

**Such Stuff podcast**  
**Season 4, Episode 2: Generations**

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**Imogen Greenberg:** Hello and welcome to another episode of Such Stuff, the podcast from Shakespeare's Globe.

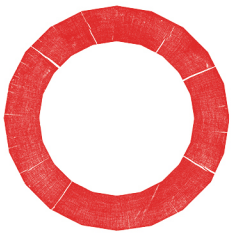
Every year around February and March, a very special production sets foot on the Globe stage. Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank is a 90 minute production created especially for teenagers, and each year we give away 20,000 free tickets to state school students from London and Birmingham.

This year, our company is taking on Macbeth. Fast-paced and political, it's a play about changing the state of the nation and getting there by any means necessary. This particular production focuses on tyranny in the play and contextualises Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in a system that is fundamentally broken.

So, what resonances will our students find with their own lives and the world around them? With thousands of young people coming through our doors, it's an extraordinary conversation across the generations, with Shakespeare's voice echoing from the past, our company bringing a fresh perspective from today's political climate... and our audience made up of future generations, who will inherit the world we live in.

So, this week on the podcast, we'll be going behind the scenes with the company of Macbeth, a few of the young people who'll be watching it, and asking... how can the voices of the past speak to the generations of the future? And how can Shakespeare help young people understand the world we're passing on to them?

And we play a special apocalypse game... I'll be asking some of the company and our lovely Globe staff... if it was the end of the world and you could save only one Shakespeare quote for future generations... what would it be?



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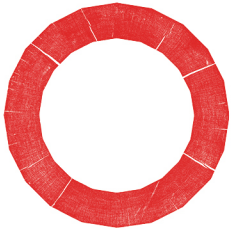
**IG:** First up, we chatted to director Cressida Brown and actors Ekow Quartey and Ely Condrón about this production of Macbeth, and what issues are at the heart of it for them.

**Cressida Brown:** My name's Cressida Brown and I'm the director. So the themes that we're picking up predominantly are the themes of tyranny. And I don't think that I'm inventing that, I think it's in the play as it is. What makes the play slightly different is that we are not just focusing on Macbeth's tyranny but we're saying that it's all part of a system. That it was ever so and even Duncan and his dynasty in a way are tyrants.

I think in the political climate, it's really important that young people stand up for what they believe in and one of the things about Macbeth is that it's not just Macbeth's actions which are responsible for the tyranny over Scotland but also the people that enabled his tyranny by remaining silent about his murder.

**Ekow Quartey:** My name is Ekow Quartey, I'm playing Macbeth. So this version of Macbeth is picking up on the themes of ambition, lineage, succeeding, children, what we pass our legacy on to, opinion, what people think of us. Definitely for Macbeth, the moment he's called 'tyrant', it just, it's like he just wants everyone to love him and if anyone dares speak up against him or ruins that chance of lineage, it's like nope, you have to go.

**Ely Condrón:** My name is Ely Condrón, I'm playing Lady Macbeth. In this version, well Lady Macbeth is pregnant. So that has really brought out that maternal theme. And Lady MacDuff is also pregnant so there's quite a strong motherhood theme. I think also Cress has decided to make them quite young, not only in age, but also in terms of their sort of energy and spirit is quite sort of naive in a way. And actually they get caught up in the excitement in the potential of becoming king and queen and it's that sort of excitement and this impending birth and the idea of making the best life for this child that's coming. And so the sort of forces that drive it



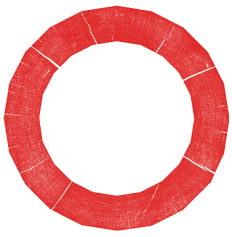
initially - for me - are... obviously they're no innocent [laughs] because of course not, but there's something a bit fresher and a bit... it sort of comes from a place that feels less cruel. Youth and vitality and lineage and family.

**CB:** I have a kind of strange reading of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. I see them as a kind of young Romeo and Juliet. I think it's really important to understand the motives of people and I think that they are doing this out of love for one another, that they think the other one could be great and they are enacting the assassination for their dynasty. I think that's something that everyone can tap into now, about the love you might have for your child and the lengths you would go to do anything for them. To that end, we're making Lady Macbeth pregnant. So that really lends an idea that they are killing the king with hopes for their unborn children and what they might achieve in the future.

[Music plays]

**CB:** I think my hope would be when people leave the theatre they become revolutionaries and take the lessons that they learn in the theatre out into the wide world and I think the Globe is particularly good for that because the audience is so present. So it really is a kind of immersive experience. I think that young people now seem to be a lot more engaged in politics than they did when I was younger and I think that's a brilliant thing. I think that ability to question and to feel that you have some agency in changing the world is an amazing gift. Shakespeare can help with that because you feel so present in the action, it means you actually experience the play in front of you. So I'm hoping this will just add a spur to the young people trying to take the future into their hands and question those around them, especially those in power.

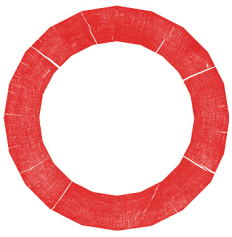
**EQ:** I suppose what they might see is what ambition, false ambition or too much ambition can do and you see what getting what you want by any means can do to you. I mean there's a version where the prophecy happens and Macbeth goes... 'OK cool, I'll just wait for



it, when it all comes that'll be amazing. And then becomes King and he's like 'This is amazing, I'm just going to be King for a bit'. But this wanton desperation for more as opposed to staying in your lane... [laughs] That'd be a good mantra for Macbeth, 'stay in your lane'. What that might mean, that severing of like your soul from reality because you become so tunnel visioned and that there's potential for good and evil in all of us [laughs].

**EC:** At its heart is someone who's ambitious who... well, I'll speak for Lady M. Ambitious and not heard. Having your voice heard and having to work within a system that's weighted against you, I think is something that a lot of kids would feel, you know, the feeling of being fifteen or sixteen and not being heard is extremely frustrating. So I think there are elements of Macbeth that will really ring from that sense.

**EQ:** I think you have these huge themes. I mean if we collate them all into one. War, we still have war. Love, I suppose we say young people don't really know what it is to love. But when I was young I really loved my football and so I did know love. Probably love greater than I've ever known since [laughs]. But they are growing up in the most, I believe, at least in my time, tumultuous time possible where things you see on TV, things you see on stage, stories you read, fictions are literally, actually happening in front of them. And I suppose they get a chance to see just how ageless and timeless it is. How do you make someone think or feel that Shakespeare, classical texts are as much for them as anyone else who might have a larger vocabulary than they do? And I think that it's important that young people get to see it and go 'oh my god, I understand that and I feel that, I've seen that, I can see how that's possible'. And I suppose like, was it last year? When Boris Johnson and Gove were going to become Prime Minister and I was like, 'It's literally Julius Caesar happening in front of us, this is ridiculous'. And I feel like I could only make a reference like that because I've had a chance to see Julius Caesar in a way that I went, 'Oh, it's politics, it's ambition, it's literally stabbing people in the back to get what you want' and we see it every day.



**CB:** I think that the reason I love Shakespeare is that I come into contact with people who were born 400 years ago and I realise that they are exactly the same as we are now and I feel that if you understand that history is so close and you understand that human nature has always been the same, you are more likely to learn from the mistakes of the past and really try and enact change in the present moment.

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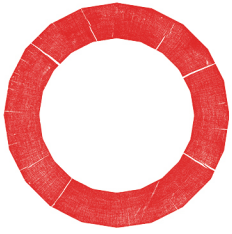
**IG:** Alongside the production, our learning teams work to provide free resources and workshops in schools so students can better engage with the plays. During one workshop with teenagers coming to see the production, our team chatted with them about some of the themes in the play and what they thought of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

**Workshop Leader:** How are the themes still relevant to the world today?

**Teenager 1:** I think there is still lots of violence and lots of murdering sadly and there's no such thing as a completely peaceful world because there always will be conflict going on somewhere in the world. There will always be someone doing horrible things. Sadly it's just what humans do.

**WL:** There's still this link between sort of aggression and masculinity, how do you think she feels as a woman in that society?

**T1:** She probably feels. I don't know she probably feels like she's a bit weird for being so like aggressive and like straight like talking and being so straight to the point. But also I think she probably feels good that her husband hasn't like told what she should and shouldn't do cos she's doing it in reverse. But it's still not an ideal relationship. I think Lady Macbeth is kind of the more powerful person and this is unusual for this time, it's like a switch in roles which I think is very interesting. It's also interesting because I'm doing sociology for my GCSE and it's interesting looking at this kind



of power struggle between the man and the women from a sociologists perspective. Cos as I think I said before it shows the history of women's rights and how it's kind of evolved that women aren't always necessarily the quiet, objectified thing in the corner. They are beings and they can be very strong, independent.

**WL:** Do you think the play is optimistic or pessimistic about how you can change your society and the world you live in?

**T1:** A bit of both because it's optimistic because obviously it does change the society, dramatically, also pessimistic because you're not doing it in the most ideal way.

**Teenager 2:** I think it's probably more pessimistic because it talks about changing society but it's almost saying that you need like stability in a society to continue on an optimistic path which it starts off on at the start. But as it starts having these things that create chaos in the stability like the witches or Macbeth, society collapses down and down and it ends with a lot of bloodshed and murder.

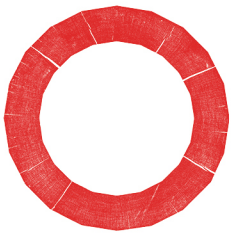
**WL:** Is there any hope at the end?

**T2:** There is some hope as stability starts becoming restored. But it also has a very, there will be a big lasting effect from the actions of Macbeth.

[Music plays]

**IG:** At a time when – across the world – the next generation is marching in the street to save their futures from destruction, it can be difficult not to get a little apocalyptic when we think about future generations... and after all, this episode has been all about the things we inherit and the things we pass on... whether that's politics or stories.

So, I played a little game around the Globe. I asked members of the Playing Shakespeare company and a few of our Globe staff... if it was the end of the world and all of Shakespeare's work was about



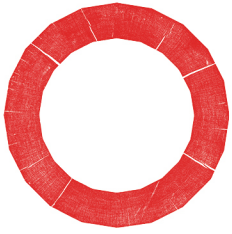
to vanish forever but you could save one, single quote... what would it be? Here's what they said...

**EQ:** Oh my goodness! 'If music be the food of love play on'. That's what I would save. That's, yeah. Because I think... I love music. Someone once said to me, 'Music is the window to the soul' or at least is like the key to open yourself up. And it's always been that for me, so yeah 'If music be the food of love...'. I might have got the quote wrong but 'If music be the food of love play on'. [Laughs]

**CB:** Oh, that is so difficult. 'All the world's a stage and we are merely but players on it'. Which I probably said wrong so... But a paraphrase of that would be good! I think it's... I love that because it shows how we perform different roles in society and we put on a mask and actually if you start to think of yourself as a character in a play, you can have some sort of objectivity to what you're doing and see how society might force you into roles but also it will allow you to have some distance to your own choices and think what might be a good choice and what might be a bad choice. So I think it serves a variety of different functions and I just love the idea of these worlds within worlds within worlds within worlds within worlds. So yeah, I think I would definitely save that one.

**Will Tosh:** So I think after the apocalypse, we'd all need cheering up and thinking about happy thoughts. So my quote to save is from Much Ado About Nothing and it's Beatrice saying 'I was born to speak all mirth and no matter'.

**EC:** What a terrible question! [Laughs] I think... ooof, that it a really difficult question! Because I would like to save something that had more hope in it but one of my favourite, favourite quote is Macbeth's and is 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace' and now I can't remember it off the top of my head. But 'It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing'. And it's not hopeful necessarily but you know, in a kind of existential



way... In fact, you know what, it could be read as being hopeful if you were just to remove it from it's context because in fact it's saying that. OK, it's nihilistic, nothing means anything. But with that same thought, you could have the energy of like we just need to live in the present, in the moment, be in ourselves and just experience this thing of life because it will go and that's it. And it's all stupid and idiotic and it does, it does sound hopeless. But in fact I think it's Macbeth and Shakespeare sort of laughing at life, laughing at it. Because one of the best - for me - treatments of the difficulties of life is the absurd, it's so absurd. And if you can step back and think of it as a tale being told by an idiot, that's great. It's true. None of us know what we're doing.

[Music plays]

**IG:** There are still a few tickets left for family performances of our Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank production of Macbeth on 21 March. To find out more about Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank, see our website. It'll be back next year, so if you're a teacher, parent or young Shakespeare fan... keep an eye out.

You've been listening to Such Stuff with me Imogen Greenberg.

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