



MIDWALES OPERA
OPERA CANOLBARTH CYMRU



Welcome to our Information Pack!

Step into the enthralling world of Verdi's Macbeth with our education pack, a passport to a world where Shakespearean drama meets operatic brilliance, providing an approachable yet engaging experience.

Explore the twists and turns of Macbeth's tragic story, enhanced by Verdi's unforgettable musical compositions, while unraveling the universal themes that lie at the heart of this iconic play.

Join us as we take the journey through the realms of power, morality, and ambition, accompanied by the evocative melodies that characterise Verdi's genius.



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Our Production:

One of Shakespeare's greatest plays is also one of Verdi's greatest operas. Experience a gripping tale of power, manipulation and tragic descent as Macbeth, a valiant general, succumbs to his wife's persuasion, leading to a ruthless quest for the Scottish throne. Verdi's magnificent score, with its sweeping melodies and intricate harmonies, propels the psychologically thrilling narrative, whilst Act 4 introduces a modern twist with the haunting chorus of refugees. Sung in English, accompanied by Ensemble Cymru and with a large cast, supplemented by community choruses, Mid Wales Opera presents its first-ever production of Verdi's Macbeth as the culmination of its Shakespeare Season.

Music: Giuseppe Verdi

Reduced Orchestration: Jonathan Lyness

Libretto: Francesco Maria Piave

Based on William Shakespeare's Macbeth

English Version: Jeremy Sams

Performed by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Limited

Conductor: Jonathan Lyness

Orchestra: Ensemble Cymru

Director/Designer: Richard Studer

Lighting Designer: Elanor Higgins

Macbeth: Jean-Kristof Bouton

Lady Macbeth: Mari Wyn Williams

Macduff: Robyn Lyn Evans

Banquo: Emyr Wyn Jones

Lady-in-waiting: Rebecca Afonwy-Jones



Meet the Characters:

Each character in "Macbeth" has a role that helps tell the story of ambition, friendship, betrayal, and the consequences of making the wrong choices.

Macbeth: Think of Macbeth as the main character who makes some bad choices. He's a brave warrior at the start but gets tempted by power. His story shows us what can happen when someone lets ambition take over.

Lady Macbeth: She's Macbeth's wife and the one who pushes him to do some not-so-good things, like becoming king by doing something really wrong. Her story teaches us about the consequences of pushing someone to do something bad and feeling guilty afterward.

Macduff: Imagine Macduff as the hero trying to set things right. He's out to stop Macbeth after some terrible things happen to his family. His role is like the good guy fighting against the bad guy.

Banquo: Banquo is Macbeth's friend who becomes suspicious of him. He's like the wise friend who realises something's not right and pays a price for it. His character helps show how someone can be betrayed by a friend.

Lady-in-waiting: This character isn't super central, but she gives us a peek into the royal court's drama. She's like a background character, showing us what life is like around the main characters.

Malcolm: He's the rightful heir to the throne after King Duncan. Malcolm runs away to save himself but comes back to reclaim his rightful place. His story is about coming back to make things right.

Doctor: The doctor takes care of Lady Macbeth when she starts acting strangely. He's like the observer who notices when something's wrong and tries to help, showing us the human side of the story.

Apparitions: These are like spooky ghostly figures that give Macbeth misleading advice. They make Macbeth think he's invincible but lead him down the wrong path. They add a mysterious and creepy element to the story.

Servant / Assassin: These characters do the dirty work for Macbeth. They follow his orders to harm others, showing how power can corrupt people and make them do bad things.



About Giuseppe Verdi:

Verdi was deeply influenced by Shakespeare's works throughout his career, and "Macbeth" was one of the playwright's plays that particularly resonated with him.

Verdi's decision to write "Macbeth" was influenced by his admiration for Shakespeare's works, the dramatic potential of the play, the artistic challenge it presented, and his desire to contribute to Italian cultural and artistic identity. The resulting opera showcases Verdi's genius in adapting Shakespeare's tragic tale into a compelling and emotionally resonant musical masterpiece.

Verdi had a profound admiration for Shakespeare's plays and found them to be a rich source of dramatic material. The themes, characters, and emotional depth present in Shakespeare's works appealed to Verdi's sensibilities as a composer interested in creating powerful and emotionally charged operas.

"Macbeth" offered Verdi a compelling narrative filled with themes of ambition, power, betrayal, and supernatural elements. The story provided ample opportunities for Verdi to explore complex characters, intense emotions, and dramatic situations, which were central to his operatic style.

Adapting Shakespeare's "Macbeth" presented Verdi with an artistic challenge; transforming the intricate plot and multifaceted characters of the play into a cohesive operatic work required Verdi to employ his compositional skills and creativity, allowing him to expand his repertoire and explore new musical territories.

Verdi's decision to adapt "Macbeth" can also be viewed within the broader context of Italian nationalism and identity.

By choosing a Shakespearean play, Verdi sought to elevate Italian opera to the level of Shakespearean drama and demonstrate the cultural and artistic prowess of Italy. "Macbeth" became a manifestation of Verdi's commitment to Italian culture and his aspiration to contribute to its artistic heritage.



What is the purpose of the chorus in Verdi's Macbeth?

In Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Macbeth," the chorus serves multiple purposes, reflecting the various functions that a chorus can have in opera in general:

Narrative Commentary: The chorus often provides narrative commentary on the action, offering insights into the unfolding drama. They can provide context, summarise events, or give voice to the collective feelings of a group or community.

Dramatic Effect: The chorus enhances the dramatic effect by amplifying emotions or reactions of the characters on stage. Their collective voice can create a sense of tension, anticipation, or foreboding, emphasising critical moments in the storyline.

Characterisation: Through their collective responses and interactions with the main characters, the chorus helps in character development. They might reflect the public's perception of the protagonists, their fears, hopes, or moral judgments.

Musical Texture: In terms of musical composition, the chorus contributes to the overall texture and richness of the opera. Verdi, known for his mastery in writing for chorus, uses them to create powerful, sweeping choral passages that contrast with solo or ensemble numbers.

Symbolic Representation: At times, the chorus serves as a symbolic representation of broader themes or ideas within the opera. In "Macbeth," for example, the chorus might represent the collective conscience, the voice of the people, or the societal consequences of the actions of the main characters.



Ideas & Questions to Consider:

Watching Verdi's *Macbeth* can be a rich and immersive experience for students, prompting you to reflect on various aspects of the opera. Here are some questions you might consider after watching:

1. How does Verdi's portrayal of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth compare to Shakespeare's original characters? What aspects of Macbeth's personality and motivations are emphasised through Verdi's music?
2. How does Verdi use music to convey the emotional and psychological states of the characters? Can you find any recurring motifs or themes in the music that correspond to specific events or characters?
3. How do the set and costume designs contribute to the overall atmosphere and mood of the opera? Do the visual elements enhance or alter your perception of the characters and their relationships?
4. What themes from Shakespeare's play are emphasised in Verdi's adaptation, and how are they conveyed through music and staging?
5. How does Verdi use vocal techniques and orchestration to evoke specific emotions in the audience? What moments in the opera have a particularly strong emotional impact on you, and why?
6. If you are familiar with other adaptations of *Macbeth*, how does Verdi's interpretation differ, and what unique elements does it bring to the story?