

Welcome to this audio introduction to the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2025 production of **Macbeth**, directed by Daniel Raggett, with set and costume design by Anna Reid.

This production of Macbeth is a contemporary one, set in the run-down, criminal underbelly of Glasgow in the 1990s - a time of violent, organised crime, blood feuds and gang warfare.

It contains loud music; flashing lights, including strobe effects; flame effects and haze. There are also prolonged blackouts; sudden loud noises; smoking; and stage violence, including suicide, fighting & stage blood.

As such, parental guidance is recommended - the play may not be suitable for children under 14.

The show lasts around two hours and thirty-five minutes, including a twenty-minute interval.

The audio describers for this production are Jenny Stewart-Cosgrove and Gethyn Edwards.

The great majority of the play takes place in a dingy working-mens' club, with just a single additional location in the second half, suggested mainly by a change in lighting state. Many scenes are shadowy and dimly lit and the action is punctuated by several total blackouts accompanied by loud, pounding music.

The seating in the theatre is laid out on all four sides of the central low, square stage with a balcony level running around the walls of the whole space at a height of roughly 3 metres. The front two rows of seating along all four sides of the stage have been replaced with individual wooden bar-chairs - all straight-backed but in a range of mismatched designs from earlier decades, the seats upholstered variously with fabric or vinyl in greens and browns.

The central area of stage is a brown chequerboard, pub dancefloor, around 3-and-a-half metres square. It's surrounded by a roughly meter-deep border of classic dark

red, pub carpet with a pale, vines-and-flowers design. That same carpet covers the rest of the stage floor, extending back towards a compact corner-bar to the left. A flight of metal stairs to the bar's right rises from left-to-right to the gallery level. A low-backed, spinet-style piano stands, with its piano-stool, under the staircase alongside a microphone stand. On the opposite front corner to the bar, the space stretches along a walkway towards what's implied to be the main doors of the club. Characters come and go at all four corners of the space as well as up and down the staircase to an upper doorway.

Directly above the dancefloor is an office-style suspended ceiling with its grid of grey-white tiles, some stained by brown patches of damp as if from leaky air conditioning. The ceiling also has a couple of ventilation grilles set into it with fans behind them; a round, red, emergency light; and four large, black, three-blade ceiling fans descending on long, black rods. In darker scenes the fans often cast their whirling shadows onto the floor in pools of pale light. Multiple, football-sized globe lights hang from long wires above the dancefloor, the glass yellowed and specked with years of dirt. There are also sets of twin, tarnished-brass lamp fixtures with small, red lamp-shades set low on the front of the balcony at several points around the room.

The club is furnished with four small, wooden, round-topped, pedestal bar tables, each roughly half a metre across, and nine mismatched wooden chairs similar to those in the front rows of the audience. These are all easily moved about by the cast and crew to reconfigure scenes as required.

The club's corner bar is compact with a flat, pine-panelled front and a pale, formica bar-top. It has an array of three beer taps the right - offering Tennants, Hofmeister and Kestrel lager - plus a fourth, unbranded plain-steel beer font to the left. A couple of square bar stools - again with mismatched seats - stand in front it.

At the rear, there is a tall, square, pine-panelled, backbar, housing a familiar array of half-a-dozen whiskey optics in front of a large mirror. There is also a range of other bottles of spirits and liqueurs lined up on its shelves. Its narrow side-panels to left and right have all manner of leaflets, old photos and notices pinned and stuck to them. There's also a hook for keys; an old football pennant; a hanging card of bar snacks; the switches for the main lights; and a yellowing push-button wall-phone. A collection of dusty old sporting trophies are displayed in a row along the backbar's top surface alongside a battered old cardboard box. A squat, black digital cash

register is stationed at the bar's rear right and there's a working metal sink and mixer tap at the back left along with a grimy, white plastic electric kettle. There's a gap in the left side of the bar top to allow characters to come and go between the bar and the implied back rooms of the club.

After Duncan's death, the club hosts his dark wood coffin, set on a wheeled, metal gurney in front of the bar - his name in white flowers displayed along the coffin's lid. Unsurprisingly, the world of this production is a violent and bloody one with a variety of weapons used throughout. These range from grim, toolbox hardware such as a stanley knife, bradawl or claw hammer, to the baseball bat Macbeth is holding when we first encounter him, to long-bladed knives and heftier weapons such as a crowbar, hatchet and machete.

There is a diverse cast of fourteen. Nine men and five women. The costumes perfectly reflect a Glasgow of the 1990s. The men swagger in Fred Perry polo shirts, and Adidas trainers worn with stonewash denim and shell suit tops, or spivvy suits in caramel hues and houndstooth checks or leather jackets and belted slacks, silver and gold chains glitter at their throats and chunky rings shine from their fingers. They all carry flick knives or other blades. The women pose in pencil skirts and bootcut jeans teamed with denim jackets or shoulder padded blouses in vibrant colours.

**Macbeth** is a tall, muscular white man in his mid-thirties. His sandy blonde hair cut short and frames an attractive face with blue eyes and a trimmed beard. He moves with a confident poise and gestures with a calm authority. We first meet Macbeth dressed in dark denim jeans worn with a tight white vest under an open grey shirt with short sleeves that show his toned arms. At times he throws on a black donkey jacket. As he rises to power his changes into beige chinos and a black vest worn under another short-sleeved shirt, this time the shirt is black and has a floral pattern of bold tropical plants in soft pinks, yellows, and greens on it. His fair hair is slicked back, and he prowls the space with a dangerous energy. He carries a long-bladed knife in a black belt-sheath at the small of his back.

**Lady Macbeth** is older than her husband. A very slim, appealing white woman in her forties. Her fine-featured face has large blue eyes accentuated with grey eyeshadow and her lips are highlighted coral pink. She has dirty blonde hair cropped into a

shaggy bob with a light fringe dusting her eyebrows. She first appears in bootcut, dark denim jeans worn with spike heeled leather boots and topped with a low-cut maroon, satin vest. Over this she wears a Leopard print, fake-fur jacket cut to her thigh and with an enormous gold brooch on the left lapel. Strings of pearls and chains of gold and silver dangle around her neck. Later she changes the jacket for a silken blouse with tapered cuffs and shoulders pads. It has a vivid paisley pattern of electric blue, orange and green. Lady Macbeth has a steely will that belies her apparent fragility and later wears a long knee length jade green silk blouse over her jeans.

**Banquo** is friend and comrade of Macbeth. A white man of the same age he has short grey hair, though his beard is black. Slim and agile Banquo has a casual swagger and steely blue eyes. He first appears in an olive-green bomber jacket worn with grey slacks and blue Adidas trainers. Later he changes his top for a long-sleeved polo shirt that hugs his gym-built torso, the top is bright green with darker green vertical stripes across the front.

Banquo has a son **Fleance** – a white boy of about eleven. He has a mop of blonde hair and a sweet smile. He wears a stripey jumper beneath a beige puffa gilet, blue jeans and “box fresh” trainers.

**Duncan** is the leader or “king” of the gang. An older white man in his early sixties he is a larger-than-life figure, and he carries himself with a straight-backed posture his blue eyes twinkling with malevolence. His grey hair and beard are shorn close to his pink skin. His linen suit is a pale cream colour, and he teams it with a pristine white shirt, expensive silver watch and a chunky signet ring that denotes his status. Over this he wears a floor length camel coat with a belted detail at the back and shiny brown leather loafers. The same actor also plays **Siward** an English gang leader with little to say. He stalks the space standing close to those around him and peering down at them clad in black leather and dark denim.

**Malcolm** is Duncan’s son and unlike his father this sallow skinned youth slinks with rounded shoulders and an unsure sideways glance at the world. His short brown hair frames a boyish face, and he is of slight build and medium height. He wears a rust

orange jumper and beige chinos or double stonewash denim both with trainers on his feet and a silver chain around his neck.

We also meet other members of the gang.

**Ross** is an ebullient white man of chunky build and medium height with a swirl of dark hair and an unkept beard. He has a wolfish smile and is quick to use it. He is dapper in his cream slacks, black loafers, deep red shirt with a zipper front and either a dog tooth jacket if grey and black or a black leather jacket.

**Angus** is a thin pale man in his mid-twenties with a shock of bleached blonde hair cropped to show the dark roots beneath. His blue eyes are hooded by dark bushy eyebrows. He struts in stonewash denim jeans, white trainers and a series of tops worn over a white polo neck including a black and blue shell suit jacket and a blue and grey striped, crew neck jumper.

A **Priest** frequents the bar. He speaks with a soft Irish accent. A white man of thin build and medium height he has watchful blue eyes and a long nose above a thin grey moustache; His steel grey hair is short and neatly combed. He is dressed in a black suit the colour only broken by the white of his clerical collar.

**Macduff** is a respected and well thought of member of the gang. A white man in his forties he has a serious face with pronounced cheekbones and earnest blue eyes. His light brown hair is cut to his collar and long on top where it is combed into a sweeping side parting away from his high forehead. He is dressed in grey slacks and dark brown leather shoes worn with a dark purple and white pin striped shirt under a brown leather jacket with a fly away collar and a button down front.

His wife, **Lady Macduff** is younger a mixed heritage woman in her late twenties she wears her dark curly hair caught on the top of her head with the length tumbling across her shoulders. Her brown skinned face is carefully made up, and she has a pronounced pregnancy bump beneath her tight-fitting clothes. She wears combinations of black leather pencil skirts with sheer tights and low-heeled slip-on shoes topped with a stonewash denim jacket and gold hooped earrings. Or she

swaps the denim for a black leather jacket with a sheen to it and a dress that hugs her figure.

The couple have a son a little boy of about eight with close cropped afro hair, round smooth skinned face, and big brown eyes – he is dressed in sky blue dungarees.

The **Porter** is servant to the Macbeth's. A mixed heritage man in his thirties with light brown skin and thick dreadlocked hair style in a top knot and framing an open face with a dogged expression. He is dressed in pale denim jeans and a dark checked shirt.

We also meet the **Weird Sisters**. Three white women who drift in and out of the bar arriving on a shrieking current of their voices piercing our ears in darkness, words overlapping and melding into the space around us. The first is the oldest a woman in her sixties with a head of long straggly grey hair held in place with a headscarf that frames a pinched face with a sardonic smile and deep-set grey eyes. She is dressed in a bulky, shaggy black fur coat over a dark brown dress and shuffles on two grey hospital crutches. The next is in her fifties with short, dyed black hair, sunken brown eyes and ruby painted lips. Two thick gold chains glitter at her throat and two golden knots are clipped to her earlobes. She is dressed with a touch of glamour and sashays, hips swinging beneath her crocodile skin, black leather coat that glints under the lights. The last is a young woman in her twenties, thin and wisp like with very short red hair, an elfin face and huge blue eyes picked out with Kohl pencil and grey shadow. She moves with an ethereal step in a shapeless cotton dress of dark brown and green covered almost in its entirety with a long mohair jumper of chocolate brown – the knit has a gappy, weblike quality revealing the pale skin of her arms beneath.

Macbeth - Sam Heughan [*hew-an*]

Lady Macbeth - Lia Williams

Banquo - Nicholas Karimi

Duncan / Siward - Gilly Gilchrist

Malcolm - Calum Ross

Macduff - Alec Newman

Lady Macduff - Jamie Marie Leary

Ross - John McLarnon

Angus - Conor McLeod

Porter- Michael Abubakar [abbu-ba-kar]

Priest - Christopher Patrick Nolan

The Weird Sisters - Eilidh [ay/ee] Fisher, Irene Macdougall and Alison Peebles

The role of Fleance is shared by Polly Florence, George Gilchrist and Myles Owen.

The role of McDuff's child is shared by Eli Felix, A'vayo Henry and Izzy Israel.

Director - Daniel Raggett

Set & Costume Designer- Anna Reid

Lighting Designer- Ryan Day

Composer - Tommy Reilly

Sound Designer - Tingying Dong

Fight Director - Alex Payne

Assistant Director - Max Harrison