays culled from Holinshed- but the majority of the plot of *Macbeth* derives from combining two stories; the murder of Duncan and the murder of King Duff.

Holinshed spends considerably more time in describing the Danish invasion and treachery that Shakespeare compresses into the first few scenes of his *Macbeth*, but then things quickly fall in line. Please compare the following excerpt from Holinshed with the scene as it appears in “Macbeth”:

Holinshed:

“Shortlie after happened a strange and uncouth woonder, which afterward was the cause of much trouble in the realme of Scotland as ye shall after heare. It fortunied as Makbeth and Banquho iournied towards Fores...passing through thorough the woods and fields, when suddenlie in the middest of a laund, there met them three women in strange and wild apparell, resembling creatures of

elder world, whome when they attentiuellie beheld, woondering much at the the sight, the first of them spake and said: All haile Makbeth, thane of Glamis (for he had latelie entered into that dignitie and office by the death of his father Sinell). The Second of the said: Haile Makbeth thane of Cawder. But the third said: All haile Makbeth that heereafter shalt be king of Scotland. Then Banquoho: What manner of women (saith he) are you, that seeme so little fauourable vnto me, whereas to my fellow heere, beside high offices, ye assigne also the kingdome, appointing foorth nothing for me at all? Yes (saith the first of them) we promise greater benefits vnto thee, than vnto him, for he shall reigne in deed, but with an vnluckie end: neigher shall he leaue anie issue behind him to succeed in his place, where contrarilie thou in deed shalt not reigne at all, but of thee those shall be borne which shall gouern the Scottish kingdome by long order of continuall descent. Herewith the foresaid women vanished immediatlie out of their sight.”

Shakespeare:

**Macbeth:**

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

**Banquo:**

How far is't called to Forres?- What are these  
so wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? Or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her chappy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

**Macbeth:**

Speak if you can: what are you?

**First Witch**

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

**Second Witch**

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

**Third Witch**

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be King hereafter!

**Banquo**

Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate.

**First Witch**

Hail!

**Second Witch**

Hail!

**Third Witch**

Hail!

**First Witch**

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

**Second Witch**

Not so happy, yet much happier.

**Third Witch**

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:  
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

**First Witch**

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

**Macbeth**

Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:  
By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis;  
But how of Cawdor? the thane of Cawdor lives,  
A prosperous gentleman; and to be king  
Stands not within the prospect of belief,  
No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence  
You owe this strange intelligence? or why  
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way  
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

*Witches Vanish.*

Except for the poetry of Shakespeare, the story and, in fact, even some of the dialogue is nearly identical. As previously mentioned, James I claimed Banquo as an ancestor. Although this particular lineage is spurious at best, (Banquo was added to the lineage after the fact by the Stuarts to solidify their claim to the throne) it still served as a nice, obsequious compliment to the new king. It is alluded to in the scene above and then seen again in the procession of kings (Act IV, Sc. 1) which shows a series of eight kings, the last of which held out a glass (mirror). It is conjectured that this mirror was held out towards James I at court so that he would see his own image as the eighth king in line of direct descent from Banquo- a clever notion but scholars are dubious about the veracity of this idea.

Another reason why the story of King Macbeth held an interest for James was that it detailed the time in history when the Scottish crown moved from an elective monarchy to one of inheritance- the basis for James place on the throne. “The principle of patrilineal inheritance was absolutely essential to James VI's claim to the crown of England.” (Carroll, pg. 116) Thus by establishing this idea in a historical context, Shakespeare was, in fact, supporting the King's sovereignty.

After the scene with the witches, Shakespeare's “Macbeth” follows Holinshed's Chronicle closely until it reaches the murder of Duncan. Holinshed does mention Macbeth's wife involvement, but simplifies the regicide into the single phrase “he slue the king at Eneuerns or (as some say) Botgosuane, the the sixt yeare of his reigne.” -not the most dramatically interesting murder. There was, however, just a few pages previous in the chronicle, the murder of King Duff by Donwald, which was far more theatrical. Donwald has King Duff as a guest in his castle “For the king being in that countrie, was accustomed to lie most commonlie within the same castell, hauing a speciall trust in Donwald, as a man whom he neuer suspected” After the king announces that he will be leaving the next day, Donwald goes about the murder:

“At length, hauing talked with them a long time, he got him into his priuie chamber, onlie with two of his chamberlains, who hauing brought him to bed, came foorth again, and then fell in banquetting with Donwald and his wife, who had prepared diuerse delicate dishes, and sundrie sorts of drinks for their reare supper or collation, wherat they sate vp so long, till they had charged their stomachs with such full gorges, that their heads were no sooner got to the pillow, but asleepe they were so fast, that a man might haue remooued the chamber ouer them, sooner than to haue awaked them out of their droonken sleepe. Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act greatlie in heart, yet through instigation of his wife... they enter the chamber (in which the king laie) a little before cocks crow, where they secretlie cut his throte as he lay sleeping, without anie busking at all”

Which is remarkably close in content to Shakespeare's scene...

**Lady Macbeth**

That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;  
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire.  
Hark! Peace!  
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it:  
The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their possets,  
That death and nature do contend about them,  
Whether they live or die.

**Macbeth**

*(Within)* Who's there? what, ho!

**Lady Macbeth**

Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,  
And 'tis not done. The attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't. -My husband!

**Macbeth**

I have done the deed.  
Didst thou not hear a noise?

We see the same officers 'surfeited with drink', the same goading wife, the same place and time of night. It is the secret murder of a king who is a guest in the castle of his murderer. Shakespeare

played fast and loose with historical accuracy, but all in the name of dramatic action. Each of his changes also helped tell a story that his patron king would like to hear. The usurping murderer is punished, the sleeping King Duncan is kind and noble, and everything goes to seed when he is murdered. It is a strong argument against regicide, which would certainly achieve royal approval in regards to plot.

There were other changes to the Holinshed Chronicles that were made to serve dramatic action or to please the king. Where Holinshed states that Banquo was an accomplice to the murder of Duncan, Shakespeare makes him completely innocent; which is important considering the royal lineage argument. While Holinshed's suggests that Duncan was a plotting and ineffective king, Shakespeare naturally makes him a good and deserving king. And whereas Holinshed suggests that Malcolm has a contentious relationship with England, Shakespeare shows that England comes to the rescue of Scotland by supplying Malcolm with an army and support- which surely would please James I as he now ruled over both nations. These liberties aside, there is a tremendous faithfulness to the story as told in Holinshed's Chronicles, particularly in the passages above and in the England scene (Act IV, Sc. 3). "This scene represents Shakespeare's greatest debt to Holinshed; clearly it took his eye, and here perhaps is the germ of how he first conceived the lay." (Bradbrook, pg. 238)

There were other facets of the play catered specifically to please King James as well. The King's interest in Witches was well known. In 1597 he published *Daemonology*, a book written in dialogue format that detailed questions and answers regarding witches and fully supporting witch hunts in order to stop their practice. He starts the book:

"The fearful abounding at this time in the country, of these detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches or enchanters, hath moved me (beloved reader) to

dispatch in post, this following treatise of mine, not in any wise (as I protest) to serve for a show of my learning and ingine, but only (moved to conscience) to press thereby, so far as I can, to resolve the doubting hearts of many; both that such assaults of Satan are most practiced, and that the instruments thereof, merits most severely to be punished...”

He goes on to elucidate the powers of witches and the nature of their practices. The information in his book was taken from, and further spurred, the Great Scottish Witch Hunt of 1597 in which, it is believed over 400 people were put on trial, half of which were executed (though there is little documentation of this). Regardless, witches were still on the mind of the King and his people.

Shakespeare also included the King's own experience into the play. Prior to 1590 witches were primarily single, poor, old women who were blamed for their neighbors problems when no other reason could be readily found. James suggested that witchcraft threatened royalty and was thus treason.

“The true aim of witches was to assault the body of the king. James evidently believed that the North Berwick witches in the *News From Scotland* pamphlet were acting on the behest of his great enemy, the Earl of Bothwell who, one observer said, was 'committed to Edinburgh Castle for conspiring the King's death by sorcery.' Witchcraft thus became not only a crime of deviance, but *the* crime against the state and monarch.” (Carroll, pg. 305)

Thus the witches in the play are involving themselves directly with the divine right of kings, much in the same way that conspirators had attempted (several times) to destroy King James' monarchy in the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The inclusion of witches in *Macbeth* fell in perfectly not only with the King's interests, but with his opinions.

While writing a play that contained subject matter that would please the king and was dramatically thrilling and at the same time, Shakespeare also set about to include topical references of the day, a common practice for theatre as much then as now.

## **The Agreeable: “Give 'em what they want”**

It is certainly true that Shakespeare was able to take the stories of the Kings Macbeth and Duff and fashion them into a compelling, thrilling, and blood soaked tragedy. Using his tools as a playwright he was also able to create rich and complex characters within the story to excite and intrigue the audience. But now that he had his story, he also set about to layer in topical allusions to events of the day in order to further engross his audience and to draw a contemporary moral.

“Shakespeare and his audience did not consider history to be a science, in which the goal was accuracy; rather history was an art, related to storytelling. The purpose of history was to make a moral point about the present society. You looked to the past to find or create parallels with the present age that would help you explain how people should behave right now.” (Harlan, pg. 1)

In order to make these parallels more clear, Shakespeare had several scandals that would have been very much on the minds of his audience, including the King.

King James was not a stranger to plots against his life, or to conspiracy in general. His father, Lord Darnley, had been murdered when he was less than a year old, and his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, had been tried and executed for her involvement in conspiracies against her first cousin once removed, Queen Elizabeth I of England. There had been many threats against James (when James VI of Scotland) during his reign, but there were three conspiracies that were particularly well known throughout Scotland and England; the Plot of the North Berwick Witches, the Gowrie Conspiracy, and most famously, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

In 1591, when witch hunts were standard practice in Scotland, James VI became involved in the interrogation of a coven of confessed and unrepentant witches from North Berwick that included

Agnis Tompson, Agnis Sampson, and Geilly Duncan (no relation). Tompson confessed “By what means she tried to bewitch the King to death, applying the charm of a poisonous toad to a piece of his clothing and conjuring up a storm on the sea to destroy his ship traveling home from Denmark.”

(Nostbakkan, pg. 101) The King questioned the witches further and, while skeptical of their fantastical claims initially, became persuaded when Sampson:

“taking his Majesty a little aside... declared unto him the very words which passed between the King's Majesty and his Queen at Upslo in Norway the first night of their marriage, with their answer each to other: whereat the King's Majesty wondered aloud wondered greatly, and swore by the living god, that he believed that all the Devils in hell could not have discovered the same.” (Harrison, pg. 2)

The King, now certain of their claims, declared them guilty and had them executed at Castle Hill, Edinburgh. The story was published in a pamphlet titled *News From Scotland* and became widely known in both Scotland and England. Less than a decade later, James VI would face another attempt on his life before becoming James I.

On April, 5, 1600 James nearly met his fate in a conspiracy which became known as the Gowrie Conspiracy. Like Shakespeare's Duncan, James was a guest at the home of a subject, the Earl of Gowrie, who, it is alleged, was secretly an enemy to the king. The Earl and his older brother lured the King into a chamber to interrogate a man who, it was said, was a thief. There was no man in the room, and the “interrogation” had now become a kidnapping. There are several competing stories about what exactly transpired next, but the result was that James escaped (just nearly), the conspiracy was foiled, and the Earl and his brother were immediately put to death. Once again, pamphlets were published and disseminated to exploit the scandalous story. “The failed Gowrie Conspiracy was widely publicized beyond Scotland's borders and undoubtedly contributed to the political

consciousness in 1606 when Shakespeare was reinventing Scottish history.” (Nostbakkan, p. 60)

The most famous conspiracy, however, and the one which would have the most direct effect on the writing of *Macbeth*, was the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Years of political and religious tension culminated in one of the most audacious plots against the English government in history. A group of discontented Catholics conspired to blow up Parliament House on the opening day of the legislative session on November 6, 1605 by igniting a large supply of gunpowder in the basement of the building. Expected to be in attendance that day in Parliament was the King, his heirs, and the House of Lords. An anonymous letter warned the King of the treason, and on the evening of November 5<sup>th</sup> guards discovered Guy Fawkes, (the man charged with lighting the gunpowder) waiting in the basement of Parliament House with a lantern in his hand and several slow-burning matches in his pocket. Once the conspiracy had been foiled, “the government realized the magnitude of the disaster that had been prevented and encouraged a widespread public celebration; November 5<sup>th</sup> became Guy Fawkes Day, a national event that is still recognized in England today with bonfires and effigies of Guy Fawkes burned to commemorate the victory for the law and the Crown” (Nostbakkan, p. 55)

While the scandal of conspiracy and treason certainly contributed to setting the general mood in which a production such as *Macbeth* could prosper, it was the aftermath that found its way directly into the play. One of the conspirators was a Jesuit priest named Father Henry Garnet. During his trial it was discovered that while not entirely lying, he was not entirely telling the whole truth either. This was known as “Equivocation” and was discovered to be a Jesuit practice for circumventing the truth about their religious actions; it became the hot topic of the times.

“During the Gunpowder trials, 'equivocation' became a central controversy because some Catholic conspirators practiced it in court while others were

accused of doing so. A crucial document, an unpublished treatise commonly known as *The Treatise of Equivocation*, surfaced as a piece of evidence implicating Father Henry Garnet...comments in his handwriting covered the margins of the treatise” (Nostbakkan, p. 56)

Father Henry Garnet was found guilty and executed. The whole of London followed the trial, and it served as an easy mark for the mocking pen of Shakespeare. In the Porter Scene of *Macbeth*, Macbeth's porter, amusing himself by pretending that he is the porter of hell, suggests several people that he might meet at the door of hell.

Porter: (Knocking within) Knock, knock, Knock! Who's there, i'the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't. (“*Macbeth*, Act II, Sc 3)

Shakespeare may well have been referring to Father Henry Garnet in this passage as “Farmer” was one of his proven aliases; a fact surely known to many due to the 'Crime of the Century' nature of the trial. Shakespeare was even more overt in the next line:

Porter: (Knock) Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator. (*Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 3)

This line would have been clearly understood and appreciated as a topical reference to audiences in the years after 1605. The Porter Scene, commonly viewed as comedic relief in a play that is mostly relentless in its violence, is written in prose- the perfect place to insert humor referring to current events.

Another reference in *Macbeth* may have been sourced from a contemporaneous pamphlet reprinted in *The History of the Gunpowder Plot: with Several Historical Circumstances* which

described the conspirators as being led “to the gaol, the ordinary place even of the basest malefactors, where they remained till their sending up to London, being met with a huge confluence of people of all sorts, desirous to see them, as the rarest sort of monsters.” (Caulfield, pg. 82) Which is a fantastically similar turn of phrase to one of Macduff's final lines to Macbeth:

Macduff: Then yield thee, coward  
and live to be the show and gaze o' the time:  
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,  
Painted on a pole, and underwrit,  
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

Although Shakespeare was telling a story of Scottish King that had lived 500 years before the audiences that were watching it, he clearly added popular references of the day for humor as well as to draw the line between the treason of history, and the treason that they had so nearly avoided.

One must also take into consideration how the English audience viewed Scotland at this time. Although James had been welcomed as King, England's history with Scotland had been violent and troublesome for centuries. A quick reading of Holinshed would have affirmed ideas of bloody, untrustworthy nation, and the pamphlets describing the treasonous scandals would have further confirmed them. “Before Macbeth, English dramatists and their audiences generally understood Scotsmen to be a comical, alien, dangerous, and uncivilized people.” (Braunmuller, pg. 9) This belief is also supported by William Harrison (his *Description of England* was included in the Holinshed Chronicles) who wrote: “Cannibalistic, violent, unlettered- these are qualities English audiences associated with Celts whom their supposed ancestors and Roman armies had forced to the margins of the British Isles; similar fear and prejudice appear elsewhere in plays and other documents, public and private.” (Braunmuller, pg. 11) This same angry sentiment towards the Scots can even be evidenced in the writings of Shakespeare circa 1599:

A Lord: But there's a saying very old and true;  
"If that you will France win,  
Then with Scotland first begin."  
For once the eagle England being in prey,  
To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot  
Comes sneaking, and so sucks her princely eggs,  
Playing the mouse in absence of the cat,  
To 'tame and havoc more than she can eat (Henry V Act 1, Sc. 2)

Although this is a character in a play speaking, he is voicing what was certainly a common English feeling. Taking into consideration the prevailing attitudes towards Scots in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the highly publicized scandals, the mood of the times clearly illuminates the themes and language haunting "Macbeth." "Terror, darkness, deception, violence, and an overwhelming sense of evil revolve around the supernatural forces, the treason, and the tyranny that drive the plot of the play. Shakespeare was not writing in a vacuum, and it is unlikely that people who came to the theatre to be entertained were ready, willing, or even able to escape the prevailing mood in the streets. (Nostbakken, pg. 66)

It is fairly clear that this was meant to be a Scottish play of a Scottish story written for a Scottish King. A great deal of effort towards verisimilitude is evident in the accuracy of the weather conditions, regional titles, the geography of the cities, even the very flowers worn on men's caps (which displayed a Scotsman's clan affiliation): "The dead man's knell is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives expire before the flowers in their caps, dying or ere they sicken." ("Macbeth" Act IV, Sc. 3) Of course Shakespeare didn't write the play in dialect (no doubt due to the somewhat impenetrable nature of the Scottish burr) but he most definitely did make the play about Scotland and its people.

It is quite popular, in this day and age, (and no doubt due to the universal nature of the themes in Shakespeare), to place a concept onto productions of his canon. *Richard III* set during the Second World War, *Henry VI* set in a butcher shop, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* set in the 1960's, for example, are all ideas that have received productions in the last few years. Having established the context in which *Macbeth* was written, and having suggested a fairly clear motivation for its author, hopefully one can see *my* motivation in wanting to set the play as closely as possible to the actual time period in which it transpires; including Twelfth Century Scottish costumes, customs, and music. It was and is my belief that by returning the story to its source, the production would be able to contextualize the violence, urgency, and beliefs of its characters, and thereby root the tragedy in truth. Truth on stage being, for me, the most important part of telling a story well.

## CHAPTER TWO

### From My Thoughts...

#### 1. INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE PLAY

I first read *Macbeth* when I was thirteen years old and it was thrilling. The amount of action and the rip roaring pace certainly appealed to my teenage mind. Through the years I have seen several productions of the play, and almost played Banquo on one occasion until a better paying job came along to which I could not say no. I have never felt that a production truly captured the story of the play. The popular Canadian television show *Slings and Arrows*, which tells the travails of a large Shakespeare Festival along the lines of the Stratford Festival (on which it is based), focusses on *Macbeth* for one of its seasons and the line “It is an extraordinarily difficult play to stage effectively” is repeated over and over- and from what I've seen I quite agree.

Every play has its challenges, and any Shakespeare play has even more. Upon reading *Macbeth* with an eye towards directing it, I was immediately struck by the amount of action and the pace with which it moves from scene to scene. Moving, as it does, from wide open spaces to castles, to different rooms within the castle, is a dilemma for set design especially in regards to transitions between these scenes. There is a lot of blood and fighting, which is complicated for a young company. And the stakes are incredibly high throughout for a very large cast of characters who live with death in every moment- which is a high bar for any company.

Practical concerns aside, however, I really just love the story. *Macbeth*, for me, is the tale of a young couple who are very much in love and on track to have everything they want one day, only they decide to take matters into their own hands and try to force their fate. Neither is more guilty than the other, but either one could have stopped the other. Events tumble out of control, and they lose each other in the process. They lose their love, they lose their hearts, they lose their minds, and they lose their lives. I became a director to tell stories, and this is a story that I want to tell.

## **2. TYPE OR GENRE OF PLAY**

*Macbeth* is a tragedy, but it is also a history play. Despite the fact that Shakespeare altered the written history to tell the story he wanted to tell, a majority of the action in the play is rooted in events that transpired in Scotland. Shakespeare took liberties with his other history plays as well, and yet they are still regarded as history plays. The fact that it is historical, for me, lends an air of truth to the story. This happened. Human beings experienced this. And we all know that history repeats itself. It says: take heed and know that this tragedy is happening still today.

*Macbeth* is at its heart, however, a tragedy- though a curious one. The Oxford Dictionary defines a tragedy as: “A play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character.” While it is certainly true that we see the downfall of Macbeth in the course of the show, I’m not convinced that it is an unhappy ending. Macbeth was a terrible tyrant, and his death is actually a happy ending for Scotland who will now be led by Malcolm who, we have seen, is a smart and thoughtful man who seems to have Scotland's best interest at heart. The Merriam- Webster Dictionary defines tragedy as “a medieval narrative poem or tale typically describing the downfall of a great man.” While this is a medieval tale, I don't know that we would call

Macbeth a “Great man”. He is certainly a proud, brave, and accomplished soldier, that's clear, but he does not have the single tragic flaw of the Greeks, but rather a myriad of faults that allow him to become almost monstrous in the latter stages of the play. The audience is, or should be, rooting for his death by the end of the play because of the pain and hardship that he causes on his people.

What really makes it a tragedy for me is the destruction of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Theirs is an epic love affair, and they have enjoyed many successes and endured many hardships. Yet, there is a passion and connection there that shows a remarkable closeness. Watching what happens as their relationship disintegrates, and then watching them spiral out of control afterwards is, for me, the heart of this tragic play.

### **3. STYLE OF THE PRODUCTION**

The best way to describe the style of this *Macbeth* would be “poetic realism.” I don't mean the French film movement of the 1930's but rather a realism that is centered in the truth presented poetically through the verse of Shakespeare.

The realism will be manifest in the emotions and actions of each character. Every line of dialogue must be examined to know not only exactly what is being said, but why it is being said. Shakespeare wrote his immortal lines over 400 years ago and the structure and expression can be archaic and sometimes impenetrable to modern audiences. The only way to make these lines understood is for the person who is saying them to have such a firm awareness of the intention that the audience can understand, if not the words themselves, at least the intention behind them. Every action that transpires must likewise be investigated for truth and honesty. There are many awful things that

transpire over the two hours traffic of *Macbeth* and we must be willing to go to some dark places to present them truthfully. Please see my director's "Back Page" (Appendix A).

The Poetry is supplied by Shakespeare. Fortunately almost the entire cast has studied verse with noted Shakespeare professor Neil Freeman. I was lucky enough to be able to sit in on his classes with the intermediate BFA students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the fall of 2011 and saw first hand his wonderful and insightful instruction. His work also supplied a working vocabulary for the students and myself that we could use in our approach to the text. Regardless of the stated goal of realism, the play is still written in verse, and it will take a lot of work to unlock those words and give them the freedom they need in order to be enjoyed. My goal is for the actors to have a firm grasp of presenting the verse poetically, while feeling their roles realistically.

#### **4. SPACE**

*Macbeth* will be performed in the 400 seat Frederic Wood Theatre on the campus of UBC. Also known as the 'Freddy Wood' this theatre is the larger of the two performances spaces on campus and is configured in standard proscenium format. It was built in 1963 and has stood up well against the rigors of time; the teak walls are lovely and unmarked, the seats are comfortable and in good repair, and there is ample fly space. The Periwinkle color scheme on the ceiling and slightly obtrusive 'eyebrow' where the ceiling meets the proscenium, however, are late additions that subtract from the classical feel of the space. This same 'eyebrow' also provides a significant obstruction when attempting to light upstage from the front of house lighting rails. There is very little room in the stage right wings, and only limited room for a crossover upstage- not an insignificant factor when considering a cast of 24.

A frequent problem with productions of Shakespeare is that the farther away the actors are from the audience, the harder it is to understand and connect with them. To this end I decided, early on, that I wanted to place as much of the action downstage as I could manage. The Freddy Wood has an apron that extends into the audience with a stairway down from the stage to the audience at the farthest points stage right and left. I had been told that the apron could be removed, resulting in a squared off down stage lip that ran straight from stage right to left. Upon further inquiry it was discovered that there was a third option (which hadn't been used in many years) which allowed for an inverted apron that resulted in a curved stage lip that opened away from the audience. This was exactly what I was looking for and gave me a playing area on the floor right in front of the audience with enough room that the actors would be visible to the entire audience. In order to make the down stage right and down stage left playable, we covered the existing stairs (extreme stage right and stage left) and built stairs that descended into the new playing area down center. We thus created three distinct downstage playing areas that were right in the audience's lap- which will hopefully go a long way towards achieving the desired goal of keeping the audience close and engaged.

The proximity of these playing areas to the audience worked for both of the previously stated styles of presentation. By keeping the actors close the audience will see the actor's faces more clearly, see their subtle reactions more readily, and feel perhaps that they were involved with the characters in the journey of the story. Keeping them close will also make it easier for the actors to deliver the verse at an appropriate volume to have it seem like poetry as opposed to having to struggle to be heard when trying to say the lines from the upstage recesses of the set. Configured in this manner, the Frederic Wood will serve as a great space to perform *Macbeth*.

## 5. AUDIENCE

Audiences for UBC productions feature a diverse group of individuals. A good number of students see the productions; some to fulfill a class requirement, some to see their friends, and others because it's a fun and inexpensive way to spend the evening. The second group is recent alumni, both from the theatre department and elsewhere, who come back to support the theatre and see old friends. Then there is the subscription base, which appears, from witnessing the lobby, to be a much older crowd who enjoy the diversity of programming as well as the excitement of a youthful production. Some have university affiliations, but others just enjoy coming to the Freddy Wood.

The theatre scene in Vancouver is an odd one, and one that I've been trying to assess for several years. The venerable Vancouver Playhouse closed its doors just a few months ago, and audience's wishing to see large scale, locally produced theatre have the Arts Club, Bard on the Beach, and the Gateway and little else. There seems to be only a few midrange company's/ theatre spaces (Jericho Arts Center, The Cultch) and after that it's small, intimate, black box productions that quite frankly don't often appeal to an older demographic. One of the great aspects of live theatre is dynamic of enjoying a large scale production with a large crowd of people and being a part of something special. Of course, there are many special things happening in small, intimate theatre (maybe more, in fact) but I think there is a segment of our audience who just really like the space, the location, and the feel of the Frederic Wood Theatre.

As far as my approach to producing *Macbeth* with an audience in mind, it isn't really a consideration. I wouldn't dream of catering the show to students or to an older crowd- this would involve assumptions that could be seen as almost arrogant. Who is to say what students would like or

adults without making gross generalizations? My hope is to tell this magnificent story in such a compelling, exciting, and honest fashion that it will appeal to student, alumni, middle age, and senior demographics equally.

## 6. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PRODUCTION

**Budget:** This is a big show. A year away from production I had been given permission to spend \$1000 for my composer Andrew Douglas, who would be writing an original suite of bagpipe tunes for the show. I would also need additional money for a fight choreographer (there are many fights in the show, and I added a massive fight at the top of the show that involved almost the entire cast), for a movement coach for the witches whose movement will be stylized and theatrical, and for a bagpiper, as it is almost impossible to find a piper who will work without being paid. Also, because of the setting and period of the production, the costumes for this large cast would have to be almost entirely built as there is very little in the UBC costume stock to suggest 12<sup>th</sup> century Scotland. There is also the set, of course, and a hazer will be needed to achieve the murky, misty world that I am imagining. Props will need to supply a vast array of weapons and a large amount of blood. This is a big show.

**Rehearsal Space:** We will be rehearsing in room 128 of the B.C. Binnings Studio. The room isn't large enough for us to tape out the set, and Belle Cheung, the stage manager, has developed a plan for using several colors of tape to tape out the floor in sections. It will be a challenge to be certain. The opening fight sequence, for example, uses almost all of the stage, and almost all of the cast. It will be a squeeze to fit them into the rehearsal room, which isn't ideal when each character is wielding an ax, pick, spear, or long sword. While there are many intimate scenes in *Macbeth* there are also a good number of other large scenes involving a many actors. Fitting them into a much smaller rehearsal

space will be tough, and I anticipate that it will take a few spacing rehearsals to adjust to the Freddy Wood when we move there. Luckily we are afforded four nights of rehearsal in the space prior to tech rehearsals, which will be very productive. I don't imagine that I'll be able to see the true shape of the show until we move in.

**Idiosyncrasies of the Performance Space:** The Frederic Wood Theatre, as I've mentioned, is a charming space. It is a little odd in that the audience is configured so that house left and house right are wider than the proscenium. This results in an angled sightline that makes staging things up left and up right rather tricky. It's almost as if the farther upstage you go, the closer to center you have to keep the action. This must be kept in mind when blocking or you run the risk of alienating the extreme sides of your audience. Creating the downstage playing area will be effective I believe, but there is also a considerable drop in sound as you move upstage past the proscenium. The actors will have to be mindful of having a voice for down stage and a voice for upstage, and I must be mindful to keep them from speaking while facing upstage as the sound disappears when this happens.

**Experience of Actors:** The cast of *Macbeth* will include the entire intermediate and final year BFA Acting students as well as two adult actors from outside the program, three child actors, and a bagpiper who will be costumed and have to act a little as well. Through my MFA program I have had the pleasure of working with many of the students already, and they are talented and enthusiastic. The biggest thing that I must keep in mind is to be mindful that they are students. In my first year I directed a production of "Private Wars" with three BFA students. As we approached Opening Night I was having a problem with one of the actors who would repeatedly laugh during his (admittedly very funny) scenes. I tried to be nice to him, and I tried to be stern with him, but it didn't occur to me until first preview that he just didn't have the tools to keep himself from laughing, he needed to be taught.

**Other Artists Involved:** I have also had the pleasure of working with my set and costume designers on four productions in the last year and a half. We have even been given the joking nickname of “The Dream Team” due to the fact, I assume, that we work together so often together (and very well), that we get a lot accomplished, and that we seem to click well. Jon Tsang, the set and light designer, and I have a fruitful relationship that involves a lot of back and forth, a great many different ideas, and a sum that is usually greater than our two parts. Vanessa Imeson, the costume designer, is a brilliant designer with a knack of delivering exactly what her renderings suggest. We too, have a great working relationship, though slightly different. We generally have several coffees wherein we discuss a few ideas, look at pictures for elements we like, then she goes off and synthesizes the ideas into a cohesive and beautiful design. I am not familiar with Hayley Peterson, the sound designer, though early meetings have been fruitful and promising. I have had the pleasure of working with several members of the stage management team and I think they're terrific. I have the good fortune of having four Assistant Stage Managers (One each for fights, set, props, and costumes) which will help tremendously. They're incredibly professional, dedicated, and fun to be around- it bodes well for a relaxed rehearsal process.

**History of the Company:** While the student body provides a constantly rotating pool of actors, Theatre at UBC works very well due in large part to the dedication of the faculty, advisors, and production staff that makes it happen. While a great many students work behind the scenes, it is the full time staff such as Production Manager Jay Henrickson, Props Supervisor Lynn Burton, Publicist Deb Pickman, and Technical Director Keith Smith who do the hard work of making sure it all comes together. Theatre at UBC has a rich history that reaches back to 1915 when Frederic G.C. Wood organized the Players' Club, the first all-student drama society in Canada. The tradition persisted through the years, even while interest in teaching theatre ebbed. A theatre department was finally

established 1958 to compliment the well established Players' Club and the number and size of productions grew through the years. Currently Theatre at UBC offers a subscription series of four Main Stage shows while also offering a wide variety of other shows through the year.

**Length of Rehearsal Process:** We will have four weeks to rehearse the show. The first week of rehearsals happens during the UBC Reading Break, and we will therefore be able to rehearse full time from 11am to 7pm with an hour lunch break. Weeks two and three will allow 24 hours each for rehearsal 6pm to 10pm Monday to Thursday and 11am to 7pm Saturday with an hour lunch break. In week four we move in the Freddy Wood for 16 hours of rehearsal (Monday to Thursday 6pm to 10pm) before starting tech rehearsals on the weekend. Tech rehearsals are 12 hour blocks per day with an hour lunch break. We then have a dress rehearsal Monday and Tuesday Night, March 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Length of the Run:** *Macbeth* at UBC will have a preview performance on Wednesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 and Open on Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will run through March 31<sup>st</sup> but without a show on Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. Ten performances over eleven days.

## 7. PERIOD

This production will be set in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland. Not only is this the period in which the place took place historically, but it is also an arena that suits that rough and tumble world of the play. It's the end of the Middle Ages, having survived through an extended period of poverty and strife, the world has become accustomed to searching to answer immediate needs. People are dirty, hungry, and mostly uneducated. They are used to war and death. People die early and often. It is tribal and primitive with little artifice. You have to learn to look out for yourself and make do as best you can.

## **8. EMPHATIC ELEMENT**

The emphatic element for this production of *Macbeth* is Ambition. Ambition is “the desire for personal achievement. It provides the motivation and determination necessary to achieve a particular end or condition” and it drives this play. Macbeth is told that he'll be king, but it isn't enough for him, he wants to be King now and takes matters into his own hands to achieve that end. He has become consumed by ambition. His wife, likewise consumed by ambition, spurs Macbeth on at every turn. It touches every character in the play and drives them to act as they do.

## **9. THEME OR IDEA OF THE PLAY**

There are many themes in *Macbeth* to choose from, but a major theme that I would like to stress is the cyclical nature of violence and ambition. Macbeth is a violent character who distinguishes himself on the field of battle. This violence earns him respect and admiration. He wants to advance, but having only achieved success through violence, he must commit more violence in order to advance and earn greater position, respect, and admiration. The worst thing about this cycle is that it is never ending. The cycle is inevitably stopped by someone else, who must use violence to end the cycle. That person then, who has relied on violence, will find that now that the violence which fueled his advancement is the only fuel available. It's a vicious cycle that is exceedingly difficult to break.

The witches plant the seeds of ambition in Macbeth's head when they tell him he will be king. He allows these thoughts into his mind, thus inviting the witches into his mind. They are there, therefore, at every turn, the very thoughts in his head that he should be king, that he should have more. He fights with these thoughts, in his head, though less and less as the play progresses. Even after he

has become King, he continually looks ahead to the next hurdle, constantly trying to stay a step ahead of fate, using violence the entire time. Violence that will, ironically, be the end of him and thus bring to a close a self-fulfilling prophecy. 'He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword.' You can't beat fate.

## **10. ACTION OF THE PLAY**

*Macbeth* is written in five acts. Due to the fact that I have changed some scenes and added others, I will break down the action of the play in terms of our working script.

Act I, Sc. 1: There is a fierce battle on the stage in which one soldier, Macbeth, distinguishes himself with honor- beheading the leader of the opposing army. Three witches, who walk about unseen by soldiers, have witnessed the violence and decide to meet with Macbeth after the battle is over. They do not say what they intend to discuss.

Act I, Sc. 2: The King (Duncan) and his two sons (Malcolm and Donalbain) receive news from messengers (Lennox and Angus) that despite the fact that the Thane of Cawdor has turned traitor, their side has won the battle due in large part to the heroics of Macbeth. Duncan orders the execution of the Thane, gives his title to Macbeth, and sends them to tell Macbeth and to bring him to the King.

Act I, Sc. 3: The witches meet Macbeth and his friend Banquo on a heath as they return from battle. The witches tell Macbeth that he shall be king, and tell Banquo that he shall be the father of kings. After the witches disappear into thin air, Lennox and Angus arrive with the news of Macbeth's promotion. It occurs to Macbeth that if he were to kill the King, he could quickly take his place.

Act I, Sc. 4: Duncan is told of the execution of the Thane of Cawdor by his son. Macbeth arrives with Banquo, Lennox, Angus, and the witches who now follow Macbeth unseen to all. Duncan thanks Macbeth and Banquo for their bravery, and then announces that his son Malcolm is the heir to the throne. Macbeth has more bloody thoughts that now include Malcolm.

Act I, Sc. 5: Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband that details everything that has transpired. Soon after a servant informs her that the King is visiting them that very night. The witches arrive and speak Lady Macbeth's most ambitious thoughts. Thrilled by the opportunity and the idea of becoming queen, she summons the courage to help her husband and to keep him from being too nice and thus missing the opportunity. Macbeth arrives and Lady Macbeth suggests that they kill Duncan while he visits. Macbeth seems hesitant, but his wife assures him that he should leave everything to her.

Act I, Sc. 6: Duncan arrives at the castle and is greeted by Lady Macbeth.

Act I, Sc. 7: While the King feasts, Macbeth wrestles with whether to commit the murder or not. Lady Macbeth comes to him and convinces him that it's a good plan and that they must do it.

Act I, Sc. 8: Just after midnight, Banquo talks to his son (Fleance) and imagines him as king, but dispels the thought quickly. Macbeth arrives and they speak briefly of the witches before Banquo goes to bed. Macbeth sees a vision of a dagger that leads him to Duncan's room. Macbeth kneels next to the king and kills him with a dagger.

Act I, Sc. 9: Lady Macbeth nervously waits for her husband in a hallway of the castle. He arrives with blood on his hands, clearly shaken by what he's done. Lady Macbeth discovers that he has brought two

daggers with him that he was supposed to have left with the King's grooms to throw suspicion on them. He refuses to go back so Lady Macbeth does it. She returns, bloody now as well, and takes Macbeth to wash themselves of the blood.

Act I, Sc.10: There is a knocking at the door and the Porter comes to answer it, pretending that she is the gatekeeper of hell. She lets in Macduff and Lennox, who have come to speak to the king. Macbeth enters and shows Macduff to the door where the King is sleeping. Lennox talks to Macbeth about odd occurrences during the night. Macduff returns having discovered the murdered king. Macbeth goes to the room with Lennox and murders the two groomsmen who are covered in blood with daggers nearby. Macbeth explains these murders to a group that has gathered from Macduff's warning cries. Malcolm and Donalbain, hearing of the news and fearing that they will be murdered next, decide to flee the country.

Act I, Sc. 11: Vignette: A lone piper plays a lament for the fallen king. Duncan's body is removed from the castle. A group of nobles meets to pick a new king. Macbeth is chosen, and together with his wife (and the witches) leaves for Scone to be crowned.

Act I, Sc. 11a: Ross and Macduff discuss what's happened and question that Malcolm and Donalbain could have done it. Ross leaves for Scone and the coronation, but Macduff decides to return home to Fife.

Act I, Sc. 12: Vignette: The Stone of Scone, the Stone of Destiny that is used for Scottish coronations, is brought out and Macbeth is crowned king. Back in the castle, Banquo expresses his suspicion of Macbeth but also entertains the idea that if the witches were right about Macbeth becoming king, then perhaps they will be right about his sons becoming kings.

Act I, Sc.12a: Having returned to their castle, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth meet Banquo and invite him to a feast that they are having that evening. Banquo states that he is going riding for the day with his son but will return in time for the feast. After Banquo leaves, Macbeth meets with two murderers and convinces them to murder Banquo and his son.

Act I, Sc. 13: Lady Macbeth tries to cheer up her husband, who seems distracted and aloof. Macbeth expresses his concern that although he is king, it's not over. Macbeth tell his wife that he is taking steps to fix things, but does not tell her the specifics.

Act I, Sc. 14: The two murders, along with a third (Seyton) that has been sent by Macbeth to make sure the job is done, kill Banquo. Fleance escapes.

Act I, Sc. 15: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth welcome their guests to the feast. The first murderer arrives and tells Macbeth that Banquo is slain but that Fleance escaped. Macbeth returns to the table and just as he is about to be seated is shocked by the ghost of Banquo who, caked with blood, stands on his chair and shakes his head at Macbeth. Much to Macbeth's confusion, the ghost is visible only to him.

Act II, Sc. 1: The banquet scene continues. The ghost disappears briefly but returns again and frightens Macbeth, whose guests are amazed and confused by his odd behavior. Lady Macbeth tries to explain his behavior as a passing illness and ends the feast abruptly. Back in their bedroom Macbeth questions why Macduff wasn't at the feast and expresses his intention to return to the witches to question them further.

Act II, Sc 1a: Vignette: Scenes of violence as the country spirals out of control. A man is executed in

front of his wife. A group kneeling in prayer is beaten and dispersed. A woman is dragged by the hair to an unknown fate.

Act II, Sc. 2: Lennox and Angus secretly discuss Macbeth's actions having seen through his subterfuge. Now aware that Macbeth was responsible for Duncan and Banquo's murders, they express hope that Macduff will be able to return from England with Malcolm to free them of the tyrant.

Act II, Sc. 3: Macbeth finds the witches in a Cavern. At his request they become apparitions who give three prophecies: beware Macduff, fear “none of woman born”, and fear nothing until Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane. The witches vanish. Macbeth calls in Seyton and Lennox who reports that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's wife and children.

Act II, Sc. 4: Ross brings the news to Lady Macduff that her husband has gone to England much to Lady Macduff's consternation. Lady Macduff talks to her children about their father being a traitor. Macbeth's attendant enters and warns them that they are in grave danger. Soon after the Seyton, the two murderers, and Macbeth enter. Lady Macduff and her children are murdered.

Act II, Sc. 5: Macduff tries to convince Malcolm to return to Scotland to depose Macbeth. Malcolm tests Macduff by saying all the reasons why he (Malcolm) would be a terrible king. The idea being that if Macduff says that it's fine then he must not be honest. Macduff, however, chastises Malcolm for his weakness. Malcolm confesses the ruse and tells Macduff that England has offered help and that they will return to Scotland. Ross enters to implore Malcolm's help, tells the state of Scotland's suffering, and tells Macduff that his family has been slaughtered. They exit intent on making war with Macbeth.

Act II, Sc. 6: Lady Macbeth's attendant waits with a doctor to observe Lady Macbeth who has been sleepwalking. Lady Macbeth enters, sleepwalking, and goes through the motions of washing her hands as if bloody. She also talks in her sleep confessing secrets though they are cryptic. The doctor confesses that she is beyond his help and that the attendant should watch her carefully.

Act II, Sc. 7: Scottish Nobles gather and plan their attack on Macbeth.

Act II, Sc. 8: Macbeth, hearing that the nobles are gathering to fight him along with an English army, prepares for battle. The doctor tells him of his wife's illness, which Macbeth tells him to cure. Macbeth is convinced that he has nothing to fear.

Act II, Sc. 9: The English force meets with the Scottish nobles in Birnam Wood. Malcolm asks every soldier to cut down a tree branch and hold it before himself in order to mask the size of their force.

Act II, Sc. 10: Macbeth prepares for battle defiantly. His attendant enters and tells him that his wife has died. Macbeth expresses his world weariness. Seyton enters and reports that Birnam wood is coming to Dunsinane. Macbeth goes out to meet his fate.

Act II, Sc. 11: Led by a piper, the army, obscured by branches, approaches Dunsinane. Malcolm addresses the troops, and they begin their battle.

Act II, Sc. 12: Macbeth realizes he is surrounded and is abandoned by Seyton. He fights Young Siward and kills him. Soon after, Macduff finds Macbeth and attacks him. Macduff dispels Macbeth's charm 'I was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd.' Macduff kills Macbeth as the witches enter,

drawn by the violence. Macduff beheads Macbeth and places the head on a pike before proclaiming Malcolm King of Scotland. The witches make plans to meet with Macduff, their next target.

## 11. DRAMATIC METAPHOR

A pride of lions in the wild- devouring other animals and fighting each other for superiority.

## 12. MOOD

*Macbeth* is dark, scary, and violent. 12<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland, at the end of the Dark Ages, and in a violent time of war and disease, is a base and tribal country. There is a tremendous amount of mistrust, duplicity, war, and hunger in the characters and the country they inhabit. A large amount of the play takes place at night which is often associated with danger and evil due to the enveloping darkness and our fear of the unknown. Duplicity, doubt, and mistrust are all elements of the night that are embodied in the characters of *Macbeth*. This reaches its apex in Act IV, Sc. 3 when Malcolm goes into a long description of his seemingly endless faults to test Macduff's honesty in coming to him to save Scotland. It is dark (literally and figuratively) and full of blood and mischief. No one can trust anyone in the dark days of Macbeth's reign, and paranoia runs rampant.

## 13. CHARACTERS

**Macbeth**                      Qualities: Strong, intelligent, ambitious, passionate, indecisive, unprincipled  
   Metaphor: A hungry prowling lion with a toothache  
   Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: "Flight of the Valkyries"  
   Major Desire: Power  
   Main Action: To get what's his

<b>Lady Macbeth</b>	<p>Qualities: Strong, ambitious, passionate, calculating</p> <p>Metaphor: An overzealous campaign manager</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A snake charmer's tune</p> <p>Major Desire: To be the Queen</p> <p>Main Action: To make her husband King</p>
<b>Macduff</b>	<p>Qualities: Honest, strong, true, smart, fierce</p> <p>Metaphor: A doctor risking it all to help a dying patient who has no insurance</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: The National Anthem</p> <p>Major Desire: To do the right thing</p> <p>Main Action: To restore Scotland to better days</p>
<b>Banquo</b>	<p>Qualities: Loving, honest, kind, pensive</p> <p>Metaphor: The Vice-President of the United States</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Bass Guitar</p> <p>Major Desire: To survive with his son</p> <p>Main Action: To advance with honor but without risk</p>
<b>The Witches</b>	<p>Qualities: Duplicitous, Sly, Ruthless</p> <p>Metaphor: The worst thoughts in anyone's mind</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A siren song</p> <p>Major Desire: To proliferate acts of violence</p> <p>Main Action: To encourage Macbeth's blood lust through ambitious thoughts</p>
<b>Ross</b>	<p>Qualities: Valiant and vulnerable</p> <p>Metaphor: A strong grandparent during a family quarrel</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A quiet, a Capella sea-shanty</p> <p>Major Desire: To keep the peace</p> <p>Main Action: To hold things together during Macbeth's reign</p>

<b>Angus</b>	<p>Qualities: Strong and trusting</p> <p>Metaphor: A war horse with a conscience</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: An Irish rebel folk song</p> <p>Major Desire: To be true blue</p> <p>Main Action: To do her duty but also do what's right</p>
<b>Malcolm</b>	<p>Qualities: Cerebral and clever</p> <p>Metaphor: A man playing several games of Chess</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A Bach Cello Suite</p> <p>Major Desire: To play the game well</p> <p>Main Action: To safely become King</p>
<b>Lennox</b>	<p>Qualities: Ingratiating, clever, pragmatic</p> <p>Metaphor: The career (non-elected) politician</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Anything produced by Simon Cowell</p> <p>Major Desire: To be the man behind the curtain</p> <p>Main Action: To be in the right place at the right time</p>
<b>Duncan</b>	<p>Qualities: Regal and kind</p> <p>Metaphor: A lamb to the slaughter</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: "Pomp and Circumstance"</p> <p>Major Desire: To survive</p> <p>Main Action: To survive and give his son the Crown</p>
<b>Porter</b>	<p>Qualities: Filthy, funny, hungry</p> <p>Metaphor: A homeless person with a "need money for beer" sign</p> <p>Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A profanity laced drinking song</p> <p>Major Desire: To do her best to enjoy life</p> <p>Main Action: Make a little extra money being funny and clever</p>

**Lady Macduff**

Qualities: Judgmental but loving

Metaphor: A bird in the nest

Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: A tender lullaby

Major Desire: To have a life with her family

Main Action: To protect her family

**Donalbain**

Qualities: Timid but physically strong

Metaphor: A squirrel trying to get a nut

Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Third chair violin

Major Desire: To survive

Main Action: To live while gathering as much power as possible

**Seyton**

Qualities: Crafty, brutal, and for hire

Metaphor: A hired mafia gun with no family allegiance

Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Castanets

Major Desire: To gather money and influence

Main Action: To support his benefactor (to a degree)

**Murder #1**

Qualities: Desperate and ruthless

Metaphor: A cornered animal

Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: "Folsom Prison Blues"

Major Desire: Just to make things better for himself

Main Action: To get in good with the King

**Murder #2**

Qualities: Desperate and ruthless

Metaphor: A cornered animal

Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: "Folsom Prison Blues"

Major Desire: Just to make things better for himself

Main Action: To get in good with the King for advancement

**Attendant #1**           Qualities: Honest, capable, and subservient  
Metaphor: Jack the Ripper's faithful pet  
Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Triangle in a large orchestra  
Major Desire: To be of service to an important person  
Main Action: To help her master

**Attendant #2**           Qualities: Honest, capable, and subservient  
Metaphor: Jack the Ripper's faithful pet  
Rhythmic/ Musical Quality: Triangle in a large orchestra  
Major Desire: To be of service to an important person  
Main Action: To help her master

## **14. STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

*Macbeth* is the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies. It is so short, and moves so quickly, that some scholars have even suggested that there are scenes missing from the play that would make the story clearer. I don't know if I would go quite that far, but I do agree that the play moves very quickly indeed. The opening scenes, as written, start with the witches alone followed by Duncan receiving news of a terrific battle and a long account of the action. Rather than starting the play with a lot of talking and exposition, I decided to actually show the battle to open the play so that we can actually see Macbeth in action. I then added the witches to the battle to explain their presence in the world and why they decide to meet with Macbeth. In the ensuing scene I was able to cut a large amount of the exposition so that we could get into the meat of the story. Things move nicely after that from scene to scene as we see the seeds of ambition planted in Macbeth's head by the witches, his promotion, the idea to kill Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth planning the murder, and Macbeth's final moment of decision to act.

As written, the murder of Duncan happens offstage. I felt it was such a crucial moment in the play that it should be seen by the audience. We've seen Macbeth kill on the battlefield, but stabbing your friend while he sleeps is another kind of killing altogether. I decided to have Duncan wake, and sit up face to face with Macbeth with the dagger in his gut. I then added a line for Duncan taken from the end of the play "Hail King of Scotland." Duncan knows what has happened. He knows that he has been betrayed, and Macbeth knows he knows. This helps explain why Macbeth is so rattled in the very next scene.

The next few scenes show Macbeth dealing with the murder and then covering up the evidence and getting away with it. As written, Shakespeare moves quickly from a scene where the murder is discovered and Macbeth has gotten away with it, to a scene with Macduff expressing doubt, to a scene where Macbeth returns from his coronation. These events happen with such alacrity that it can almost be hard to follow. In order to clarify the events in this section I added a "Lament" vignette after the first scene of this segment with a lone piper playing for his fallen king. We see Duncan's body being carried out, a group of nobles electing Macbeth King, Macbeth being dressed in ceremonial furs by his wife, and the couple leaving for the coronation. After this vignette we see the Macduff scene which is followed by another vignette of the coronation which plays out as Banquo expresses his suspicions of Macbeth. We then return to the scene of Macbeth returning from his coronation. After this the play focusses on Macbeth's increased paranoia about Banquo. We see him arrange for Banquo's murder and then witness the murder. The last scene of Act I is a feast to celebrate the coronation where the ghost of Banquo appears to Macbeth. Macbeth's guilt is tearing him apart and ruining his mind.

In Act II, Sc. 1 we see Macbeth and Lady Macbeth drifting apart as Macbeth becomes obsessed with maintaining his power. In the second scene we see Hecate and the witches discussing how they

have treated Macbeth. In the third we see that his subjects (Lennox and Angus), who were only suspicious previously, are now openly discussing the evil acts of Macbeth. My first action was to cut the Hecate scene, which is done quite often, because it didn't fit into the conceit of the witches as ambition. The Lennox and Angus scene seems to suggest that the country has spiraled out of control, which also suggests the passage of time. To this end, I added a scene to replace the Hecate scene that demonstrated that Scotland had fallen under the rule of a tyrant; a man is executed in his home, people at prayer are beaten and dispersed, and a woman is dragged by her hair to an unknown fate.

Macbeth then visits the cavern where the witches offer their prophecies. Structurally this sets up the rest of the second act. We see Macbeth visit the Macduff household and murder Lady Macduff and her children, we see Malcolm in England plotting Macbeth's overthrow, We see Lady Macbeth sleepwalking in guilt-induced madness, and then we watch quick back and forth scenes of the nobles gathering and approaching Dunsinane and Macbeth's preparation for their attack. The final scene brings us the confrontation that we knew was coming. Macduff explains that he was from his mother's womb untimely ripped and he kills Macbeth, afterwards declaring Malcolm as King. Normally the play ends there, but I added a coda of the witches repeating their lines from the first scene. "When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lighting, or in rain?" It was incredibly important for me to have this bookend to suggest the cyclical nature of violence and ambition. Macduff was next on their list, and the witches would do their best to fill his mind with the same poisonous ambition that had so consumed Macbeth.

## **15. DIRECTORIAL APPROACH**

It is my intention to really focus on telling this story clearly. To this end, I will start with the

text. There will have to be a considerable amount of table work in order to work with the actors. The first thing that we'll need to discover is what, exactly, these characters are saying. This will be accomplished by going through the script line by line, looking up words, researching phrases, paraphrasing the words into modern language, and coming to a firm understanding of the text.

Due to the rather short rehearsal time and the fact that the first week of rehearsal will be full time, I'd like to set the form of the show rather quickly. It is my intention to block the show entirely in the first week and then use the ensuing weeks to do scene work within the form created (allowing, of course, for changes as we work) I believe that this will be beneficial for the actors, who will be able to understand the world that they'll be living in, and for me, to make sure that there is a good shape to the show from a blocking and movement standpoint. I will then use the four days in week four, when we move in the Freddy Wood, to space the scenes on the stage and allow the cast to adjust to the stage after the confinement of the rehearsal space.

As we investigate the text and set the blocking, it is my intention to always look for the truth. It isn't enough for an actor to know what his character say or does, it is crucial to understand why. The word and the action have to make sense and resonate with the actor on some level. He or she has to find what the truth is for the character, and then look for where that truth lies within themselves. It is relatively easy for the actor playing Macbeth to know that the character must decide to kill Duncan and then do it, but it is much more difficult to find the place within the actor that can agree with the decision and the action. It is that understanding, that truth, that I believe will root this production in a very humanistic reality, which will, in turn, make the story all too real to the audience.

## 16. DESIGN WORDS

This is a very dark and earthy world. The set should suggest the simplicity of the times and be comprised of stone, wood, and dirt. There is nothing fancy about these people or their surroundings. There is no ornamentation and everything has a function. The most important props are the characters weapons, and after that they simply make do. Macbeth sleeps on a pallet of straw on the floor and when the King visits, he too is given a humble bed on the floor. The table for the feast is a rugged wood table with benches for the king's guests. The castles are made of thick slabs of stone and are the only permanent seeming parts of the world.

The lighting should be murky and high contrast. Beams of light, partially obscured by gobos, slash through the air thickened with haze. Most of the scenes of the play take place at night, where the foul deeds can be undetected. There are always a dark corners and shadows in which to hide, piercing shafts of light to illuminate the secret dark.

The costumes should appear dirty and shabby. These characters wear the same thing almost every day and their clothes show the same wear and tear that the characters have been exposed to- rips from battles, blood from fights, and mud from having slept in a ditch. They have accents of animal furs and leather to accentuate their tribal nature. Their hair is long, dirty, and braided as custom. Their exposed flesh is filthy from the elements. The men are unshaven, the women are unkempt.

The Sound of the play should be both evocative and driving. Between the early scenes of the play drums should drive the action as bounce back and forth between the battle and court. Once we arrive at Macbeth's castle, the songs should be Celtic, dark, violent, moody, and medieval sounding.

The drums return at the end of the play as the armies are gathering and preparing for battle.

## **17. AUDIENCE ORIENTATION**

The Frederic Wood theatre is a proscenium stage. By inverting the apron and creating playing spaces down stage right and down stage left, however, we will be able to play a majority of the play very close to the audience. This proximity will help increase the intimacy and immediate-ness of the action and hopefully have the effect of bringing the audience right into the action.

It is my intention to try to use the part of the stage that is upstage of the proscenium for the wide open scenes (the opening battle, the heath, the cavern, the closing battle) to utilize the size of the space, and to keep the more intimate scenes downstage of the proscenium. There are a lot of secrets and furtive actions in this play, and I would like to honor these by keeping the scenes themselves small, dark, and with an air of danger about them.

“Hell is murky” says Lady Macbeth, and as we know from the porter, Dunsinane is a kind of hell. I would like, therefore, to have a murky, dark world for this play accented with high contrast pools of light that catch the characters who would much rather live in the shadows.

## **18. THE WORLD OF THE PLAY**

This production of *Macbeth* will be set firmly in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland. It is a harsh and violent world still experiencing the political instability and severe economic hardship of the middle ages. There have been regular invasions from outside the country, and plenty of fighting within it. The King

has some comforts, but is still one of the people- just with a crown and a slightly nicer fur cloak. There is no thought of the king being ordained by God to rule, he is simply the leader of the tribe, and if he doesn't get the job done, a new leader will take the crown. There is no wealth in the country and even the Thanes, though they live in castles, still struggle to make ends meet. The rest of the general populace are hearty and hard working. Events in the play happen quickly and we move from battle to murder to coronation to murder to battle and more murder without much time to think things through. These characters live in a very immediate world where no one is safe for very long and it's best to keep your wits about you.

## **19. SPECIAL PROBLEMS**

There are many problems in the staging of *Macbeth* (“It is an incredibly difficult play to stage effectively!”) The fight scenes, of which there are many, will have to be choreographed and rehearsed frequently both for effect and safety which will eat into rehearsal time. There are two beheadings, which is a challenge for the props department as well as for blocking- how do we get the heads on stage without them being seen by the audience? There is a large amount of blood which, as a matter of practicality, will include costumes as well as how we apply the blood and how we can clean it off. I am including a live bagpiper in the show who, because I have to pay him, will only be added to the show at the last minute (Sunday of tech week). I am also having my nephew and niece act in the show, but as they are coming down from Alaska I will have to add them into the show at the last minute as well (but will rehearse with them via Skype). It is a very large cast, so arranging schedules and facilitating conflicts will be quite difficult. The biggest challenge, I believe, will simply be putting on a show of this size and scope within a very short rehearsal period and with very little working time between tech weekend and opening. I will be able to arrange table work with individuals in the weeks before we

officially start rehearsals, but even with that I have 80 hours of rehearsal prior to tech, or basically the equivalent of two weeks in the real world. It's daunting to say the least.

## CHAPTER THREE

### To The Table...

#### Winter, 2009

A cold January afternoon in Juneau, Alaska in the home of my brother Michael. As an avid player of the bagpipes, he competes internationally and is enthusiastic about sharing new music. He calls me over to hear a private YouTube video of him and seven other pipers playing an original composition by Andrew Douglas titled “Underneath”. The tune is haunting and moodily evocative. Looking out of the large picture windows of his living room at the misty, snow covered mountains bathed in the cold winter sunlight, it occurred to me at that instant how theatrical the tune sounded and what a wonderful theme it would make for the witches in a production of *Macbeth*.

My initial thought is to have it play whenever the witches appear. It would be there at the beginning of the play, on the heath, in the cavern, and at the end of the play. Surely I could add the witches to the end of the play? As a bookend? The recorded tune is over seven minutes, so there are enough different sections to have each appearance sound different though in the same world.

It remained in my head as just this seed of an idea until I was accepted into the MFA in Directing Program at UBC. Knowing that I would have to offer my ideas for a thesis in the fall, I spent the summer months of 2010 developing the idea for my *Macbeth*.

Being of Scottish heritage (both of my parents are from small towns near Glasgow) I have always wondered why a play known as often as not as “The Scottish Play” rarely embraced design elements that reflected Scotland. Once I had decided to set the play in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, and considered

the use of bagpipe music, the next logical step was to include live bagpipes. There is really nothing as visceral as the sound of live bagpipes, and having them played live during a performance of *Macbeth*, I thought, could be truly stirring (though slightly anachronistic for the period).

It then occurred to me that the original composition we had listened to that afternoon was created only a few years before and by a musician known to my brother. If I was going to have live bagpipers why not ask him to write tunes specifically for *Macbeth*? Why not find places in the show where one might actually hear bagpipes? As I continued to ruminate new ideas continued to blossom.

The first place in the script that seemed appropriate was Duncan's arrival at Dunsinane. Certainly the King would travel with a piper, and his arrival would then have an air of pomp and occasion. The next thought was the Macbeth's feast. Much in the same way that the world is turned topsy-turvy with the murder of Duncan (horses going mad, strange screams of death, etc...) perhaps the music at the feast could likewise embody a subversion of the normal. Of course the advancing army marching on Dunsinane would be led by a piper, an ideal spot for another original tune. I continued to play around with places in the play where music might serve to heighten the storytelling, trying not to get too attached to ideas to keep as many options open as possible.

### **Fall, 2010**

Only a few weeks into the MFA program at UBC and we are given the task of proposing plays for our thesis. I haven't really considered any other show outside of *Macbeth*, and although I put together a list, I'm really only excited for the Scottish play. A dilemma arises when I discover that the other MFA candidate would like to do a Shakespeare play as well. Rather than submitting our lists and hoping for the best, I request the opportunity for each of us to pitch our respective shows. The season

selection committee agrees and we each prepare our pitches. The main selling point, in my mind, is that this particular production can only be done at this time and in this place. The short run of the show makes it possible to have a live piper as it would be particularly difficult to get a piper commit to a full run of six nights a week for six weeks. Also, the fact that the seven time World Champion SFU Pipe Band is in Vancouver gives the production access to a large number of very talented pipers. The fact that we are not paying our actors facilitates having a large cast which is important for the huge battle scene that starts the show.

I've been informed by several faculty members that a major concern is the number of roles for women. To address this concern I decide to cast the roles of Ross and Angus as women warriors. I have also increased the size of the witches roles in the show by having them part of the action almost throughout and also by having them say some of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's lines. The concept is that they are a personification of ambition. As such they can find their way into someone's mind and suggest ambitious thoughts. When Macbeth is wrestling with whether he should kill Duncan, it is the witches who say:

**Witch #3**

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly:

**Witch #1**

if the 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.

To which Macbeth counters:

## **Macbeth**

But in these cases  
We still have judgment here; that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague the inventor:

When the witches say the lines, they mimic Macbeth's physicality so that the audience gets the idea that the witches aren't controlling Macbeth, they are simply thoughts in his head. The argument that he is having with himself is actually two competing thoughts much like Hamlet or the poor cat i'the adage.

There are enough changes to the script already that I type out the whole script to help facilitate further changes and to accurately describe the story as I would like to tell it. I sit down with an Assistant Stage Manager and count every line in the show for each character:

### **Macbeth Line Count**

#### **Men**

Macbeth		Total: Lots
Banquo/Seward:	Act 1: 92 Act 2: 15	Total: 107
Duncan:	Act I: 56	Total: 56
Malcolm:	Act 1: 24 Act 2: 114	Total: 138
Macduff:	Act 1: 57 Act 2: 105	Total: 162
Lennox:	Act 1: 59 Act 2: 57	Total: 116
Lord/ Seyton:	Act 1: 0 Act 2: 5	Total: 5
M1, M:	Act 1: 26 Act 2: 12	Total: 38
M2, C:	Act 1: 16 Act 2: 0	Total: 27
M 3, D, YS:	Act 1: 8 Act 2: 7	Total: 15
2 Lords/Soldiers		

TOTAL MEN: 665

## **Women**

Lady Macbeth		Total: Lots
Witch 1:	Act 1: 25 Act 2: 30	Total: 65 (on stage for much more)
Witch 2:	Act 1: 16 Act 2: 23	Total: 49 (on stage for much more)
Witch 3:	Act 1: 15 Act 2: 19	Total: 44 (on stage for much more)
Ross:	Act 1: 35 Act 2: 87	Total: 122
Angus/Dr:	Act 1: 24 Act 2: 81	Total: 105
Porter/ Lady Macd:	Act 1: 35 Act 2: 39	Total: 74

TOTAL WOMEN: 459

While there are still more lines for the men in the company overall, the line count is much closer than the committee had expected, and there are some great roles for the women.

In the pitch meeting I play a recording of Andrew Douglas' "Underneath" and describe the opening of the show. I explain the concept of the witches and my ideas for the world of the play including the costumes, the live pipers, the fights, and world of the play. I tell them that I would like to produce the play in the Freddy Wood as opposed to the Telus Studio due in large part to the fact that a live piper in so small a space, and with the metal facings, would sound terrible. I also feel that a proscenium is the best configuration for the show as I see it. I assure them that there are tremendous roles for the female BFA actors as well as the male and show the line count. I feel good about the pitch and hopeful, and now it's just a matter of waiting.

We find out several weeks later that they have selected *Macbeth* and that it will be performed in the Frederic Wood Theatre in March of 2012. I'm fantastically excited and can't wait to get started though it's still a year away. Jon Tsang will design my set and lights, and Vanessa Imeson will design the costumes. The sound designer is yet to be determined.

## **Spring, 2011**

I have directed two shows so far in the MFA program and worked with Jon and Vanessa on both of them. I consider myself lucky to have fallen in with them so early on in the process and I'm excited to have them working on *Macbeth*. Before we leave for the summer, I sit down with both Jon and Vanessa to start kicking around ideas for sets, lights, and costumes.

Jon and I have a very productive meeting where we discuss the idea of creating playing spaces down left and down right by covering the stairs. For the opening battle we discuss how to achieve the 'red' look that I'm hoping for and consider a large backlit red background against which the soldiers will appear as silhouettes. We also consider how much set we want as well as logistical concerns of moving quickly from scene to scene. Jon has an idea for two towers that slide off and on stage that I like quite a bit. It will allow us to have a wide open stage for the battle, heath, and cavern but then look quite different when we're in the castle. Another idea that we discuss is that the castle scenes could have false doors and secret entrances. The castle becomes claustrophobic compared to the open outdoors, and has as many secrets as the characters.

Vanessa and I have coffee and talk about early ideas for the costumes. The characters will all be in great kilts with the exception of Seyton, who will have more of a continental look about him (being from Spain) We will have a large variety of plaids and Vanessa is very excited to include animal furs and leather which I'm, in turn, very excited about. We discuss a sort of Steampunk concept, but decide to keep it as true to 12<sup>th</sup> century as possible while highlighting the tribal aspect. We're not entirely sure what to do with the witches and table the conversation for further reflection.

## **Fall, 2011**

Back in Vancouver I check in with Jon and Vanessa regarding designs. Vanessa has tremendous ideas for dressing family members in 'family' tartans and we discuss characters one by one to find ways that the costumes can reflect their personality. Jon and I decide that the two tower idea will work well, though there is concern that the lack of wing space stage right will make it impossible to store the tower there when it is moved offstage. Jon is also excited about the idea of using Tyvek on the walls and towers. In order to use the down stage right and down stage left playing areas it is essential to cover the teak walls of the theatre without damaging the teak. We can't build flats therefore as there is nothing to serve as an anchor for them. Tyvek is cloth like paper material that Jon is convinced will give a textured stone like appearance if painted properly. My major concern is that it has to look solid and not give the impression of being a drape with folds. Jon believes that we will be able to anchor the Tyvek in such a way that it will look textured but not drapery.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> I am given the Sydney J. Risk award at UBC before the Monday evening performance of *The Trial of Judith K*, I am in rehearsals for *Bash* and several days later we have auditions for *Macbeth*. I try to keep an open mind going in to auditions, but I feel that I have many of the parts already cast in my head. I know, for example, that Scott Button will play Malcolm, and that Jordon Kerbs will be the Porter. I have other actors in mind for roles, but there's a unique challenge to casting from such a limited pool of actors. I have to use all of the BFA actors in the show, and even that isn't enough- I have to fill two more slots from outside the program. So it's not always who's perfect for the role, but how do I fit this group of actors into this cast list. There are also departmental concerns as they must insure that the actors each get a certain number of lead roles during their time at UBC. This makes it slightly more difficult to cast an intermediate student in a lead role, when there are final year BFA's who need good roles.

I am immediately impressed with Alexander Keurvorst, an intermediate year student, and he becomes the odds on favorite for the role of Macbeth. He has a tremendous facility with verse, and although smaller in stature than several other of the men he has an intensity that suits the character. Mitch Hookey and Alex Pangburn also read for Macbeth, but neither really hits a home run. Something just doesn't fit. When Mitch reads for Macduff, however, my decision is easy. He just fits the role so well. It suits him. It's a remarkable thing to see and several advisors in the room agree that it's a no brainer. Likewise with Alex P. when he reads Banquo- the role fits him like a glove.

I have more difficulty casting the role of Lady Macbeth. After several reads I'm down to two very different choices. Christine Bortolin is an excellent actress and, one would think, an easy choice for Lady Macbeth, but several things cloud the decision. She seems rather stern in the role, which I am actively trying to stay away from, and there is very little chemistry between Alexander and her. I am hoping for sparks and tremendous sexual energy between them to really sell the idea that they are a wonderful couple.

The other possibility is Tracy Schut, who is an intermediate actor. Tracy is a less experienced actress than Christine and a little more raw. She has some breathing issues that could be a problem in such a verse heavy role, and the faculty wouldn't like having two intermediate BFA's as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, but there is an undeniable chemistry between her and Alexander. They audition with the side for Macbeth's return to his castle and it's electric. After consulting with faculty I decide to have callbacks for Lady Macbeth the following week. I offer the role of Macbeth to Alexander and he is thrilled. The following week we have the callbacks and although the dilemma is still present, I opt for trying to create the chemistry between them and Christine is cast as Lady Macbeth. I'm very pleased with the casting:

**Men:**

Macbeth	Alexander Keurvorst
Banquo, Menteith	Alex Pangburn
Macduff	Mitch Hookey
Malcolm	Scott Button
Lennox	Matt Reznek
Duncan, Caithness	Joel Garner
Donalbain, Yng. Siward	Kenton Klassen
Seyton	Alen Dominguez
Murderer #1, Siward	Kyle Salive (replaced by Charles Heffernan)
Murderer #2, Doctor	John Voth

**Women:**

Lady Macbeth	Christine Bortolin
Ross	Emma Middleton
Angus	Pippa Johnson
Witch #1	Tracy Schut
Witch #2	Georgia Beaty
Witch #3	Melanie Reich
Porter	Jordon Kerbs
Lady Macduff	Emma Johnson
Attendant #1	Courtney Shields
Attendant #2	Karina Palmitesta

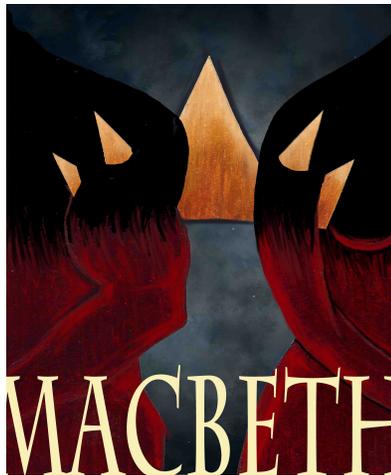
**Children:**

Fleance	Matthew Rhodes
Macduff's son	Carraig New
Macduff's daughter	Maire New

With the casting in place I take another pass at the script. I cut the 'Procession of Kings' from the cavern scene- because it didn't really fit into the story that I was telling as well as the fact that Jon and I , despite hours of brainstorming, couldn't find a way to stylistically fit it into the show. At the urging of Neil Freeman I also included the witches into Act I, Sc. 5 with Lady Macbeth. Neil argued, and I quite agree, that Lady Macbeth is possessed of the same poisonous ambition as Macbeth. When she reads the letter it sparks the ambitious thoughts in her head, and the witches, standing nearby, give voice to her terrible thoughts. This also helps in establishing the witches as the personification of ambition instead of spirits who haunt Macbeth alone. I also cut a few more lines out of the Porter

scene. The Porter pretending to be the keeper of the hell-gate isn't as funny as the latter portions of the Porters scene, and I want Jordon to be able to keep it fast and funny.

I talked to Deb Pickman about the poster design as was given permission to create my own image for the show. It was important for me to have an image that reflected the story that I was trying to tell, and I'm not a fan of photo posters. I started to work with an artist named Carolyn Rapanos on ideas for a poster. I wanted it to be active, with violence and ambition pulling apart and destroying. My first idea was a bloody hand reaching for a crown, but I threw other ideas at Carolyn this was her first idea:



Which I liked, but it wasn't quite right. I sent an email which read:

Dear Carolyn,

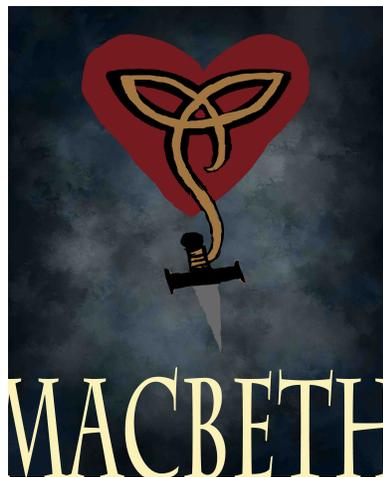
I like the font of Macbeth and something getting stuck on the points of the crown is a really cool idea, but the color of the bodies makes them look devilish and not human and the image is not quite active enough. Ambition is a striving and reaching- the action of which tears them apart; they are both very human, but this one fault destroys them.

Here are some more possible ideas to stoke your imagination:

-two bodies intertwined, one reaching up to a crown the other reaching to catch something that's fallen  
-daggers, hearts, hands, crowns,  
-it's not the crown itself that is the danger, it's the action of trying to take it, to grasp power  
-in this play violence leads to power which leads to ambition which leads to violence to power to... the crown is just a means to an end, a rung on the ladder  
-these two are in love and everyone thinks they're perfect at the start, but their love is poisoned by ambition and it ruins them

See what you can do, I'm sure we'll come up with something!  
Thank you for your hard work,  
Patrick

After a few days a few more tries, Carolyn came back with this:

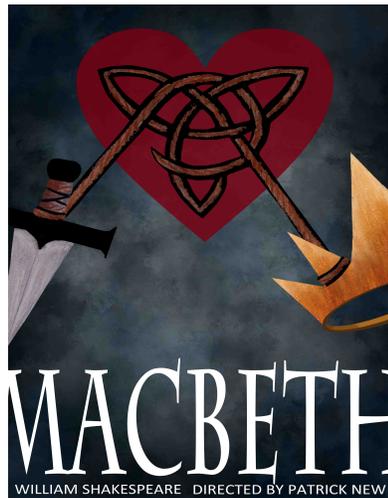


Which I was very excited about- I loved the heart and the Celtic knot. I sent another email:

Carolyn,

Oh I am very excited about this concept! It's so close. Now what I'd like to do is have one side of the heart pulled by a dagger (love the celtic design) and the other half being pulled by a crown. And the heart is starting to split apart at the top like it's breaking in two. Violence and ambition pulling the heart in two. What do you think? Doable? Very cool!!!

Which was the last tweak we needed to find the image that I think is perfect:



Over Christmas break I took one last pass at the script, tightening where I could and making absolutely certain that I was telling the story clearly. I spent Christmas at home in Michigan and returned to UBC in January ready to work.

### Winter, 2012

Andrew Douglas, who was composing the original suite of bagpipe music had been incredibly busy in the fall. We had discussed the tunes over the summer and exchanged a few emails in the fall, but he was now ready to get to work and set the tunes down. I sent him a list of the tunes and timings:

### Macbeth Sound Cues for Pipes with Timings

- 1) "The Battle"- "Underneath" plays under the opening battle (which is in slow motion until the beheading) and plays under the witches lines about meeting Macbeth on the heath. Establishes mood of the piece. **(Pretty much the first two minutes of "Underneath", at two minutes it should go to a quiet moment playing under the witch's lines...)**
- 2) 'The Heath'- short reprise of "Underneath" **THIS PIPE CUE IS CUT, DRUMS ONLY. (I'll need quite a few fifteen second drum sequences, pulse pounding, driving drums)**

- 3) 'The Kings Arrival'- a piper pipes in the King and his entourage. This is a march, it is celebratory, but something is not quite right. The King will be murdered here in short order, so there should be something off in the tune. **(One Minute to One Minute and twenty seconds, somewhere in there, keeping in mind that when we start to hear the tune it's a ways off so it's actually starting near the end. Should also have drums)**
- 4) 'To Kill a King'- **(THIS CUE IS CUT, DRUMS ONLY)**
- 5) 'Our Fallen King'- a single piper stands on the battlements and pipes a lament for the murdered King Duncan. It is sad, of course, but also reflects that there is something unnatural in his death, something is rotten in the state of Scotland. **(One Minute, Fifteen Seconds (Though if you could write something a little longer as well that would be ideal- I'm not sure of this, but might like to have a nice long lament here...))**
- 6) 'The Banquet'- a young boy plays as entertainment for the gathered guests while his sister dances. This would be played on parlor pipes, or something smaller and fitting for indoors. Plays under dialogue so can't be too overwhelming. This is a gathering of murderers, and there is something wrong here too. **(What thoughts do you have to keep this relatively quiet? Is there something he could play that could play under dialogue? If so I would need it to be several minutes long and would be great.)**
- 7) 'The Cavern'- played under the iconic witches lines “double, double, toil and trouble...” Mostly drones but some melody should be present. Witches are miked so can compete. This tune then continues when the witches show Macbeth different apparitions... **(Three Minutes, but with sections of just drones. Nice if it is short sequences that can be moved about. A tricky one and may need some work during rehearsals to fit the action)**
- 8) 'Practice for Death'- Macduff's son practices his chanter as his sister dances. **(Chanter only. They are about to be murdered but don't know it. One Minute)**
- 9) 'The Forest'- the advancing army comes to Dunsinane appearing like a forest. This is a march, they are righteous and confident, they are coming to right a wrong. **(Forty to Fifty Seconds)**
- 10) 'They Fight' – another slow motion fight, “Underneath” again would work well as a book end, one of the later movements perhaps? **(One Minute Thirty Seconds)**

As you can see we had originally discussed more tunes, but cut back as we moved forward. We actually ended up cutting even more of the cues in the hopes of leaving the audience wanting more bagpipes as opposed to having them saying “Oh no, not the bagpipes again”. We had several Skype video sessions where he would play the tunes for me and I would tell him 'oh I like that bit there, but

that other part wasn't quite right.' After several of these sessions we had our tunes and Andrew went to work writing out the compositions. He also agreed to record the compositions on his pipes so that we would have recorded versions to work with in rehearsals which was a tremendous help.

I have one last coffee with Vanessa to look at a few drawings and discuss the witches. We look through photo books and talk about the witches each having their own costume color and individual look. I suggest that we highlight one aspect of their face with makeup to suggest different manifestations of ambition- black eyes of one witch for ambition to pursue what we see, red lips on another for spoken ambition and lust, and sere cheeks on the third for gaunt look ambition as hunger. Looking through a fashion magazine we see a model with horns coming off of her shoulders. We both love them and agree that one of the witches should have horns. Vanessa suggests that the witches should have a wrapped and bound look, each one with a different binding. It's a great idea and we have our witches. Vanessa goes home to do some sketches.

Vanessa's costume renderings are terrific (Appendix B). She took pictures of the actors which she used as a template so there is a tremendous likeness of the actors in each rendering. Vanessa is a wonderfully skilled designer in that everything that you talk about in preparation meetings or over coffee ends up in the design exactly as you had imagined. The designs are spectacular and people will be talking about them after the show I'm certain. Even though the entire cast is in kilts, there is a tremendous variety of looks and each character has something to set them apart. It's excellent work.

Jon and I continue to hammer out details about the set. We go through several different versions of the stairs down to the ground level. Jon wants a very asymmetrical look to them, while I'm looking for more functionality as I would like as much playing area as possible. His early drafts, for example,

have stairs that not only go to the ground floor playing area but also down into the house. I have to lobby to cut these as I need that space for the actors to work on. There is no point in creating the down stage left and down stage right performing areas if we then sacrifice them for stairs that we'll never use.

We will only be able to build one tower as it turns out, due to budget and the lack of room in the stage right wings. Jon proposes that the second tower be Tybek that can slide on a curtain track in and out. It will be quick and effective, but my concern is that it will look like a shower curtain. Jon feels that a little weight at the bottom of the material will keep it taught. I also express concern that it might billow if people walk by it too quickly, but Jon doesn't feel that this will be an issue. If the material works out it will be a very cool design, and I'm comfortable going into rehearsal with the set that we have. It provides fantastic playing areas downstage and we should be able to get some fantastic looking lighting effects upstage of the proscenium for the more stylistic scenes.

In an early production meeting I request that costumes and make-up be available for the Saturday of tech rehearsal. I've been a professional actor in the United States for many years and it's our custom to add all the technical elements, including costumes, from the first day of tech. I was surprised to learn that at UBC the first day of tech is done in street clothes. It was confusing to me because so many technical elements depend on costumes: set changes, movement on stage, and lighting, to name but a few. But despite the best efforts of myself and my advisor Tom Scholte, I was told that we would do tech the way it was always done at UBC and that the demands of this production did not warrant a change. It was unfortunate, but as it turned out, not the most serious challenge that tech rehearsals would offer.

We don't start rehearsals officially until February 20<sup>th</sup>. Some of the cast is performing in *The*

*Idiot* on the Freddy Wood stage, and others are performing in two one act plays from George F. Walker's *Suburban Motel*. Luckily, and with the help of my extremely capable stage manager Belle Cheung, I'm able to arrange individual table work sessions with the cast prior to first rehearsal. These sessions prove invaluable. It's a luxury to have the time to sit down one on one with an actor and go through his character's entire journey. This is when I am able to get some real nuts and bolts work done with the text. My first session with each actor involves going through the script and simply translating the language, paraphrasing the lines for understanding, and examining the arc of the character. This is especially effective with the smaller roles in finding the story of their character.

I have made two roles, Attendant #1 and Attendant #2, out of the many servants, lords, and messengers in the show. Attendant #1 is Lady Macbeth's servant, and Attendant #2 is Macbeth's. In talking through their roles we find a very clear story that is actually full, moving, and different for each. Attendant #1, for example, loves Lady Macbeth completely. In her first scene she delivers the news that the King is coming and she can barely contain herself. She then is with Lady Macbeth when the King arrives (an honor) and before you know it she's attendant to a queen. Shortly thereafter, however, the Queen starts to act haughty and dismissive. The attendant witnesses Macbeth going mad at the feast, and hears her mistress lie about Macbeth 'often being this way due to an infirmity.' She gradually watches the queen slipping into madness and consults a doctor to try to help her. She has taken action above her station out of love for the queen. It's a lovely arc.

Attendant #2 has a similar arc in the early stages as Macbeth comes home with honors and then quickly becomes king. She too witnesses his madness at the feast, and then watches as he slowly turns into a monster. After the cavern scene she discovers that Macbeth is heading to Macduff's castle to harm Lady Macduff and her children. The attendant risks her life to go and warn Lady Macduff of the

danger, thus betraying her master and her King. Afterwards, terrified of her master, she reports that there are ten thousand soldiers as Macbeth mocks her white face- a face which is white from sheer terror. She returns one last time to tell the King that the Queen is dead before defiantly leaving his company without a bow and without being told to go. She is done with him now. They are relatively small characters, but we had a tremendous time finding the arc and story of each character.

Another wonderful revelation occurred during table work with Alex Pangburn who was playing Banquo in the show. We were discussing Act I, Sc. 8 and in particular the following section:

**Banquo**

Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven;  
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.  
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

We were focussing on why Banquo gives Fleance his sword and what exactly he is giving him when he says “Take thee that too.” Considering that the 'heavy summons' that he refers to in the following lines is the weight of the witches prophecy, it occurred to us that Banquo should be indulging the idea that his son might be king someday. While indulging that thought, perhaps he even dresses him like a king by placing a sword before him and a crown on his head? I wasn't sure where the crown would come from, but I was very excited about finding a physical manifestation of the intellectual indulgence.

In the second session with each actor I was able to delve even farther into the text by examining the rhythm text version of the script written by Neil Freeman. This text examines the First Folio for clues regarding the state of mind of the speaker as well as to how the lines might be delivered most

effectively. Neil is a professor at UBC and teaches a unit on Shakespeare to the intermediate BFA students each year. Luckily, and with great forethought, the faculty had arranged to have Neil teach this unit in the fall so that the intermediate years would be prepared for *Macbeth*. I sat in on the class as well, so that I would have a common vocabulary with the students as we approached the text. The class was marvelous, and I owe Neil no small amount of gratitude for the work that he did in preparing the students for speaking Shakespeare. The second sessions that I had with the actors proved equally fruitful in discovering characters and furthered everyone's understanding of the moments in the play.

With table work taken care of before the first official day of rehearsal, we were able to hit the ground running with blocking from day one. As I have mentioned it was my intention to block the entire play in the first week, but with the last day of the first week devoted entirely to fights I actually only had five days to block the show. Here's the schedule for the first week:

### **Macbeth Reading Break Schedule**

#### **Monday February 20<sup>th</sup>**

11-3pm: FIRST READ

3-4pm: Lunch

4-5pm: Act II, Sc 5

5-545: Act II, Sc 5 – ADD ROSS

545-7pm: Act II, Sc 6

#### **Tuesday February 21<sup>st</sup>**

11-3pm: Movement with Catriona

3-4pm: Lunch

4-430: Act I, sc. 2

430-545: Act I, sc. 3

545-7: Act I, sc. 3 – ADD LENNOX, ANGUS

#### **Wednesday February 22<sup>nd</sup>**

10-11: Act I, sc 4

11-1230: Act I, sc 5

1230-115: Act I, sc 6

1:15-2: Act I, sc 13  
2-3: Lunch  
3-4:15: Act I, sc 7  
4:15-5:15: Act I, sc 8 (Banquo, Fleance, Macbeth)  
5:15-6: Act I, sc 8 – ADD WITCHES, DUNCAN, ATTENDANT #1

**Thursday February 23<sup>rd</sup>**

11-12:30: Act I, sc 9  
12:30-2:30: Act I, sc 10  
2:30-3: Act I, sc 11  
3-4pm: Lunch  
4-4:30: Act I, sc 11A  
4:30-5: Act II, sc 2  
5-6:30: Act II, sc 3  
6:30-7: Act II, sc 7

**Friday February 24<sup>th</sup>**

11-11:30: Act I, sc 12  
11:30-12:30: Act I, sc 12A  
12:30-2: Act I, sc 15  
2-3: Lunch  
3-4:30: Act II, sc 1  
4:30-5:30: Act II, sc 4  
5:30-6: Act II, sc 8 (turret)  
6-6:30: Act II, sc 9 (field)  
6:30-7: Act II, sc 11 (field)

**Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>**

11-3pm: FIGHT SCENES, ALL CALLED  
3-4pm: lunch  
4-7pm: FIGHT SCENES, ALL CALLED

\*PLEASE BRING BALLET OR DANCE SHOES\*

*\*We will work Act I, sc 1 and Act I, sc 14, and also the end of the play.*

**Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>**

5:30-6:15: Act II, sc 10 (Turret)  
6:15-7:15: Act II, sc 12 (Turret)  
7:15-7:45: Act II, sc 12 (ALL)  
7:45-8: Break  
8-10: Stumblethrough

Ambitious, yes, but not ridiculous. The biggest challenge is keeping an open mind to impulse based blocking and allowing the actors to find their way. The blocking would change, of course, but

where ever possible I like the movement on stage to come from the actors impulses- it's the best way for the movement to seem natural and motivated as opposed to moving because you were told to do so. It is also just more organic, and I think the audience can ultimately tell.

There is a superstition in the theatre that *Macbeth* is a cursed play. It is considered bad luck to say the name of the play, which is why so many theatre artists refer to the play as 'The Scottish Play' or "Mackers". I'm not sure if I believe in the curse or not, but I am a bit of a traditionalist and like to respect the belief because it's one of the peculiarities that makes ours such a fun profession. Anyone looking for evidence of the curse in regards to this production would not have to look very far. On the morning of our first rehearsal our movement coach fell while teaching one of our witches a tap dance step (unrelated to *Macbeth* it should go without saying) and broke both her wrists. Our *movement* coach. We hadn't even had our first read of the script and we had already made a trip to the emergency room. It would not be our last.

The first week went very well indeed. The actors were focussed, there was a lightness and ease in the room, and we were tremendously productive. On Saturday we worked with Nick Harrison on the fights. Due to the fact that I could only pay Nick half of his usual salary, we hired him as a Fight Consultant. He would choreograph the fights and I would work the fights in rehearsals to lay in intention and specifics. Luckily I have a great deal of fight experience and had the ability to finesse the fights effectively and safely. We also had the benefit of our Assistant Stage Manager for fight choreography, Sarah Melo, who kept notes on the fights. After the fights were set, Sarah would also record videos of each fight and place them on a private YouTube channel for the fighters to use as reference. A great idea and one which I though was very 21<sup>st</sup> Century new media of us.

There was one complication that occurred in the first week when I had to fire an actor. Kyle Salive was cast as Murder #1/ Siward. Out of consideration for his schedule I had grouped the murder scenes together so that he would only have to rehearse Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (when everyone was called for fights) of the first week. On Wednesday night he emailed that he could not make Thursday's rehearsal, and on Thursday night he emailed that he could not make Friday's rehearsal because he had an audition. An audition for a TV show that would have shot during our first week of performances. It was clear to me that he was not committed to the production. I explained to him on Thursday evening that he would have to make a choice between the show and the audition. He chose the audition and I chose to replace him. I made a call to an actor named Charles Heffernan that I had been hoping to work with but whom I assumed was too busy. Luckily he was able to clear his schedule and we were fortunate to have him join our cast.

I have a revelation during blocking rehearsals and talk to Jon immediately. The turret needs a staircase spiraling down to the stage from the top. A staircase gives me levels to work with, allows for entrances and exits, and gives a finished look to the stage picture that wasn't there before. He is happy to oblige and agrees that it will help with a lot of things. He leaves quickly to start sketching.

The second week of rehearsal we start in on focussed scene work. In these rehearsals I was trying to combine the work that we had done at the table within the basic form that we had established in the first week. We are also spending some very productive hours with our substitute movement coach Catriona Leger. Catriona teaches a Commedia Dell'arte unit at UBC (among other things) and is a remarkable artist. She has been working with the witches primarily in terms of their form when they move unseen through the world, as well as their transitions into visible, physical creatures. I had a clear vision of the disjointed, violent feel for the transformations, but Catriona has been invaluable in

teaching the cohesiveness of group movement, the variety of movement available, as well as some other options that I had not considered. Catriona also suggested a sharp intake of breath to punctuate group movement. For example, when the witches turn their heads in unison to look at something or when an individual witch assumes the physicality of Macbeth before speaking a thought in his head. It's a wonderful addition and clarifies the physicality and its intention. It helps to keep the witches functioning as a unit, provides a cue for their group movements, and draws focus when appropriate.

After the second week, I am ever so slightly disappointed with the amount of choices that the actors were offering. As a director I would rather avoid telling the actors what to do in a given situation, preferring to rather choose between different options being offered by the actor. We have a stumble-through at the end of the second week and my advisor Tom Scholte agrees that the actors weren't quite bringing enough to the table. He sends an email to the acting company (well within his rights as a member of the faculty) encouraging them to step up their game and have the confidence to bring more of themselves to the characters and their choices.

Tom's email has a positive effect. In the third week of rehearsals the actors seem to be taking a more vested interest in their roles. I'm hearing "I think I'd like to try..." and "Maybe I could..." far more frequently and I'm happy to say "Of course, yes!" every time. People are getting off book at an appropriate pace and things are moving forward nicely. Every actor needs to be directed in a different way though, and I'm finding it difficult to adjust to directing such a large cast of differing processes. Spirits are high, however, and there seems to be a great deal of excitement for the show amongst the cast and crew. The stage management team is doing a fantastic job not only of keeping things running smoothly, but also of having as many props and other items ready for the actors to help them do their job. They are dedicated and talented and I feel lucky to have them.

The show has a good form and flow, and I feel that the story is clear and compelling. We have our last run through in the rehearsal hall on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> and it goes well. We are ready to move in to the space. Ready for the next level.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### On The Boards...

We move into the Freddy Wood. We quickly discover that the rehearsal hall was far different from the actual space, but we plow forward. Over the course of Monday and Tuesday evenings we start/stop our way through the whole play, adjusting as we go. On Wednesday and Thursday we will have run throughs of the play- or at least that's the plan.

We start Wednesday night with fight call as is the custom. During the fight with Macduff, running through the fight at half speed, Alexander (Macbeth) forgets to move his leg back before parrying a cut from Macduff. He hits himself in the knee. As a precaution he is taken to the emergency room. Luckily it's a bruise and he'll be fine, but for Wednesday we have to run through the show without Macbeth, which is no small task in a play titled *Macbeth*. I'm thinking about "The Curse" a little. Alexander returns for the Thursday run and it goes well. I have significantly more notes to give, of course, as we actually have our Macbeth as opposed to a disembodied voice reading his lines from the house and actors talking to the empty space where Macbeth would be standing.

Friday we have paper tech. Paper tech, for those of you unfamiliar, is when the stage manager, designers, and director sit down to talk through the show cue by cue. It's a vital part of preparing for tech weekend when all the technical aspects are added to the show. We get through it in about four hours which is actually pretty good. I find out that the first act has far more cues than the second, which will be an important consideration in scheduling tech weekend. I now that I need to schedule twice as much time for act one than act two. Good to know.

Later that evening, with the timings for the transitions now at my disposal, I talk to my nephew in Alaska to record the drum transitions. Sadly he is feeling ill and won't be able to record them that evening. I knew that I was leaving them to the last minute, but thought it was pointless to record them without knowing the timings. I was mistaken. This mistake proved fruitful, however. Scrambling to consider alternatives I found some recording of Japanese Taiko Drumming that was just exactly what I had imagined for the transitions- driving, tribal, and violent, they were perfect. I called my sound designer and apologized for the last minute change. She was able to edit two place holder cues for Saturday, and spent the days all the way to Opening Night editing the drum cues to fit the transitions. In the end they sounded fantastic. The schedule for tech weekend is as follows:

**SATURDAY, MARCH 17**

8:30am Stage Management called  
9am Running crew called (Setup, orientation, practice scene changes etc)  
10am Al, Mitch, Matthew, Alex, John, Charles, Alen called  
10:30am Rest of company called  
Dressers, Makeup Assistants called  
Introductions, orientation, safety talk  
11am Begin Cue to Cue (Q2Q)  
2pm LUNCH  
3pm Continue Q2Q  
6pm DINNER  
7pm Continue Q2Q  
10pm DAY END

**SUNDAY, MARCH 18**

8:30am Stage Management called  
9am TBA, Running crew called  
11am LUNCH  
12pm Aidan arrives – sound check, levels, etc  
1pm Actors called  
1pm Work scenes with Aidan  
3pm TBA, blocking in kilts  
4pm Carraig & Maire arrive – work scenes  
4:30pm DINNER  
5pm Dressers/Makeup Assistants called  
5:30pm Prep for Full Dress  
6:30pm Fight Call  
7pm FULL DRESS  
9:30pm Cast & crew photo, out of costumes  
Notes (time permitting)

Tech moves quite slowly but is productive. There are over 65 cast and crew members working on this show, some of whom have never worked on a play before. There is a bit of a learning curve to which I am unaccustomed, but we get through the first day of tech having run through the entire show. Though, of course, with the bagpiper or the Macduff children who will be arriving on Sunday. The set isn't quite finished and the Tyvek has a very definite drape look to it, but the lights look fantastic.

Sunday morning does not start off well. I receive an email from my sister in law informing me that they had missed their flight from Alaska and won't arrive in time for rehearsal. (The curse?) This means that the tech dress rehearsal scheduled for that evening will be missing several actors and scenes. We rearrange the schedule (there is always plenty to do), work Aidan Caves (the piper) into the show, and work transitions which are still quite slow. The music and the pipes sound terrific. Sunday late afternoon the costume, hair, and makeup crew arrives, and we prepare for our first full tech dress.

I'm impressed that the actors are able to bring so much of what we have rehearsed to the stage with so many new elements. The tech dress on Sunday night goes well and everyone is pleased with the run. Here is just a section of my notes to give you an idea of where we stand:

#### SUNDAY – TECH RUN

Hello my dears!

I was honestly very, very pleased with your effort tonight! Your ability to retain focus with the new and myriad set, costume, and prop details that you were dealing with, and considering as tired as you were, was really very impressive.

You made wonderful leaps in clarity of intention and consistency of arc, and actually the costumes and lights were encouraging you to make strong choices to reinforce the work we've done. I really hope you feel confident that we are on the right track, because I certainly feel so.

We are, of course, hammering out a lot of technical details, please trust that we will take care of our end and provide you with a fast moving, breathless production to match your performance of same.

So now, a few notes- please forgive my lack of encouraging, positive notes- there were so many exciting moments that I apologize for not listing them. Please assume that if I'm not mentioning it, I'm very, very happy with it!

Matt- I/2 please lose breathlessness, people think you had to run from the fight  
Matt- please stay upstage of Pippa when she crosses you, don't counter down after she does so

Witches- blocking- let light in, heath. please watch each other and if your in another's light, adjust

Melanie- closer to Tracy during first witch diagonal towards mackers, heath  
Alex- stay spooked by witches when you cross behind, you get too comfortable too early...

Matt- come on stage farther to deliver news to Mackers please. Think of house L

Pippa- 'give thee thanks' excellent feeling of the importance of Macker's effort

Matt- please find stillness on heath. The fidgeting steals your power.

Al- 'two truths are told' this is exciting news, please don't slow it down

Matt/Pippa/Alex, dont stand in a line, Matt/Pippa together, Alex slightly apart and facing DS

Joel- "was a gentleman", don't cross in so much to Malcolm, a few steps will do

Joel- embarrass Mackers with sincerity of your thanks, careful of laughing after- its too important

Alex/Joel- 'there if I grow' section cue pickup

Georgia- need to get back in line with witches after 'prince of cumberland'

Christine- "is not thy master coming"- never understand line after, please slow

Christine- "and when goes hence"- too serious, just get the info, keep a little of the excitement

Joel- please wear the crown as you arrive at Dunsinane

Christine- line with 'dignity' in it welcoming Duncan- too fast

Alex- talk to your boy after hug- it's great to see him and you're alive after battle!

Al- "not cast aside so soon"- ask for permission, don't be dismissive of her.

You're floating an idea-

(have you ever said something strongly yet still asked for permission?)

Christine- careful of overly strong "We Fail", don't be his instructor, be the love of his life!

Witches- ADDITION. At the end of the line before "will it not be received"

there should be a head turn to Al

Fleance- after you're given his sword- look at your dad "what is he doing", enjoy laugh with him

Karina- stand with your back to tower, chin down after you enter with mackers;

Alex- "the like to you". Stare at him. Awkward moment. Then go.

(continued...)

On Monday I was able to spend some time with my nephew and niece and put them into the show. I also had some wonderful assistance from Ed Macilwaine, a local piper and former instructor of Aidan Caves, who helped Aidan and Carraig with the musical arrangements and their pipes. Mondays run of the show went well but my biggest concern at the moment are the transitions; they are taking an awfully long time and the cues are not being called as concisely as I had hoped. My stage manager Belle is very frustrated that there are so many changes day to day and I understand her frustration. She is understandably eager to call the show consistently from night to night, but we're not there yet.

I consult with my advisor to try to see if I can set up a time to work just on transitions. He informs me that I can, and I'm fortunate to arrange an hour with Belle and her crew just to finesse transitions on Wednesday before the Preview. It is incredibly helpful and the transitions tighten considerably. We have a good preview and while I'd like a few more previews to tighten the transitions even more, there is simply no time.

*Macbeth* opens on March 22, 2012 to a large and enthusiastic house. The company delivered and their performances were assured, clear, and exciting. The costumes looked brilliant and were a major hit with the audience. The Tyvek on the set never lost its drape quality, which was unfortunate, but otherwise the set design worked well. The lighting design looked fantastic. The sound design was evocative and compelling. I was proud of the production and pleased be able to let it go into its run.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### After All Is Said And Done...

*Macbeth* closed on March 31, 2012. We enjoyed good sized audiences for the first weekend and the houses grew steadily through the week until we were just shy of selling out at the last weekend- which is no small feat for the Freddy Wood. I was very pleased to see the show become tighter over the course of the run, and felt that the company maintained a high level of intensity and connection. We received very favorable reviews, which is always gratifying, and the word of mouth was excellent.

“Some of the best stage images I have seen in a long time...This was a visual *Macbeth*, a *Macbeth* of style and beauty” (Gay Vancouver)

“A stylish and fresh vision of the play...From its passionate cast to its edgy aesthetic, Theatre UBC’s *Macbeth* is brimming with youth, vigour, and the special excitement that happens when emerging talent get their hands on Shakespeare’s great words.”  
(Lauramurraypr)

“The director, Patrick New, made each character in the play memorable, regardless of the role’s scope, making them an invaluable part of the play.” (Online review)

The show was not a complete success however. The weakest part of the show, in my opinion, was the transitions. The action and scenes move very quickly in *Macbeth* and if I had the chance to do the show again I'm certain that I would try to have the scenes flow more quickly from one into the other. Although the sound cues were wonderfully evocative, the sheer number of blackouts and their length resulted in a choppy feeling as the story unfolded. Sometimes you need a blackout for the audience to digest what has transpired or to suggest the passing of time. After Macduff's children are murdered, for example, or before the violent vignettes of Act II. Blackouts such as this have to be earned, however, by quickly moving through the scene changes that don't require a pause in the action.

I was very pleased with the design elements, but felt that the use of Tyvek was a poor choice. It billowed as actors passed it and had large folds that exposed it as draped fabric. My intention was to have stone, steel, and earth as the physical elements of this world, and I believe that we fell short of this goal. In future I'll have to be more vigilant about having a firm understanding of the design elements and will be more vigilant about deadlines for model presentation and paint elevations.

This was a big show. I'm incredibly grateful to the UBC Theatre Department for allowing me the opportunity to put on a show of this scale. It felt at times like a giant engine, comprised of many complicated parts, that took considerable effort to assemble, but roared when it was finally firing on all cylinders. As I said in the pitch meeting, this production may not be possible in the professional world. A cast and crew of this size would be cost prohibitive, it would be very difficult to find a bagpiper who would commit to a full length run, and cost of building that many costumes (which was achieved with the assistance of many free student hours) would have been astronomical. It was a perfect storm of opportunity and it all came together. In the end I was pleased with the product and proud of the story that we told.

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## **APPENDIX A:**

### **MACBETH BACKPAGE**

#### **Prologue**

Scotland, 13<sup>th</sup> Century. A desert place. Thunder and lightning. A fierce battle. Violence, Glory, Power. He who sacrifices his conscience to ambition burns a picture to obtain the ashes.

#### **Story**

Macbeth, a Scottish nobleman and warrior, obtains promotion and the favor of his King (Duncan) when his excellence on the field of battle helps turn back an invading army- a victory that is quickly followed by Macbeth and his fellow warrior Banquo meeting three witches on a heath who predict that Macbeth will be made Thane of Cawdor and eventually King, and that Banquo's children will be kings. Macbeth is made Thane of Cawdor and shortly thereafter King after King Duncan, visiting Macbeth's castle (Dunsinane) for an evening, is murdered by Macbeth (assisted by his wife) who was able to shift the blame for the murder onto two of Duncan's henchmen, although he becomes increasingly paranoid about the security of his throne and embarks on a series of terrible events including the attack of Banquo and his son Fleance (resulting in Banquo's death whose ghost returns to haunt Macbeth at a great feast), the murder of Macduff's wife and children, and other unmentioned horrors. The Scottish Nobles, who had gone into hiding or left Scotland altogether out of fear for their safety, gather an army and return to seize the country back from Macbeth, who waits confidently in his castle having been told by a second visit from the witches that “no man of woman born shall harm Macbeth” and that he would be safe until “Birnam wood come to Dunsinane”- predictions that come true when

the army approaches Dunsinane hidden as a forest, and when Macduff, who was “from his mother's womb untimely ripped,” beheads Macbeth and secures the throne for Duncan's son and true successor Malcolm.

### **Theme**

Power achieved through ambition and violence leads to ambition's use of violence to maintain that power. Ambition is desire- in moderation it provides motivation and determination to achieve one's goals; but in excess it is a slippery slope on which man's heart, mind, and very self may be lost.

### **Long Distance Mood**

Lord of the Flies in a Braveheart world. “He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling” -William Golding, Lord of the Flies

## APPENDIX B:

### COSTUME RENDERINGS OF VANESSA IMESON



