

## MACBETH

This is a full - blooded production that is not afraid to unleash the power of Shakespeare's dark masterpiece. The witches are identified as the source of the dramatic energy of the play. They are shamans, wild forest spirits and they are neither man nor woman. They inhabit the entire world of the play. Macbeth himself is a warrior, not a thinker, a man of courage whose bravery is corrupted by unthinking ambition. His wife is also a type of witch, this is a Lady Macbeth who calls down the spirits to “unsex her here” but is possessed and destroyed by the demons she thought to command. In contrast the Porter scene is a comic and acrobatic dance that is (unusually) genuinely funny. The set, by noted designer Kurn is an extraordinary luminous series of walls that become trees. These move around the stage on wheels, creating striking visual imagery.

### **A brief synopsis of the TNT production:**

Macbeth and Banquo are two Thanes (Leading nobles) of the aged King of Scotland, Duncan. They are also his generals. They defeat a Norwegian invasion of Scotland and on their return from the battlefield meet three witches who predict that Macbeth will become King and that Banquo will found a dynasty of Kings. They also predict that Macbeth will be made Thane of Cawdor, which happens almost as soon as they vanish. Macbeth starts to believe their prophesy and tells it in a letter to his wife. Lady Macbeth is actually more ambitious and tough than her husband and when she receives the letter starts to hatch a plot to murder the old King when he stays with them soon after the victory. Banquo is troubled by these events but keeps silent. Macbeth wonders if he should do the terrible deed of killing his guest and King. Prompted by his wife he does kill the King, almost has a breakdown and is saved from discovery by his cooler wife.

As the witches foretold Macbeth is declared King in preference to Duncan's son, Malcolm, who fearing for his life flees to England. It is assumed the young Malcolm is guilty of his father's death. Both Banquo and another noble, MacDuff are worried at the turn of events. Macbeth once in power becomes convinced that Banquo will betray him and is also worried by the witches' prophecy that Banquo's family line will one day become King. Macbeth is hardening and without his wife's knowledge arranges the murder of his “friend” Banquo and Banquo's son (Fleance) but although Banquo is killed Fleance escapes.

Macbeth holds a banquet to celebrate his coronation, but Banquo's ghost appears and disrupts the banquet. Only Macbeth can see the ghost, the nobles are worried that their new king is mad. Lady Macbeth, now Queen, tries to hold the banquet together and cover up for her husband but the effort almost destroys her and we never see her energetic or rational again.

Macbeth decides to return to the witches for advice, he receives three riddling predictions that seem to prove he can never be defeated, including the statement that “no man of woman born can ever harm him” and that he will fall only when a forest marches on his castle. When Macbeth presses them they repeat the prediction that Banquo's descendants will rule Scotland for hundreds of years. This drives Macbeth to new fury and he decides to be bloody and murderous. He is angered that MacDuff has gone to England to meet with Prince Malcolm and so has his whole family murdered including the children. The scene shifts to England where MacDuff is trying to persuade a cautious Malcolm to return to Scotland and lead a revolt against Macbeth. News comes that all MacDuff's family are murdered and Malcolm, moved, is persuaded to lead an English army into Scotland with MacDuff.

Back in Scotland, Lady Macbeth goes mad, driven to distraction by her guilt. She eventually commits suicide and Macbeth sinks into dark despair. The English army arrive and Macbeth trusts to the witches' prophecies. But these are soon revealed as omens of his destruction as the English army camouflages itself with branches so the forest appears to march on Macbeth's castle. Finally, as Macbeth's disloyal army melts away, MacDuff corners the tyrant King. Macbeth still trusts the witches but MacDuff reveals he was born by Caesarian operation and so not truly born from a woman's womb. Macbeth sees he is doomed but chooses to fight to the end. MacDuff kills him and cuts off his head. Malcolm is restored as King of Scotland. The witches are still in the background – the play's themes are repeated and reinforced – all seems well but humanity will soon corrupt and destroy itself again in its endless pursuit of power.