

Macbeth

A Tale of Darkness

Adapted by
Nelly E. Cuellar-Garcia

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DEDICATION

The varsity drama team at ZHS. Their undying devotion to the craft made all the adventures we faced with this show well worth it.

A special nod of love and appreciation to my sisters, Belinda, Wanda, Vianey, and Dinorah, for always being my staunchest supporters.

Julian and Christina - my world and my life.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

This play was a finalist at the University Interscholastic League Contest for Texas Public Schools in Spring, 2009. Directed by Nelly E. Cuellar-Garcia, the original cast and included:

ROSS: Eduardo Flores; MACBETH: Marco Regalado; BANQUO: Marlowe Bigler; MALCOLM/HECATE: Adam Escamilla; WITCH #1: Alyssa Torres; WITCH #2: Jessica Martin; WITCH #3: Rebecca Gonzalez; KING DUNCAN: Jossue Velasquez; MACDUFF: Roberto Garcia; LADY MACBETH: Adriana Vela; FLEANCE: Keith Martin; GENTLEWOMAN: Alexandra Harsacky.

Crew: Celisa Martinez, Light Tech; Vanessa Jasso, Stage Manager; Benjamin Morales, Sound Tech; Shelby Bigler; and Katherine Harsacky.

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Here is a retelling of Shakespeare's tale of the decline of an honorable man into darkness -- a study of how far an individual is willing to go in the pursuit of power. This adaptation includes new scenes between Lord and Lady Macbeth and uses an interactive ensemble to play a variety of roles. Only the director's imagination will be the limit for this piece. It can be staged as elaborately or as simply as desired. The truth is in the words. It was written to be performed at any venue, any time period, and with a multi-cultural cast. Movement, music, and passion are the driving forces within this piece that will help the actors find their voice.

Critics' Reviews

"Stunning concept...combining the actors into a huge ensemble was artistically and theatrically bold." – UIL Judge

"Masterful...your dream sequence for Lady Macbeth has never been seen before..." – UIL Judge

"This play takes risks and delivers in artistry..." – UIL Judge

"Macbeth's death was masterfully staged. I've seen many versions of *Macbeth* but that was totally unexpected. It caught me by surprise." – UIL Judge

"Audiences and directors who really know *Macbeth* will appreciate all the nuances and levels you added to this tale..." – UIL Judge

"Superb concept...spectacular adaptation. Your command of the classics and your ability to concentrate and condense a play is beyond the ability of most..." – UIL Judge

"I finally understand *Macbeth*! That play was cool!" – Teenage audience member on the way out of the theatre

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A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

As I was packing to leave the UIL State One-act Play Contest in Austin, I stopped to reflect on all the adventures we had with this play: a city-wide power outage which left my actors performing in the dark; a Lady Macbeth who had the beginning stages of appendicitis and had techs holding buckets off stage so she could throw up between scenes; Macduff actually wounding Macbeth during their battle scene; a lost Macbeth crown; a sword swept up between the curtain line and the pulley system during strike (and another school trying to get us disqualified because of it); and Macduff being taken to the emergency room at 1 a.m. the day of the state contest suffering from food poisoning. I wondered if it had all been worth it. The answer was an unequivocal yes.

I adapted this piece because the character of Macbeth has always interested me. The descent of a man from the path of honor to one of darkness deserves deep thought. How can darkness become so tempting that it eradicates everything you've always stood for? Why is power so all consuming? These are questions that I placed before my varsity theatre actors.

In order to help them explore these concepts, I first put the language into prose so that they could explore the nuances in the lines. I also added new scenes between the Macbeths in order to help understand their relationship better. The addition of the ensemble to various key scenes also changed the feeling of the piece. The ensemble is extremely important and is composed of all the actors, but the work has been written in a manner that allows the director the option of leaving leads out of the ensemble.

I added mask work to the Lady Macbeth sleepwalking scene and choreographed movement so that in essence her nightmares became three-dimensional. The same thinking outside of the box was applied to the prophecy scene which we called the "tribal scene" because we used deep primal movement and music during the ritual. We worked with limited lighting effects (too many venue changes) and used organic beats which we did with our feet, voices and hands, "spiritual possessions," and frozen tableaux to emphasize the prophecy. Fog was the only other element that was used during both scenes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 4 w, plus numerous ensemble roles)

WITCHES 1, 2 AND 3

MACBETH: The ambitious Scottish nobleman.

BANQUO: Scottish nobleman, admirable.

KING DUNCAN: King of Scotland.

MALCOLM: Son of King Duncan.

HECATE*: Leader of the witches.

MACDUFF: Scottish nobleman.

FLEANCE: Banquo's son.

ROSS: Scottish nobleman.

LADY MACBETH

ENSEMBLE to play all the roles of the Spirits, Witches,
Soldiers, Peasants, and Ladies as needed.

**For this version of Macbeth, a male Hecate works best.
Hecate may be double cast with Malcolm, if needed.*

Performance time: About 50 minutes.

Please see end of script for more production details.

Scene 1

(SFX: Bagpipes are heard in the dark as the CURTAINS part to reveal a stage bathed in low-lying fog. Suddenly from the mist writhing FIGURES begin to erupt from the ground. They have lived in darkness for an eternity, thus all react in various ways to seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching the earth for the first time. They try to speak to each other and see who has survived their long journey. They resort to the only thing they know to unite them into a cohesive entity - their knowledge of the darkness.)

ENSEMBLE: Double, double, toil and trouble ... fire burn and cauldron bubble. *(Freeze.)*

ACTOR: *(Who will become Banquo.)* The instruments of darkness tell us little truths. They tempt us with honest trifles in order to lead us to our destruction.

ENSEMBLE: Round about the cauldron go; in the poisoned entrails throw: eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog *(Freeze.)*

ACTOR: *(Who will become Macduff.)* What drives men to spurn fate, scorn death, and bear his hopes above *(Whispers from the ENSEMBLE.)* wisdom, grace, and fear?

ENSEMBLE: Fillet of a swamp snake boil and bake, till the hell-broth boil and bubble Double, double, toil, and trouble *(Freeze.)*

ACTOR: *(Who will become Lady Macbeth.)* Women should appear to be like innocent flowers blossoming on a golden morn -- but beneath that façade, they should be like the snakes *(ENSEMBLE hisses.)* that hide underneath the flower ready to strike at the slightest provocation.

ENSEMBLE: Come, thick night, and cover the world in a dense smoke from hell so that heaven may not be privy to my deepest and darkest desires Double, double, toil and trouble ... fire burn and cauldron bubble *(Freeze.)*

End of Freeview

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