# “Macbeth” at the Midnight Carnival

*Written by Steven Fogell*
*Incorporating the work by William Shakespeare*

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

A traveling carnival, run by the frightening Madame LeBeau, arrives outside of a small American town in the early 1900s. Several children sneak into the carnival and quickly discover a wicked world of darkness and mystery. Trance-like, the townspeople are soon pulled to the tent and end up as characters in the tale of "Macbeth." The Mayor and his wife become Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Mrs. Cambridge, the local widow, becomes Hecate, and other citizens become Macduff, Banquo, Ross, the Apparition, and others. The carnival's Siamese Twins and Lizard Creature become the three Witches. By the end of the tale, the townspeople discover the carnival is here to do more than entertain, but also to take on new performers to spread its evil ways.

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The original show entitled "'Macbeth,' A Wicked Tale" was first produced by students in 6th - 10th grades at Bainbridge Performing Arts in Bainbridge, WA in spring, 2005.

## CHARACTER NOTES

Many characters play both a townsperson and a character in the play "Macbeth."

The role of Marie can have all her lines set to a lyrical tune without written music. The idea of this character came from the medieval chants of the 15th and 16th centuries. In the original performance, the actors trying out for the role created their own tunes. It doesn't matter if the actor sings high or low, the idea is for her to find her own rhythm to Marie's lines. The lines were written in rhyme to help the actor find a pattern to follow. When Marie is on stage without lines, she should hum the melody she created. This is a very strong effect, especially when Marie appears like a ghost holding the dagger and Macbeth recites one of his more famous speeches.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(29 or more characters, much doubling possible)*

TOWNSPEOPLE
SAM ARDEN: Child.
MARY ARDEN: Sam's mother. Becomes Attendant.
TOM BARNS: Child.
DANIEL BARNS: Farmer, Tom's father. Becomes Macduff.
PATRICIA BARNS: His wife. Becomes Lady Macduff.
DOCTOR LLOYD: Town physician. Becomes Apparition 1.
MAGGIE GIBSON: Child.
MR. GIBSON: Town mayor, Maggie's father. Becomes Macbeth.
MRS. GIBSON: His wife. Becomes Lady Macbeth.
FATHER SCOTT: Preacher. Becomes Banquo.
MR. QUINCE: Store owner. Becomes Ross.
MRS. QUINCE: His wife. Becomes Apparition 3.
MISS ELLA: School teacher. Becomes Porter.
REX SHADE: Carpenter. Becomes Old Man.
CORA SHADE: Rex's wife. Becomes Apparition 2.
JULIA SHADE: Child.
ANGUS SHADE: Child.
MR. MAGEE: Town sheriff. Becomes Soldier.
MRS. CAMBRIDGE: Widow. Becomes Hecate.

CARNIVAL PEOPLE
SIAMESE TWIN 1: Carnival oddity. Becomes Witch 1.
SIAMESE TWIN 2: Carnival oddity. Becomes Witch 2.
LIZARD CREATURE: Carnival oddity. Becomes Witch 3.
MADAME LEBEAU: Owns the carnival.
GRAYSON: Manager.
BARKER: Announcer.
MAGDA: Conjurer.
MARIE: Singer of fortunes, mysterious ghost of sorts.
BELKIN: Confessor.
PHAIR: Healer.

"MACBETH" CHARACTERS *(Much doubling possible.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| KING DUNCAN | HECATE |
| MALCOLM | FLEANCE |
| SON OF MACDUFF | GHOST |
| ROYAL 1, 2, 3, & 4 | |
| VOICES 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5 | |
| EIGHT KINGS | |

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The production is a play within a play and much of the action and special effects can be achieved by using a shadow scrim for certain scenes to happen behind quickly. The set can be very sparse, with either a fabric tent that appears to be the carnival and banners of the amazing features at the carnival, or as done in the original production, with a gobo of a carnival, with Christmas lights and fabric banners added to the effect.

A large white scrim was placed center that actors could be seen in shadow behind, or used to project shapes (gobos) and colors to add mood and ambiance. Low lighting and mysterious shadows add to the effect of the dark environment.

The opening scenes of the play were originally done with minimal set pieces. They were seen as vignettes and done in low lighting to create different locations quickly.

Old carnival-style music as on a merry-go-round or ice cream truck helps create the creepy aspect of the carnival. It can also be used with the witches and Hecate.

## COSTUMES

As the townspeople under a spell get pulled into the action of the tale of “Macbeth,” they are given masks and garments to become those characters. The carnival people are dressed darkly and appear as mysterious beings of another world.

## EFFECTS

**Lighting**

Branch shadows, shadows, fog, strobe lights, red light.

**Sound**

Huge wind; organ music; thunder; low knocking that grows to banging; bell chimes; loud knocking; loud striking music; women crying and voices; drumming.

## ACT I

*(The following is done in a sequence of short scenes or vignettes. AT RISE: ANGUS is performing a magic trick for JULIA and CORA.)*

ANGUS: Look, Mother!
CORA: What, dear?
ANGUS: Look at this trick!
CORA: Trick?
ANGUS: I can make this soda cap disappear!
JULIA: No, you can't!
ANGUS: Yes, I can!
JULIA: Can't!
ANGUS: Can!
JULIA: Mother!
CORA: *(Not paying attention.)* Stop, you two! I need to finish these pies in peace!
ANGUS: Now what did she tell me to say? What was it?
JULIA: What are you talking about, Angus?
ANGUS: The magic words. Now hush!
JULIA: There are no such things as magic words, are there, Mother? Mother?
CORA: No such thing as what, dear?
JULIA: Magic words! Angus is saying some sort of magic words!
ANGUS: Quiet, Julia, I can't hear myself think.
JULIA: Maybe because there is nothing to hear in your head!
ANGUS: *(Mumbles something under HIS breath.)* … and manifesto altimoto! *(The cap is gone.)* I did it!

*(JULIA screams.)*

CORA: What in the world? *(Moves to THEM.)* Julia, stop that, you hear!
JULIA: It's gone! It's gone! Make it come back!
ANGUS: I ... I … I don't know how to bring things back. She didn't teach me that part.

CORA: What are you two talking about? Bring what back? Angus, what is all this about?
JULIA: *(Crying.)* It just disappeared, Mother. The bottle cap -- it just … just vanished!
CORA: What nonsense is this? Angus?
ANGUS: *(To HIMSELF.)* The words ... they worked.
CORA: All right, children, enough! What is going on here?
ANGUS: The spell, the spell she taught me was real!
CORA: Who taught you? What's this talk of a spell? Angus Shade, you best be telling me what is going on!
ANGUS: I … I … I ….
JULIA: *(Crying.)* You better not use that spell on me, Angus! Mother, tell him not to use it on me!
CORA: There is no such thing as any spells. Now, Angus, tell me who you been talking with!
ANGUS: I … I ….
REX: *(Enters.)* Good evenin', family! *(No response.)* I said good evenin'! *(No response.)* What's this, no one goin' to greet your poor father who worked all day? You all look as if someone just walked on your graves! What's wrong here … hello!? Cora?

*(LIGHTS down. We hear in darkness as WITCHES' SHADOWS appear.)*

WITCH 1: When shall we three meet again?

*(SHADOWS disappear. LIGHTS up on MR. QUINCE, MRS. QUINCE, DANIEL BARNS, PATRICIA BARNS, and TOM BARNS in store.)*

MRS. QUINCE: I will have that flower pattern fabric in by a week from Tuesday. Will that be soon enough, Patricia?
PATRICIA: Well, I guess it will have to be. Plenty of time to make the dress by Easter, no worries.
MRS. QUINCE: Can I interest you in a new bonnet to go with it? I have several arriving next month. I could save you one. They are straight from the shops in Jefferson.

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