



INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Welcome to this introduction to the 2020 *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank* production of *Macbeth* written by William Shakespeare and directed for Shakespeare's Globe by Cressida Brown. These introductory notes were written by Miranda Yates and Willie Elliot, and script edited by Julia Grundy.

SHAKESPEARE'S
GLOBE

 **VOCAL EYES**

Shakespeare's Globe and the setting for *Macbeth*

The Globe theatre is a faithful reconstruction of the open-air theatre built in 1599, where many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were first performed. It is situated across the river from St Paul's Cathedral – on the south bank of the Thames, about 170 metres from the site of the original and has been constructed using as many Elizabethan building methods as possible. Opened officially in 1997, today's Globe is a twenty-sided wooden structure made of oak and lime-plaster – with the first thatched roof permitted in London since the Great Fire in 1666.

The Chorus in *Henry V* describes the Globe as a hollow circle – the centre of the wooden 'O' is called the Yard, where there are about 600 standing, or Groundling, places. Other members of the audience sit on wooden benches in one of the three galleries which run around the circular auditorium – the upper gallery being some ten metres above the yard.

The theatre is open to the elements and performances continue whatever the weather – even during a thunderstorm. Occasionally helicopters and airplanes fly overhead and the sound of boats from the nearby river can be heard in the background.

Thrusting out into the Yard is the large rectangular stage. This stands at shoulder height – so that the groundlings nearest to the stage can lean against it, and actors can stoop down to address members of the audience directly, face to face.

Towards the front of the stage are two huge pillars, one on either side. Each pillar has been created from a complete oak tree. Although made of wood these pillars are ingeniously painted to look like polished marble. The deep base of each is octagonal and the column above is topped with an ornately carved Corinthian capital, gilded with real gold. The pillars support an overhanging roof –

called the 'heavens'. Its underside is divided into panels by gilded wooden ribs. Each panel is painted deep blue and decorated with stars, moons or signs of the zodiac.

This production of *Macbeth* is not set in a specific period, the costumes have a contemporary style that has an element of timelessness. The staging is simple using minimal props, with the floor of the stage covered with well-worn wooden boards.

The back wall of the stage is two stories high with a minstrel's gallery on the upper level where the three musicians can be found. At stage level, on the far left and right, are doors that lead to an unseen back room called the Tiring House or backstage area, and in the centre a large set of wood panelled double doors. All the doors and the back wall have the look of a battle-scarred castle stone walls, their surfaces blood stained and battered. As we arrive in the auditorium a large pile in the centre towards the front of the stage faces us – on closer inspection as we make out the detail of various limbs clad in bloodied and filthy garments, it's revealed as a pile of rotting corpses.

Several flags and banners hang in the space with the Scottish Flag design of a broad white X in a sky-blue background with the addition of a black laurel leaf crown and a capital letter D. Further reference to the Scottish flag is incorporated into the costume design which uses a range of different blues – from navy through royal blue to turquoise.

In this production there are ten actors, with some playing more than one role, and some traditionally male roles being played by women. Most are in their twenties. Their costumes are contemporary in style.

The Three Witches wear similar outfits made of several layers of pale ragged cloth, with grubby leggings and trainers.

Their garments are dirty and stained with dried blood.

King Duncan is a man in his sixties who commands the space he inhabits with a tall and majestic bearing. He is pristine, wearing a pure white three piece suit with a double breasted jacket and a long white overcoat. He wears a blue spotted tie knotted perfectly at the collar of his white shirt and a golden coronet on his head. His grey hair is cut short and he sports a neat moustache.

Duncan's son, Malcolm, stands only to his father's shoulder. He is a geeky young man with a smooth boyish complexion who peers at the world through silver framed spectacles. His short black hair is greased into a side parting. When we first meet him, he is in a school uniform with a black duffle coat over the top. The uniform is a navy blue V neck sweater over a white shirt and grey wool shorts with grey knee high socks and black leather shoes. He carries a schoolbook with him. Later, his costume is exactly the same design, but in a uniform beige colour.

Members of the king's court wear royal blue, with the white crisscross of the Scottish Saltire flag draped over one shoulder.

Ross is played by a female actor, who is tall and slim – her thick dark afro hair is tinged with red and worn up sculpted into coils. She wears a knee length dress with a full skirt that sticks out over layers of petticoats and is worn with a toning blue coat with gold buttons. The coat has broad leopard skin patterned cuff and is worn with blue gloves. She also wears short black socks with black ankle boots.

Macduff is a tall slim-figured man with a pale complexion, thick wavy hair and a light covering of beard. When we first meet him, he is dressed smartly in a black and white shirt with royal blue trousers and a blue woollen overcoat.

Lady Macduff is slim and athletic with short dark hair and dresses in a blue one piece jumpsuit and black boots.

Soldiers wear a uniform consisting of dark grey, heavy duty canvas trousers and a matching jacket. Their armour is an off-white webbed waistcoat, dyed with grey camouflage patches. On their feet they wear heavy black boots and have long white scarves wrapped several times around their necks.

Macbeth is one of these, a tall man with an athletic build, whose dark brown skin and thick stubble of beard are streaked with the stains of muddy battle. A white T-shirt under his jacket is blood-stained. Later he wears a royal blue velvet three-piece suit, with a light blue polo neck under the waistcoat, and gold trainers

His wife Lady Macbeth is petite with auburn hair pulled back into a neat bun. She wears a mid-blue jump suit, cropped at the ankle with long sleeves, in the same style as Lady Macduff. It stretches across her heavily pregnant frame and is worn with brown ankle boots. More formally to receive guests she adds an elegant deep blue fascinator and a toning knee length coat worn with a gold brooch. Later she wears a royal blue fur coat with a glamorous blue satin jumpsuit with gold pumps and a slim gold band as a crown on her head.

Like Macbeth, Banquo's pale complexion is muddied from battle, when we first encounter him. Like his brother in arms, he has an athletic build and his light brown hair is cut short and spiked up over his forehead. Also like Macbeth, his undershirt is stained with blood.

Banquo's young son, Fleance is played by a woman. Fleance is around ten years old and stands to his father's shoulder. He's a round faced youth with short black hair. When we first meet him he's dressed as a

superhero, in a blue boiler suit with black Converse shoes. A blue silk cape flies from his shoulders. The cape has a red lightning flash on the back and the boy wears a red half mask to hide his true identity.

We meet a Porter, who speaks with an Irish accent. The porter is a relatively short woman with a stocky figure, who wears a close-fitting grey cap, showing lengths of lank hair to her collar. Her heavy jacket and trousers are brown and a large ring of keys hangs on her wide leather belt.

Finally, we meet two murderers, a man and a woman, dressed in white thermals that are ragged and stained with sweat and mud. The bottoms are held up by white braces and they both wear wool beanies on their heads and heavy dark work boots.

CAST AND PRODUCTION CREDITS

Macbeth is played by Ekow Quartey
Lady Macbeth by Elly Condron
Macduff is played by Jack Wilkinson
Witch 1 and Lady Macduff by Jessica Murrain
Witch 2 and the Porter by Molly Logan
Witch 3 and Fleance by Mara Allen
King Duncan by Dickon Tyrrell
Malcolm is played by Aiden Cheng
Banquo by Samuel Oatley
Ross by Amanda Wright

The Designer is Georgia Lowe, with **Choreography** by Shelley Maxwell.

The Fight Directors are Rachel Brown-Williams and Ruth Cooper-White of RC-Annie Ltd.

The musicians are Hilary Belsey, Beth Higham-Edwards and Barnaby Philpot and the **Director** is Cressida Brown.

The introductory notes were written by Miranda Yates and Willie Elliot, and script edited by Julia Grundy, voiced by Willie Elliott, Emily Pollet and Miranda Yates, produced by Aiwan Obinyan, recorded by Wayne Harris and edited by Gary Giles for VocalEyes.

An audio version of these notes can be found [here](#).

To contact VocalEyes, please email us on enquiries@vocaleyes.co.uk or visit vocaleyes.co.uk