

INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

and
Indiana Bell
present



Macbeth

February 6 to March 3

STUDY GUIDE

Welcome

to IRT's Classic Theatre for Youth Program

We are excited to be launching this new component of our Educational Outreach Program and hope that you, the students for whom this program was designed, will find your experience in the theatre, whether it is your first or your fiftieth, a thrilling one.

The following notes have been compiled to aid you in imaginatively preparing to see the production of *Macbeth*. Because Shakespeare wrote his plays specifically for performance, without much thought that they would ever be published (nor studied in high school English classes), his plays attain their fullest meaning on the stage. Things that you may have found difficult to understand when reading the play will come to life on the stage, as actors embody the characters and interpret Shakespeare's poetic language.

A person doesn't become an experienced theatregoer overnight. Background knowledge and perhaps more important, specific questions can be carried into each performance to enable the viewer to completely understand and enjoy the play. Here's an example: one of the chief challenges presented to the actor who plays Macbeth is the degree to which he should be portrayed as a ruthless killer and the degree to which he must be sympathetic to the audience in order to sustain interest in him for the course of the play. How does this production address that problem? Another question might be: how are the "weird sisters" portrayed in this

production? Are they meant to be completely supernatural, or do they seem to bear some relationship to the society depicted in the play? What are the effects of the choices?

A helpful device for constructing the questions is the reporter's "checklist" of WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and HOW. WHO? invites consideration of the play's characters and their possible interpretations. WHAT? suggests questions of plot and structure. WHERE? and WHEN? raise questions of setting—both broadly, in time and place and narrowly on the stage. HOW? invites consideration of theatre technique.

Considering such "performance questions" before you come to the theatre can instill an open-mindedness toward the performance that will itself almost guarantee a better theatre experience. Many people do not realize that a script is just a score, open to widely different interpretations by a director and actors, so they come to a performance expecting to see the play they imagined as they read the text. Unless we are prepared for the unexpected, such preconceptions will interfere with our full enjoyment of the performance. The best art experience has often been described as a balance between the expected (what we imagined when we read the text) and the unexpected (the imaginative ideas in staging and delivery created by the production staff). Hopefully the production will surprise you, even

though you already know the play's plot.

For the theatre experience to truly take place, the audience must become active participants in the play. Accustomed as we are to TV and film, in which attention is focused for us by the camera's eye, people too often come to the theatre as passive observers. A play is not a thing but an event, created when the audience actively participates in a performance. This participation happens as you are drawn into the production, experience its building tension, the excitement of the sword fights, the emotions of the leading characters. The feeling created in the room as you become involved in the production is very influential and important to the actors: they listen to your reactions and incorporate them into each performance, making each performance somewhat different from the others.

We hope you're looking forward to experiencing *Macbeth* as much as we are looking forward to having you as our audience. We have consistently found our student audiences to be our most responsive, which makes the experience between the audience and the performers an especially vital one. And what other play can offer witches and ghosts, battle scenes, bloodshed and bravery: all within a magnificently poetic, concise script written by the greatest playwright of all time?

Indiana Repertory
Theatre's

Classic Theatre for Youth Program

presents

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

February 6-
March 3, 1989

Sponsored by



Indiana Bell

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by Gibbs Murray

Macbeth: A Synopsis of the Plot

Act I: Macbeth and Banquo, conquering generals in the service of Duncan, King of Scotland, have succeeded in putting down a rebellion led by the Thane (or duke) of Cawdor. The fame of their deeds reaches the King before they do. While crossing a heath on their return home from battle, they meet three witches, who hail Macbeth first with his own title (Thane of



Witches with familiars. Woodcut from 17th century, as reproduced in *Book of Days*, 19th century

Glamis), then as Thane of Cawdor and "king hereafter." Banquo also demands a prophecy, and he is told that he shall be the father of kings though he himself will never rule. Still puzzling over these prophetic words, the two are greeted by other lords dispatched by King Duncan, who confirm that Macbeth has been named Thane of Cawdor. Thus, part of the witches' prophecy has already come true. Macbeth's hopes are stirred that the rest of their prophecy may also hold true and that he might become king. When Macbeth and Banquo join up with the rest of the army, Macbeth is

congratulated on his promotion; then King Duncan names his son Malcolm heir to the throne and tells Macbeth that they plan to visit Macbeth's castle as a mark of royal favor. Macbeth starts home to receive the King, sending news of the visit and the strange prophecies ahead to his wife in a letter. She seizes upon her husband's dreams of power even more resolutely than he and when he arrives home she is determined that Macbeth shall take the opportunity of Duncan's visit to usurp the throne.

Act II: Banquo, stirred by the prophecy on the heath that his descendants will be kings, fights down his impulse to hasten the event. With the encouragement of his ambitious wife, Macbeth formulates a brutal plot to kill King Duncan, making it appear that his servants are responsible. Macbeth's conscience surfaces even before the deed is done, but the unflinching Lady Macbeth calms his nerves and drives him forward. Lady Macbeth drags Duncan's bedchamber servants and Macbeth stabs the King while he sleeps. But Macbeth flees the scene of the crime before the setup is complete, and Lady Macbeth must return to Duncan's bedchamber to place the daggers and smear the servants with blood to seal their apparent guilt. In the morning when the murder is discovered, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, pretending grief, join the mourners. To divert suspicion, Macbeth kills the grooms as

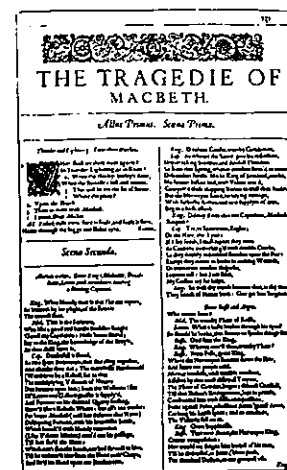
though angered by their denial of the deed. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, fearing a similar fate, flee to England, thus casting guilt for the King's death on them. Macbeth is crowned king, but the honor seems incomplete when he remembers the prophecy that Banquo's sons, not his, will reign in Scotland.

Act III: Knowing that Banquo suspects him of Duncan's murder, Macbeth plots the assassination of

Macbeth utters words which lead his nobles to suspect his guilt; to cover for her husband's loose tongue, Lady Macbeth dismisses the guests, claiming that her husband is ill. The nobles learn that Malcolm has been joined in England by Macduff, one of the most powerful of the Scot's lords, whose defection to Malcolm's side speaks of a coming rebellion against Macbeth's claim to the throne.

Act IV: Macbeth visits the witches again and begs them to prophesy his fate. They answer his demands by showing him a series of apparitions. The first is of an armed head, warning him to beware Macduff; the second is of a bloody child, which promises that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth"; the third is of a child drowned, with a tree in his hand, which promises Macbeth safety until Birnam Wood shall come to Dunsinane. These prophecies bolster Macbeth's courage, for they seem to suggest that it would be impossible to conquer him, and yet the witches conclude their prophecy by tormenting Macbeth with a vision of Banquo's line of kings. In hopes of securing his safety, Macbeth issues orders to have Macduff's wife and children murdered. When news of this horrible deed reaches Macduff in England, Malcolm and the English forces join with Macduff to rid Scotland of the tyrannical King. With ten thousand soldiers they set out for Scotland.

Act V: In Dunsinane Castle, Lady Macbeth, wracked with guilt, walks and talks in her sleep, reliving



First Folio, printed in 1623

Banquo and his son, Fleance. He invites them to his coronation banquet, intending to have them killed on the road as they travel to Dunsinane. Fleance escapes, but Macbeth's hired killers succeed in killing Banquo. At the banquet Macbeth praises the absent Banquo, and the murdered ghost of Banquo appears to Macbeth, seizing him with terror. Unseen by the other lords and Lady Macbeth, the apparition takes a seat at the banquet table, causing Macbeth to behave wildly. In this state,

Macbeth: A Haunted World of Images

Macbeth represents some of the most skillful writing and magnificent poetry in dramatic history. The play is a work of extraordinary compression. There are no subplots to intrude on the thrust of the tragic action, which is relieved only by a single comic moment: in the Porter's drunken ramblings following the murder of Duncan. The compact dramatic construction of the play is further heightened by the playwright's careful use of verse. The bulk of the play is written in the usual iambic pentameter or five-stress rhythm. An example of perfect iambic pentameter is contained in Macbeth's first line in the play:

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Shakespeare establishes an eerily hypnotic tone by writing the witches' scenes in trochaic tetrameter, or four-stress rhythm. An example is contained in one of

their lines that nearly echoes the image in Macbeth's line above.

Fair is foul and foul is fair.

Shakespeare weaves a tapestry of interlocked images in *Macbeth*. Here is a list of a few to listen for that recur frequently throughout the play, gaining resonance through their profusion.

Blood

Very few lines pass in this play without words that evoke blood; it is used repeatedly to suggest the essence of life, a precious liquid, the spilling of which means treachery.

Wine & Drink

Lady Macbeth, Duncan's servants, the Porter all suffer from the abuses of alcohol; Macbeth toasts Banquo and his ghost appears. It is treated

rushes into battle. He kills young Siward, son of the English general, and then comes face to face with Macduff. Still confident that he cannot be defeated by one "of woman born," Macbeth challenges Macduff, only to learn that Macduff was "from his mother's womb untimely ripped", meaning that he was born by Caesarian section, not by natural childbirth. Thus the last of the prophecies comes true, Macduff kills Macbeth in single combat and Malcolm is crowned king of Scotland.

as a destructive force that alters man's senses unnaturally.

Night & Darkness

Many images collide in the play that suggest the horrors of the night; almost the entire play takes place at night when shadows loom and strange sounds echo hauntingly across the landscape. Darkness (in the form of blindness) is invoked to cover up sin. Macbeth's is a world upon which the sun seldom shines.

Sleeplessness

"Macbeth does murder sleep"—as Macbeth begins his sequence of murders, he becomes the victim of horrible nightmares which eventually afflict Lady Macbeth too, ultimately driving her to suicide. Sleep is depicted as a balm that heals the innocent and deserts the guilty, leaving Macbeth in a waking nightmare of fear.

Disease & Medicine

Images suggesting disease reflect both sin and Macbeth himself who becomes the disease from which Scotland suffers. Doctors are curiously inept in the play.

Clothing

"Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" Macbeth's new honors sit ill upon him, like badly fitting garments and this idea is picked up and carried through recurring images of dress.

Children

Duncan, Banquo, Macduff, even Lady Macbeth, are parents. Only Macbeth is childless, and is therefore totally obsessed with his own ambition, that makes murder itself seem to be a lesser evil than failure to achieve the crown and so satisfy his wife.

Lying & "Equivocation"

In order to cover up his crime, Macbeth must lie and continue to lie to insure his own safety. Equivocation—meaning words or expressions capable of having double meaning, used with a view to mislead—is a common practice in this play. Opposites become interchangeable: murder becomes both "foul and fair," and nothing is at it seems. Macbeth, by his own actions, has robbed life, and language, of meaning: "A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Synopsis continued

hideous memories of her crimes. Macbeth prepares to repel the English invaders, whose approach has been reported. To conceal their numbers and their movements, Malcolm has ordered each soldier to cut and carry a bough from Birnam Wood. The wood then literally moved on Dunsinane, thus fulfilling one of the witch's prophecies. He learns this at the same time that he is told that Lady Macbeth has committed suicide. Robbed of his strongest ally and deserted by his followers, Macbeth

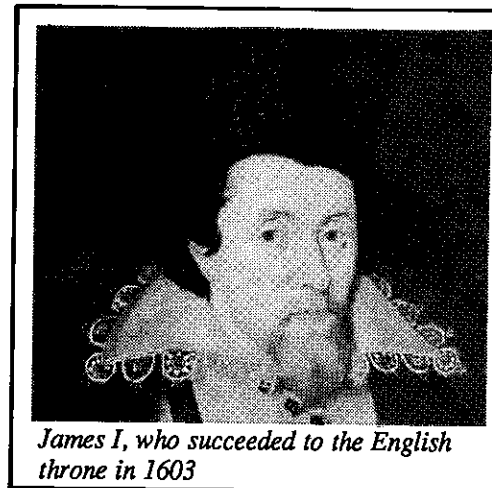
Historical Background of *Macbeth*

In 1603, Queen Elizabeth of England died leaving no heir. Her nearest surviving relative was a distant cousin, James VI, King of Scotland, whose mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been beheaded by Elizabeth for her rival claim to the English throne. James suffered the turmoil attendant on this heritage and believed that much of his family's suffering and his own

was probably first performed by command at court in 1606, to celebrate a visit from James' brother-in-law, King Christian IV of Denmark.

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays. Two reasons may account for this: James I was known to nap during long performances and Shakespeare was bargaining that a brief, action-packed play would retain the royal attention. His guest, the King of Denmark, presumably spoke no English and could not, therefore, be expected to follow intricacies of plot and language. The compression of the language in *Macbeth* also seems to indicate that the play was written, or at least finished, in great haste; this is also indicated by the lack of subplots and the fact that the minor characters are less developed than in other Shakespeare plays.

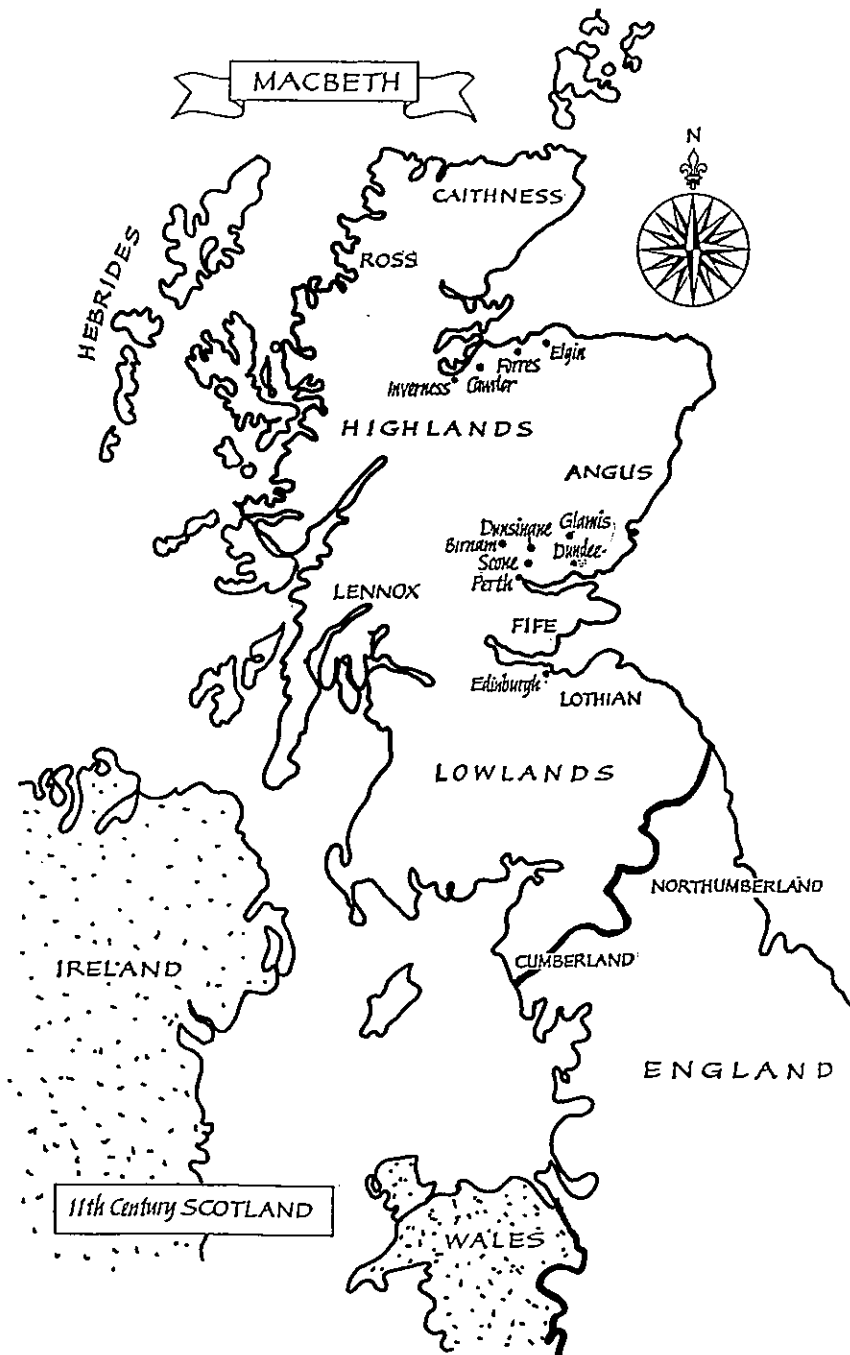
There can be no doubt that the play was intended to please its royal audience: James was a direct descendant of the honorable General Banquo in the play. But there is some historical indication that Shakespeare's plan backfired: King James was apparently less than pleased to see a play based on the assassination of Scottish kings and the realistic portrayal of the witches is likely to have terrified a man as obsessed with witchcraft as James was. Evidence suggests that the king banned performances of the play for five years. It was produced only once again in Shakespeare's lifetime, in 1611 at the Globe



James I, who succeeded to the English throne in 1603

fears were due to a conspiracy of witches. In 1595, James published a book on the occult called *Daemonologie* and during his reign over fifty women accused of witchcraft were burned at the stake.

Scholars agree that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* especially for King James: the king being the patron of Shakespeare's theatrical company, it is easy to imagine the playwright hatching the idea to create a play combining ancient Scottish history with the occult, both subjects of considerable interest to the new king. *Macbeth*



Theatre, which burned to the ground shortly after launching, perhaps, the superstitious belief that a curse surrounds the play and its productions through history.

In speculating about the creation of *Macbeth*, the critics tell a persuasive tale of Shakespeare skimming the history of Scotland, discovering there "a strange, bleak, haunted world . . . where savage beings fulfill the passionate cycle of their dreadful lives as if under enchanted compulsion." As a source, Shakespeare drew his ideas from Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), which presented a relatively factual picture of 11th century Scotland: a barbaric time when the nation was just emerging from a group of warring tribes. But Shakespeare altered and compressed the facts to shape his own story of Macbeth: an honorable general who is driven by his own ambition and his wife's exhortations to act upon the prophecies of witches and usurp the throne of Scotland.

This issue of usurpation—of seizing a position of power by force—has changed through history from an accepted method of determining leadership to a horrible crime against society. We know that in 1034, when Duncan became King of Scotland, there was no established hierarchy that assured the throne to the firstborn child. Bloodshed had been used for centuries to obtain power, and regicide (king murder) occurred with monotonous frequency in early Scottish history. It was, in fact, an implicit feature of their system of succession. Therefore, Macbeth, as a cousin to the King Duncan and a powerful general, had as much right to the throne as anyone.

In Shakespeare's time however, right of succession was established as passing from father to eldest son: the succession of James I from Queen Elizabeth challenged this accepted belief, and the chaos created when Elizabeth died without declaring an heir

cannot have been too dissimilar to the chaos created by Macbeth's murder of Duncan. In this manner, Shakespeare was dramatizing a real concern of his society through the metaphor of history.

Shakespeare was perhaps a bit too

circles as "the Scottish play," is treated with caution and respect.

Macbeth has drawn the attention of generations of leading actors: from David Garrick, Edwin Booth and Henry Irving in the 19th century to John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Paul Scofield, Michael Redgrave, Alec Guinness, Ian McKellen and most recently, Christopher Plummer in the 20th century, the Scottish king has provided a beckoning challenge. Lady Macbeth has also attracted the attention of leading actresses through the centuries: Ellen Terry, Sarah Siddons, Judith Anderson, Vivien Leigh and most recently Glenda Jackson have assayed this spirited spouse who woos her husband into bloody tyranny. Shakespeare's play has been adapted into opera, symphony and ballet, but most notably into films by Orson Welles in 1950, Akira Kurosawa (titled *Throne of Blood*) in 1957 and Roman Polanski in 1971.



AT ONCE, GOOD NIGHT

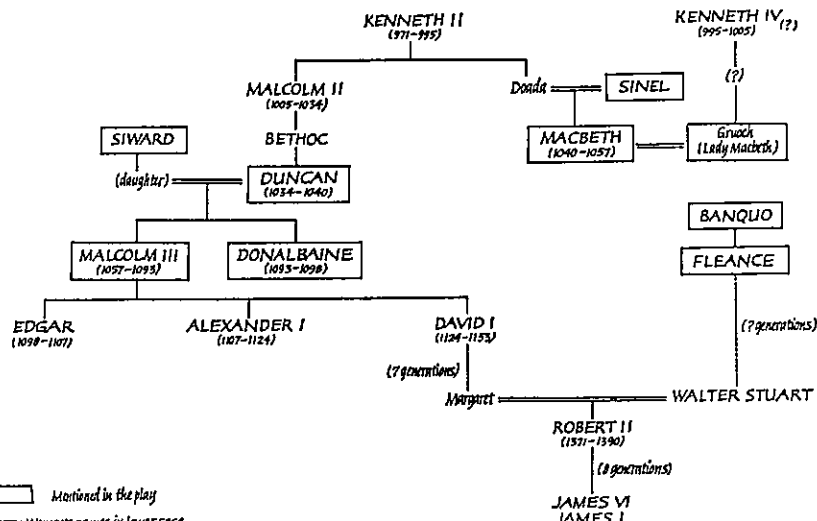
Lady Macbeth. Illustration by Byam Shaw, *The Chiswick Shakespeare*, 1899

realistic in one other aspect of the play: the witches incantations are thought to derive from an actual medieval witches' spell. Consequently, hundreds of horror stories about mishaps during rehearsal and performance of the play. No one knows just when *Macbeth* developed the reputation it holds among theatre people for being jinxed, but the play, which is whisperingly referred to in theatrical



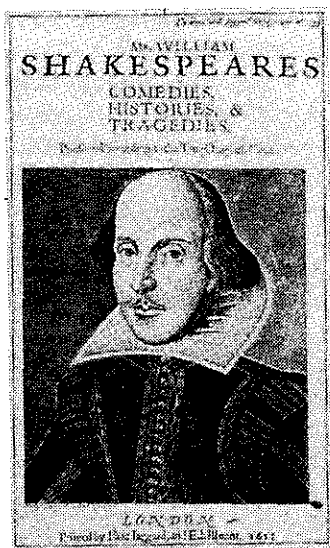
David Garrick, the most famous of the 18th century Macbeths

MACBETH



Shakespeare's Life

Although William Shakespeare is generally considered the greatest dramatist in the English language, little is known of a factual nature about his life. A handful of legal documents verify his existence, but much of what historians know about Shakespeare has been creatively reconstructed from general knowledge about the



Frontispiece from First Folio, 1623, with likeness of William Shakespeare

historic period and life in that time.

He was baptized in the Church of England at Stratford upon Avon, a Warwickshire market town, on April 26, 1564, which leads us to believe that he was born on April 23 because it was the custom in those days to baptize children about three days after their birth. His father John was a glove maker who became High Bailiff of Stratford, a position very much like our mayor. His mother, Mary Arden

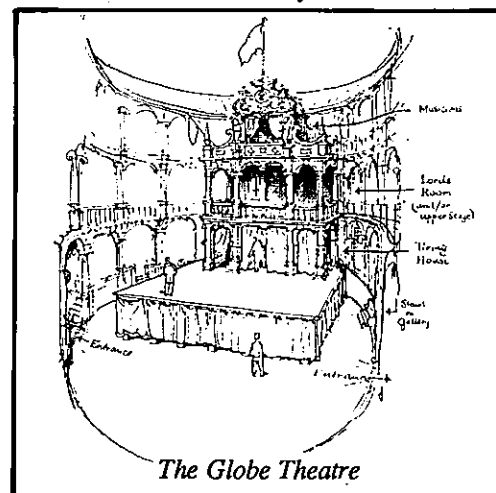
Shakespeare, was the eldest daughter of a wealthy landowner, and William was her eldest son. William, with his three younger brothers and two younger sisters, grew up in a middle-class family of good local repute.

As the son of a leading citizen and public official, Shakespeare would have been expected to go to school as soon as he had learned to read and write. The Stratford grammar school, one of the town's prized institutions, was excellent by comparison to similar schools in bigger towns. School was in session in summer and winter, and students attended for nine hours a day. The curriculum was limited, consisting almost entirely of Latin—grammar, reading, writing and recitation. It is possible that as an older student, Shakespeare might have had the opportunity to act out some of the fine classical plays written in Latin as part of a school assignment.

By the time Shakespeare was a youth, many travelling theatre companies of significance had visited Stratford, so it is fair to guess that Shakespeare had seen some of them and admired their art. One of the leading companies was the Earl of Leicester's Men (named after their patron), led by James Burbage, who built the first permanent theatre structure in London when Shakespeare was twelve. Burbage's son Richard was destined to become Shakespeare's future colleague and friend. If one side of young Shakespeare's life was dominated by the stern discipline of school and religious

morality, the other suggests the color and enthusiasm of the medieval world. From this contrast must have come eventually the impulse that sent Shakespeare to London and theatrical fame.

The next fact that exists regarding Shakespeare's life seems to suggest that his path to London was not a direct one: a document dated November 27, 1582 states that at age 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years his senior. Six months later, Shakespeare's eldest child, Susanna, was born. Two years later he



became the father of twins, Hamnet and Judith. Little is known of Shakespeare's life at this time: he might have worked as a school teacher in Stratford. In any case it is clear that by the early 1590's Shakespeare was very much a part of the theatrical scene in London, although we know nothing of the circumstances by which he left Stratford and his family to become an actor and playwright in the city. It is sufficient to note that by 1594 Shakespeare was established at the center of theatrical activity, for he is recorded as a shareholder, along

with Richard Burbage, in the famed Globe Theatre, located on the south bank of the Thames, across from the Tower of London.

Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, several narrative poems and over 150 sonnets in the next fifteen years. By the turn of the century he was the most popular playwright in London and his company enjoyed a unique advantage in the city's highly competitive theatrical world. He seems to have attained some degree of wealth and prestige, for he was granted a coat of arms, thus officially making him a gentleman, and bought sizeable pieces of real estate in and around Stratford with his earnings. His plays also exhibit not only a fine sense of poetry and stagecraft, but an excellent awareness of the political and literary atmosphere in which he lived. They were tempestuous times socially and politically and Shakespeare used his plays metaphorically to suggest how order could be made out of chaos in a changing society. By 1604 his company was named The King's Men, for they had attracted the favorable attention of the new monarch, King James I. Their fortunes continued to rise as their plays drew well at the Globe, and the number of command performances at Court began to double and triple. It may be significant that most of Shakespeare's great tragedies—*Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*—were written within the first five years of the new century. It suffices to say that, within a single decade, Shakespeare created a wealth of drama, some of it comic, some tragic, such as the world has never seen.

Notes from the Director

By Paul Frellick, IRT Resident Director

The Scotland in *Macbeth* is a violent and bloody place—the play opens during one war and ends with another, and between these confrontations there are enough private battles to fill three plays. Violence is a way of life for Macbeth and his contemporaries: it is the only means available to settle disputes, to establish authority, or to advance within the society. For Macbeth, it is also the only way to take his destiny into his own hands and assert his manhood, rather than passively hope that someday he may benefit from his king's generosity.

Macbeth declines to trust in that generosity; he knows all too well that trust is something no one in this society can afford. Duncan, the king, built an "absolute trust" on the Thane of Cawdor, which only enabled the Thane to plot a revolt

that almost succeeded in overthrowing Duncan's reign. This is a world fraught with deception, where any ally may well be an enemy in disguise, where the appearance of good will has replaced the thing itself. Lady Macbeth advises her husband to "look like th'innocent flower/ But be the serpent under't;" he later tells her that "False face must hide what the false heart doth know." The Macbeths are, in effect, the perfect products of the world they inhabit. They have learned the rules of the game.

It is a game with many players, all of whom seem to have something to hide. Banquo, Macbeth's friend (certainly a relative term in this society) suspects that Macbeth is guilty of Duncan's murder, but he says nothing to anyone and makes no attempt to

Shakespeare's Life continued

Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616—his 52nd birthday—and is buried in the Church chancel in Stratford. The epitaph, perhaps written by Shakespeare himself, carved on his gravestone reads:

Good friend for Jesus sake forbear,
To dig the dust enclosed here!
Blest be the man that spares these
stones,

And curst be he that moves my
bones.

The greatest testament to Shakespeare's genius occurred in 1623, when two of his fellow actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, cooperated with a London

printer in publishing a collected edition of Shakespeare's plays. Many of the plays had never been published, so it is safe to say that Heminge and Condell reconstructed some of the texts from memory or from a stage manager's promptbook. In any case the first Folio, as this first collection has come to be called, is a document of great historic and literary importance, for it preserved for posterity some of the greatest writing in the English language, allowing us to study and perform Shakespeare's plays over 400 years later and for generations to come.

avenge the crime. Even Macduff, as heroic a character as any in Shakespeare's plays, cannot confide in his wife and instead sneaks secretly out of the country. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, know instinctively that they are not safe after their father is killed—"where we are," says Donalbain, "There's daggers in men's smiles." They don't know who the guilty party is, but in this

last impediment to the successful reign he and Lady Macbeth can share. He comes to believe that he can break the cycle of violence he is in fact perpetuating, rationalizing his acts as necessary evils that will make possible the realization of his dreams.

The weird sisters that predict Macbeth's rise and fall know better. They are outsiders in this world, displaced from homes within the castle walls and forced to scavenge through the battlefield for their sustenance. Their perspective on the events of the play is removed and objective. They have seen kings come and go, seen ambitious men and women force their way into positions of power, seen the wars fought for control of the society, and they know that they will see it all again. Their visions of the future may well be supernaturally aided, but the lessons of the past are more than enough to suggest that the violent actions of Macbeth's world will only lead to further mistrust, fear and bloodshed.

These are terms, of course, familiar to our own world as well. From the global hostilities embodied in terrorism and military actions, to the strong-arm tactics of Wall Street, to the crime in the streets of the cities, violent acts and mistrust continue to lead to ever-greater atrocities. "All our yesterdays have lighted fools/ The way to dusty death," Macbeth says after the death of his wife; if we too continue to repeat the past instead of learning from it, he might be pronouncing our own epitaph as well.

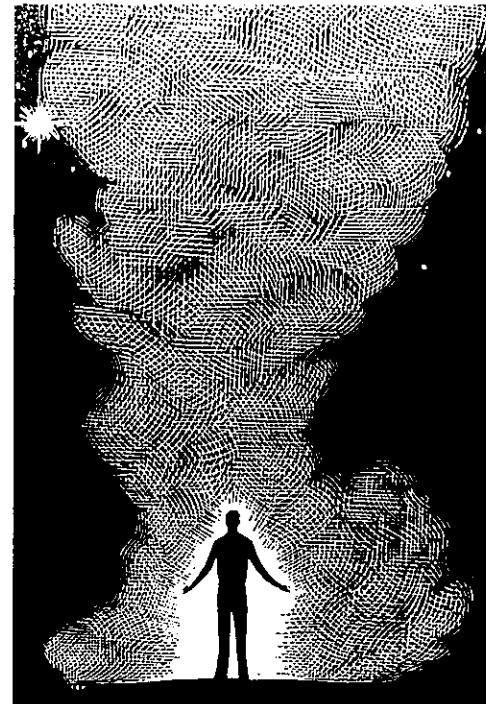


Illustration by Leonard Everett Fisher,
from the *The Night Country*.

false-faced society, it could be anyone.

They also know that the killing will not stop with Duncan's murder, a fact that Macbeth initially worries about but finally decides to ignore. Each subsequent murder appears to him as a final solution to his troubles, the removal of the



The stage is where history comes to life, teaching us about how we were. The essence of communications is to unfold life's lessons before the eyes and ears, bringing the printed word to life. That's why Indiana Bell is proud to sponsor the performances of the Indiana Repertory Theatre's "Classic Theatre for Youth." We believe in the power of communications, and the impact it has on all of us.



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