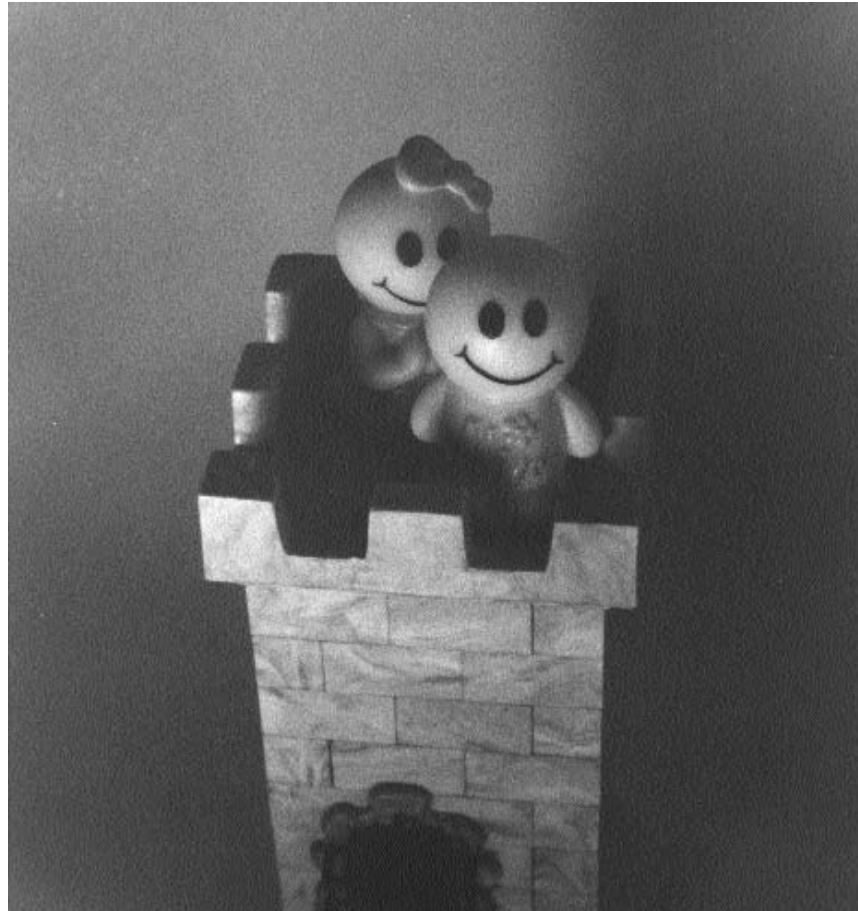


# Big Theatre for Little People



## Tiny Ninja Theater presents Macbeth

By  
William Shakespeare

Directed by  
Dov Weinstein

Student  
Matinee  
2004-2005

# SEASON



**Geva**  
Theatre  
Center

## Dear Educators,

*Macbeth* is one of my favorite plays so I try to see it performed whenever I can. The first production I saw was set in an undefined world where the witches were beautiful spirits that tempted Macbeth as they revealed the prophecy before sending him on his dark journey. Another was presented on a bare stage with only five actors, a circle of rope and a few musical instruments. I've even seen *Macbeth* performed on scaffolding while the cast struggled to reach a crown that was suspended from the ceiling. Each production told the story in a different way and gave me a greater appreciation of Shakespeare's play. You can imagine my delight when I learned that a cast of tiny ninjas would be performing *Macbeth* in our Big Theatre for Little People series this season.

I'm not sure what it is about the Scottish play that lends itself to such creative interpretation. It could be that *Macbeth* is concise, fast paced and lacks the subplots often included in Shakespeare's other work. Maybe it's the element of the supernatural that is mysteriously woven throughout the text. For whatever reason, the play has thrilled and intrigued audiences for hundreds of years. Dov Weinstein's production is no exception. This time told by one-inch high plastic ninjas, the story remains as powerful as ever and gives every audience member the opportunity to take a new look at the classic tale - through binoculars.



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### Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

Duncan

Malcolm

Donalbain

Macbeth

Banquo

Macduff

Lennox

Ross

Menteith

Angus

Caithness

Fleance

Siward

Seyton

Boy

A Scotch Doctor

A Sergeant

A Porter

Murderers Johnny &  
Tony Ball

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macduff

Gentlewoman

Three Witches

## Synopsis – The Story of the Play

Generals Macbeth and Banquo are returning home, victorious from battle, when they encounter three witches. The witches predict the future of the two men. They inform Macbeth that he will be named Thane of Cawdor and ultimately become King of Scotland. To Banquo, they reveal that his sons will be kings.

Soon after, Macbeth is named Thane of Cawdor, fulfilling the first part of the prophecy. His wife encourages him to preempt the rest by killing King Duncan. Macbeth murders Duncan in his sleep and, fearing Banquo's prophecy will also come true, hires men to murder Banquo and his son, Fleance. The men are successful in killing Banquo, but in the fray Fleance escapes with his life.

Filled with trepidation Macbeth sets out to find the witches again. They tell him to beware Macduff, a noble who has fled to England with Duncan's son Malcom. The witches assure Macbeth that he will not be overcome by any man born of woman, or until the forest of Birnam moves to Dunsinane Hill. Believing both to be impossible, but fearing the fulfillment of the prophecy, Macbeth continues to defend his crown fighting every obstacle he encounters along the way. At the end of his journey, Macbeth is left to face his fate when the prophecy, and all its riddles, become a reality.

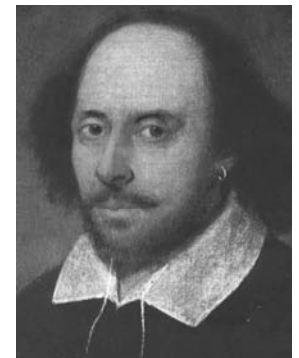
**Trepidation:** a state of alarm

How do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth change throughout the course of the play?

## The Playwright - William Shakespeare

The first record of Shakespeare's involvement in London theatre dates from 1592. In a letter to fellow playwrights Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe and George Peele, rival playwright Robert Greene wrote: "There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in player's hide, supposes he is well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and, being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shakes-scene in a country." Apparently Shakespeare had inspired Greene's jealousy as a play mender ("beautified with our feathers") and a poet ("bombast out a blank verse"), and his *Henry VI Part 3* had become famous enough to be recognized by one of its lines ("O, tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide").

By 1594, Shakespeare had become a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men who by 1599 had raised sufficient capital to build their own theatre. Shakespeare was listed as one of the primary investors. By the end of the year, the Lord Chamberlain's Men moved to the new Globe Theatre on the south shore of the Thames. When James I ascended the throne in 1603, the group retired their former patron, and became the King's Men. Shakespeare wrote an average of two plays a year for the Lord Chamberlain's Men until 1613, when the Globe Theatre burned down for the second time. He resumed full-time residence in Stratford soon after the fire. By the time Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, he had written 38 plays and over 154 sonnets.



William Shakespeare

**Johannes Factotum:** jack-of-all-trades

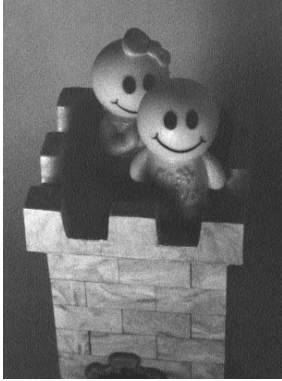
**Capital:** of or involving wealth and its use in investment

**Patron:** a person who supports or champions something, such as an activity or institution, by giving money; a benefactor

## From the Director, Dov Weinstein

*What was your first experience with Shakespeare, either reading one of the plays or seeing a live production? What was your first impression?*

My first time seeing Shakespeare live was a class trip to APT, which is an outdoor classical theater in Spring Green, Wisconsin near where I grew up. We were supposed to see *The Tempest*, but, appropriately, it rained. So instead, they crowded us all under a makeshift tent and did a couple scenes from the play, along with a Q&A with one of the actors. I mainly remember it being really wet. Since then, I'd say my impression of Shakespeare has improved a lot.



*Mr. and Mrs. Smile  
as Macbeth and Lady  
Macbeth*

*What was your inspiration for bringing Tiny Ninja Theater to life?*

The ninjas themselves. I got one out of a vending machine and I knew - they were made to perform classical theater.

*Of all of Shakespeare's plays, what was it about Macbeth that you found lent itself to such a unique interpretation?*

Once Mr. and Mrs. Smile joined the company (also from a vending machine) I knew we had to do *Macbeth*. It was amazing to watch them mine the raw material of their own long-standing relationship in service of their characters' deep, and deeply troubled, love affair.

*What has been your greatest challenge in developing and presenting this piece?*

1. Explaining to people what I do for a living.
2. Memorizing all those lines.

*What has been the most fun?*

Touring the world (Stockholm! Prague! Rochester!) doing my own work is pretty darn fun.

*Are you and the Ninjas currently working on any new projects?*

We are currently touring our three shows: *Tiny Ninja Theater presents Macbeth*, *Tiny Ninja Theater presents Romeo & Juliet*, and *Tiny Ninja Theater presents Hamlet*.

**How do Macbeth and Banquo's reactions differ after hearing the witches prophecy?**

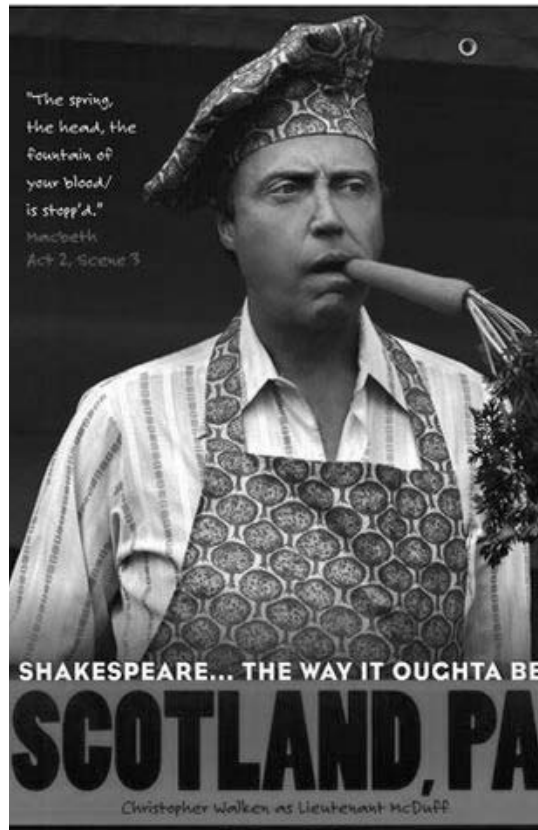
**"Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep.'" Macbeth**

## On Quoting Shakespeare

If you cannot understand my argument, and declare “It’s Greek to me”, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow than in anger; if your wish is father to the thought; if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, danced attendance (on your lord and master), laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool’s paradise -why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare; if you think it is early days and clear out bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that that is the long and short of it, if you believe that the game is up and that truth will out even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low till the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have your teeth set on edge (at one fell swoop) without rhyme or reason, then - to give the devil his due - if the truth were known (for surely you have a tongue in your head) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I was dead as a door-nail, if you think I am an eyesore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnate, a stony-hearted villain, bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then - by Jove! O Lord! Tut tut! For goodness' sake! What the dickens! But me no buts! - it is all one to me, for you are quoting Shakespeare.

*-Bernard Levin*

**What ultimately leads to Macbeth’s downfall? Does he control his destiny or is he fated to fulfill the prophecy? What role does Lady Macbeth play in his demise?**



*Movie poster from film version of Macbeth; Scotland, PA*

## Decoding Shakespeare

It may seem like Shakespeare's plays are more for scholars than for theatregoers. If he was simply writing scripts for actors, how did everything get so complex? Listening to Shakespeare's language can be an adjustment for anyone and there are many reasons why. From vocabulary to geography we see and hear Shakespeare from a very different perspective than his first audiences did over 400 years ago.

### All the World's a Stage, *As You Like It*

We can begin by taking a look at how entertainment itself has evolved since Shakespeare's lifetime. With the advent of film and television, much of today's recreation is found at the movies or in front of the television. Both are extremely visual and fast paced compared to the amusements of years past. Even going to the theatre has become an elaborate spectacle with the level of technology available to us today. Without lights, elaborate sets or musical underscoring, Shakespeare needed to use language to set the scene. Instead of creating the atmosphere of each play visually, Shakespeare built the images through the spoken word. See the witches' lines that open *Macbeth* below:

*When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?  
When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.  
That will be ere the set of sun.  
Where the place?  
Upon the heath.  
There to meet with Macbeth.  
Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.*

How do the lines of the witches differ from the rest of the characters in the play? Why do you think Shakespeare made that choice?

What images do you take from these lines? What tone do they set for the play?

### A Feast of Languages, *Love's Labor's Lost*

The plays are also written in language that is, in some ways, foreign to us. Shakespeare's vocabulary consisted of over 21,000 words compared to the average 500 used in the United States today. Shakespeare also invented many words when he was writing, and used 600 new words in *Hamlet* alone. The fact that he was writing in a different time and in a different part of the world, also means that many of the words and phrases he used are unfamiliar to us or have changed in their meaning over time. For example, the word *peace* which we often define as the absence of war, Shakespeare used to mean *quiet*. Here it is used to silence the witches when Macbeth approaches:

*Peace! - the charm's wound up.*

### Method in the Madness, *Hamlet*

Another element to decoding the language is looking at the style in which it was written. Shakespeare often wrote in blank verse, otherwise known as iambic pentameter. This is simply verse that does not rhyme. Iambic pentameter is a pattern of 10 syllables, alternating between stressed and unstressed. See Banquo's lines below:

/ x / x / x / x / x  
*If you can look into the seeds of time,*

/ = unstressed  
 x = stressed

/ x / x / x / x / x  
*And say which grain will grow, and which will not,*

The combination of stressed and unstressed syllables creates a rhythm that moves like a heartbeat throughout the play. There are times however when the rhythm is broken, often when the heartbeat of the character skips due to fear, anxiety, doubt or restlessness. See Macbeth's speech below:

*She should have died hereafter;  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow  
 Creeps in this petty place from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.*

Which lines in this speech follow the regular 10 syllable rhythm?

Although some lines follow the regular rhythm, this speech is full of pauses and irregular lines. Shakespeare uses the regular and irregular rhythms to give us clues as to how the characters are feeling at any given moment during the play.

### The Play's the Thing, *Hamlet*

Above all it's important to remember that Shakespeare's plays were not written for scholars, but to entertain people from all walks of life. The universal themes allow us to relate to the characters just as his first audiences did years ago. That is why Shakespeare's plays continue to be enjoyed by audiences of all ages to this day. So instead of trying to decode every word, just sit back and let the language wash over you. What you bring to the play will bring Shakespeare's words to life in a whole new way.

“But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
 and we'll not fail.” Lady Macbeth

## Versions of *Macbeth*

Shakespeare's work has always been subject to interpretation. *Macbeth* is no exception. *Tiny Ninja Theater presents Macbeth* is only one in a long line of creative and often, groundbreaking rethinkings of the classic play.

Most scholars agree that *Macbeth* was originally performed with Richard Burbage in the title role in 1611. As with many of Shakespeare's plays, as time evolved, so did interpretations of his work. One of the first was David Garrick's production in 1744, when he chose to resort to the text as "written by Shakespeare". *Macbeth* had been produced with elaborate spectacle, singing and dancing for years. To revert back to the text as written was considered quite a radical departure for the time.

Beginning in 1933, interpretation of the play took a new turn. Theodore Komisarjevsky staged *Macbeth* in Stratford-upon-Avon. The set and costumes were decidedly abstract. One of Lady Macbeth's costumes even had her in a crown made of saucepans and a matching breastplate made out of saucepan lids! It was not a critical hit but because of the unusual nature of the production, it did well at the box office. Orson Welles directed a voodoo-based *Macbeth* in Harlem with a predominately African-American cast in 1936. The play was set in Haiti with the witches being voodoo priestesses. In 1974, Trevor Nunn produced the play for the Royal Shakespeare Company with Ian McKellen and Judi Dench in the lead roles. It was a minimalist production with only a chalk circle and upturned crates for scenery; actors were in modern dress and sat with the audience when not on stage. Critics loved it and considered both McKellen and Dench's work to be definitive.

In recent years, even more unusual interpretations have been produced. 500 Clown Theatre, out of Chicago, has produced *Macbeth* with a minimum of text, lots of energy and mime. Also recently in Chicago, the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre produced *Kabuki Lady Macbeth*, which focused on Lady Macbeth's journey as well as incorporating elements of Japanese Kabuki theatre. The Alabama Shakespeare Company mounted a tour of *Macbeth* to U.S. military bases in 2004. Tiny Ninja Theater is just one company in a long line of theatres that have tackled Shakespeare, and specifically *Macbeth*, in a new way—each new interpretation hoping to bring a fresh perspective and understanding of this classic play.

**Abstract: in art, designs or shapes that don't realistically represent any person or thing**

**Think outside the box! Tiny Ninja Theater's *Macbeth* is a completely unique interpretation of the text. How would you tell the story? Would you place it in contemporary times? Develop a concept for your own interpretation of the play.**

**"What's done cannot be undone; to bed, to bed, to bed." Lady Macbeth**

## The 32-Second Macbeth

Inspired by the Reduced Shakespeare Company's *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, the following activity was developed at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Using the text below and nine actors, stage your own 32-second *Macbeth*. Divide students into two groups and then have each group present their *Macbeth* to the class. Take out a stopwatch and time each group seeing if either successfully presents its version in 32 seconds. To take it further, create your own reduced script of the play. What 21 lines would you choose to tell the story?

### *The 32-second Macbeth*

**Actors 1, 2, 3** *Fair is foul and foul is fair.*  
**Actor 4** *What bloody man is that?*  
**Actor 2** *A drum, a drum! Macbeth doth come.*  
**Macbeth** *So foul and fair a day I have not seen.*  
**Actor 3** *All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!*  
**Macbeth** *If chance will have me king, then chance will crown me.*  
**Actor 5** *Unsex me here.*  
**Macbeth** *If it were done when 'tis done—*  
**Actor 5** *Screw your courage to the sticking place!*  
**Macbeth** *Is this a dagger which I see before me? (Actor 4 dies)*  
**Actor 5** *A little water clears us of this deed.*  
**Actor 6** *Fly good Fleance, fly! (dies)*  
**Macbeth** *Blood will have blood*  
**Actors 1, 2, 3** *Double, double, toil and trouble*  
**Actor 7** *He has kill'd me, mother! (dies)*  
**Actor 8** *Bleed, bleed, poor country!*  
**Actor 5** *Out damn'd spot! (dies)*  
**Macbeth** *Out, out, brief candle!*  
**Actor 8** *Turn, hell-hound, turn!*  
**Macbeth** *Lay on Macduff! (dies)*  
**Actor 8** *Hail, king of Scotland!*

What role does the supernatural play in *Macbeth*? Are any of the mystical elements of created by Macbeth's imagination?

Movie poster from a Japanese version of *Macbeth*



“Is this a dagger which I see before me?” Macbeth

## The Audience – The Final Piece

*“The public sometimes thinks an artist is a television set – something comes out, nothing goes back. They don’t realize that if they can hear me, then I can hear them – their coughs, the electronic beeps from their wristwatches, the squeaking of their shoes.... The art of performance depends on the relationship between the musician and the audience. In the concert hall, each motionless listener is part of the performance. The concentration of the player charges the electric tension in the auditorium and returns to him magnified....The audience grows together and becomes a group. There’s the impression of a journey undertaken together and a goal achieved.”* **Pianist Alfred Brendel**

This is a quote from a musician, but everything he says applies to the theatre, too. When you come to see a play, the actors are aware of you. Unlike a movie or a television show, the audience can affect or influence what happens on stage. Actors can hear the audience laugh, cry, become restless, or become still and silent with concentration. The mood of the audience can affect the mood of the performance – this is why we say that no two performances are alike, because no two audiences are the same.

We hope you enjoy the show. While you sit in the audience, please remember that you are a part of the theatre journey. You do not take that journey alone; please respect the people who are on the journey with you and allow them to enjoy the play also.

**The audience is the final piece of the process – without an audience, the actors would still be rehearsing. By adding the audience the play becomes a performance!**

## Tell Us What You Think

Please write to us or send us pictures! You can send them to Andrea Stoner, Associate Director of Education, Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Boulevard, Rochester, NY 14607. We are always interested in knowing what our audiences think about our plays, especially...

- The most fun part
- The part that surprised you
- The most exciting part
- The part you talked about on the bus on the way back to school
- The first thing you told your family about the play when you got home
- The part you’d like to see again
- The part you thought about the most after
- The moment where you noticed the set
- The minute where you noticed a costume
- The most interesting sound you heard
- The part where something unexpected happened

**“Out, damned spot! Out, I say!”** Lady Macbeth

## References

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*Tales from Shakespear (Collected Works by Charles Lamb)* by Charles Lamb

*Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* by Stephen Greenblatt

[www.renaissance.dm.net/compendium/index.html](http://www.renaissance.dm.net/compendium/index.html) – Life in Elizabethan England: A Compendium of Common Knowledge, 1558-1603. Includes maps and information on all social classes, education, professions, language, and religion. A very accessible site.

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/shakespeare/> – Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet. An excellent timeline, the canon, links to other sites and a biography quiz.

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“All Hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!”  
Witches

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