

Lyric

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MACBETH

EDUCATION PACK

For Drama GCSE, A Level &
BTEC Performing Arts students

OVERVIEW & CONTENTS

This education pack has been created in collaboration between English Touring Theatre (ETT) and the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. We are committed to deepening and nurturing young people's understanding of theatre and the arts. We aim to raise the cultural aspirations of young people and make theatre accessible to all. With this in mind, this education pack is designed for teachers of Drama GCSE and BTEC Performing Arts students and is geared towards the live theatre review and practitioner study. This pack is written from a theatre maker's perspective and we hope it provides some interesting insights into how a production like *Macbeth* is created and performed. Additionally, there are also resources and ideas of how you might further explore the themes and issues raised within this innovative and thought provoking performance.

Macbeth is a set text option for assessment for English GCSE exam boards AQA, OCR and EDEXCEL.

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SYNOPSIS

**SPOILER
ALERT!**

The story of *Macbeth* takes place in a bloody and tumultuous time. Scotland is at war with rebels within, and Norway without.

FIRST HALF

We open with Lady Macbeth, hearing news from her husband that he has fought a great battle and defeated his enemy. He also reports of a strange incident in the forest, where he and his friend Banquo came across three strange women, who told him a prophecy: that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, and eventually King of Scotland... They also said that Banquo – though he would never be King – would have children who became Kings. No sooner did these strange women vanish, than the first part of their prophecy came true: Macbeth is named Thane of Cawdor.

Together, the Macbeths decide to do whatever they can to make this prophecy come true and become King and Queen.

That night, the Scottish King Duncan and his court attend a feast hosted by his friends the Macbeths, where they will celebrate Scotland's victory and reward the Macbeths with titles and jewels.

While the King is sleeping, Macbeth sneaks into his room and murders him.

They frame King Duncan's own heir, Malcolm.

Malcolm flees the country and Macbeth is crowned King.

The act weighs heavy on Macbeth, and as his conscience catches up with him, he spirals into doubts, memories, and hallucinations. Macbeth becomes paranoid that Banquo suspects him and is concerned about what the 'witches' said about Banquo's children becoming Kings.

Unstable, threatened, and jealous, Macbeth orders Banquo and his child Fleance to be murdered.

Banquo is killed, but Fleance escapes.

Despite Lady Macbeth's best efforts to calm her husband, Macbeth's psychological state deteriorates, and he acts out at a banquet in front of assembled lords, saying he can "see" the murdered Banquo.

Fear spreads like wildfire, and many flee.

SECOND HALF

Paranoid and fearing for his life, Macbeth decides to return to the 'witches' who gave him the prophecy – although it is unclear whether they are real people, spirits, or just the hallucinations of a paranoid mind. The 'spirits' he calls upon tell him that he cannot be killed by anyone "of woman born", and that he will remain King until the nearby Birnam forest marches on the castle. Macbeth is a little reassured.

Elsewhere, though, Malcolm makes a deal with the English force to help her retake the throne.

She tests the loyalties of MacDuff and other Scottish lords, and then marches on Macbeth with a combined English-Scottish army. They cover themselves in branches cut from Birnam Wood to mask their approach...

Meanwhile at the castle, Macbeth has lost all control.

His wife, haunted by her actions, kills herself.

Macbeth looks outside and he sees Birnam Wood walking towards the castle...

Macbeth battles on but is found by MacDuff.

MacDuff reveals that he was not "of woman born", but brought into the world by C-section.

Macbeth is killed and Malcolm becomes King of Scotland.

IN CONVERSATION WITH...



**RICHARD TWYMAN,
DIRECTOR**

Click the link below or use the QR code to watch Director Richard Twyman discuss the process of creating this performance and why *Macbeth* is still such an important and relevant text.

[WATCH HERE](#)



**RACHAEL WALSH,
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR**

Click the link below or use the QR code to watch Rachael Walsh explain her role as Associate Director.

[WATCH HERE](#)



**HEATHER COOPER,
COMPANY STAGE MANAGER**

Click the link below or use the QR code to watch Heather Cooper give a valuable insight in the role of a Company Stage Manager.

[WATCH HERE](#)





SOPHIE STONE

PERFORMER

Sophie Stone shares thoughts and insights into this production of *Macbeth* from the perspective as a performer.

Were you familiar with the play *Macbeth* before you were cast in this production and what were your experiences of Shakespeare?

At school, I had a similar relationship to Shakespeare's work as most teenagers, especially the pre-Baz Luhrmann generation! But, sometimes all it takes is someone who loves it and wants to share breakthroughs and relevancies to the themes, that something clicks and we can access a world that seems so alien to us. Once I understood that rhythm, imagery and expressions were the core connections between Sign Language and the prose & verse of Shakespeare's words, I felt it opened up another dimension. I've played Lady Macbeth in many workshopped scene studies, in both spoken and signed translations, so knew the play from that perspective quite well. Though entering the world via other characters like Ross / Porter, meant seeing a different POV (point of view) and another opportunity to play. The two things that help the most with owning the language is trusting the iambic pentameter:

it tells you the clues and shows you what words are emphasised as important; and intention: what does your character want? These are useful tools, whatever language you're working with. I've worked with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* – so whatever I felt about Shakespeare at the start, is clearly not obvious anymore! I love to be challenged and to discover ways to make something work artistically and culturally. Bringing your own truth to Shakespeare's world is exactly why the works are celebrated today, he wrote about society, behaviours, relationships and the rise and fall of humanity, he would embrace how we translate and apply them to today.

Could you explain an aspect of the character Ross that you have enjoyed playing as a performer?

My character is an amalgamation of several characters (Porter, Lords, soldier) which allows us to have an edit of the show that enables the story to be carried through the nine actors on stage. I've loved playing the complexities of Ross, not being one shade. She has the frailties of human nature and is a joker, front foot and seemingly unafraid, yet makes decisions that causes the deaths, unintentionally, of those

she loves. The storytelling opportunities in this role has been joyful, physical and confronting. There's no hiding or sitting back for this one! When the audience want to play along with you, it's a dream playground for everyone.

As a Deaf actor, could you explain how you collaborate with others during the rehearsal process? What arrangements are made to ensure that you are fully included in the process of creating theatre?

We have had two interpreters working with us through the rehearsal process to ensure communication was seamless and equitable. Once we open the show, notes sessions and preview re-workings were also covered by access support. We also had Matthew Tuckey, associate sound designer, who liaised with me throughout on ways to make sound more tactile, feeding in vibrational tones, bass and reverbs to the design, pumping them into the stage floors. Other discussions were had on light changes for on-stage cues and support backstage for cue lights, forming communication via stage management and among the cast themselves. I'm an independent artist and have ways to rely on visual cues just like hearing artists rely on sound cues, no-one needs to be reliant on another actor if the environment is made equitable and accessible for all. Sometimes spaces haven't had the advantage of working with different bodies, so learning curves and educational growth is inevitable and hopefully informs solid change for a more inclusive future. It all starts with language and awareness before anything begins.

Could you describe your journey becoming a performer? Did you first develop a love of theatre at school, or was it via other routes?

As a Deaf child without language, I found solace and expression in the Arts (performance and fine) and started my curiosity into acting at the Unicorn Theatre. I later joined The Watermill Theatre whilst at secondary school, performing in annual youth plays then returning there as an adult in a professional capacity. It was the one area where I felt most safe to fail, most embraced as an individual, most celebrated as an artist, most welcomed into a 'family'. I had a love

of words and human behaviour, a desire to story-tell through every means of expression available to me, it gave me a connection to the world where I wasn't judged by what I 'couldn't' do but by what I could. In a society where I didn't have a voice, I could be heard through the words of others, a catharsis, if you like. I trained at RADA as the only Deaf person to have ever trained there (James Boyle has since joined) and graduated into an industry that wasn't quite ready to take 'risks' (though I don't deem myself as one, the industry certainly did). The fight has been long and arduous, but those who have championed change and celebrated new 'voices' and bodies, striving to make theatre and TV representative of the exciting variety of real life; putting truth and resilience, diversity and inclusivity front and centre until the industry is more balanced and rich, are the ones I will remember and will look back on with admiration. Opportunity, opportunity, opportunity. That'll always be the name of the game. Provide them in the right way, to the right people, and everyone wins.

What would you love audiences to take away from seeing this production of *Macbeth*?

If it changes one person's perspective of Shakespeare and they feel able to connect, relate and understand it either for the first time or in new ways, that's worth all the graft we've put into it. The European theatre flavour we've explored, plus bringing our culture, voices, language and ideas into a cauldron of a play, has given us the opportunity to show how else Shakespeare can be done. How else we can look at the text and make it relevant to today's world. How else we can bring ourselves to the work, rather than the 400 year history to us. I hope school and college students feel they can reach his world more when we bring it crashing into today. I also feel hopeful that the character choices expose a little of how today's people in power can behave and how tyranny can start from seemingly good intentions. Power is a drug with the biggest destructive force and often the least resistance and accountability at its earliest stages, it's only when it is too late, that we actively try to stop it. *Macbeth* is a warning. You laugh now, but you always saw it coming.

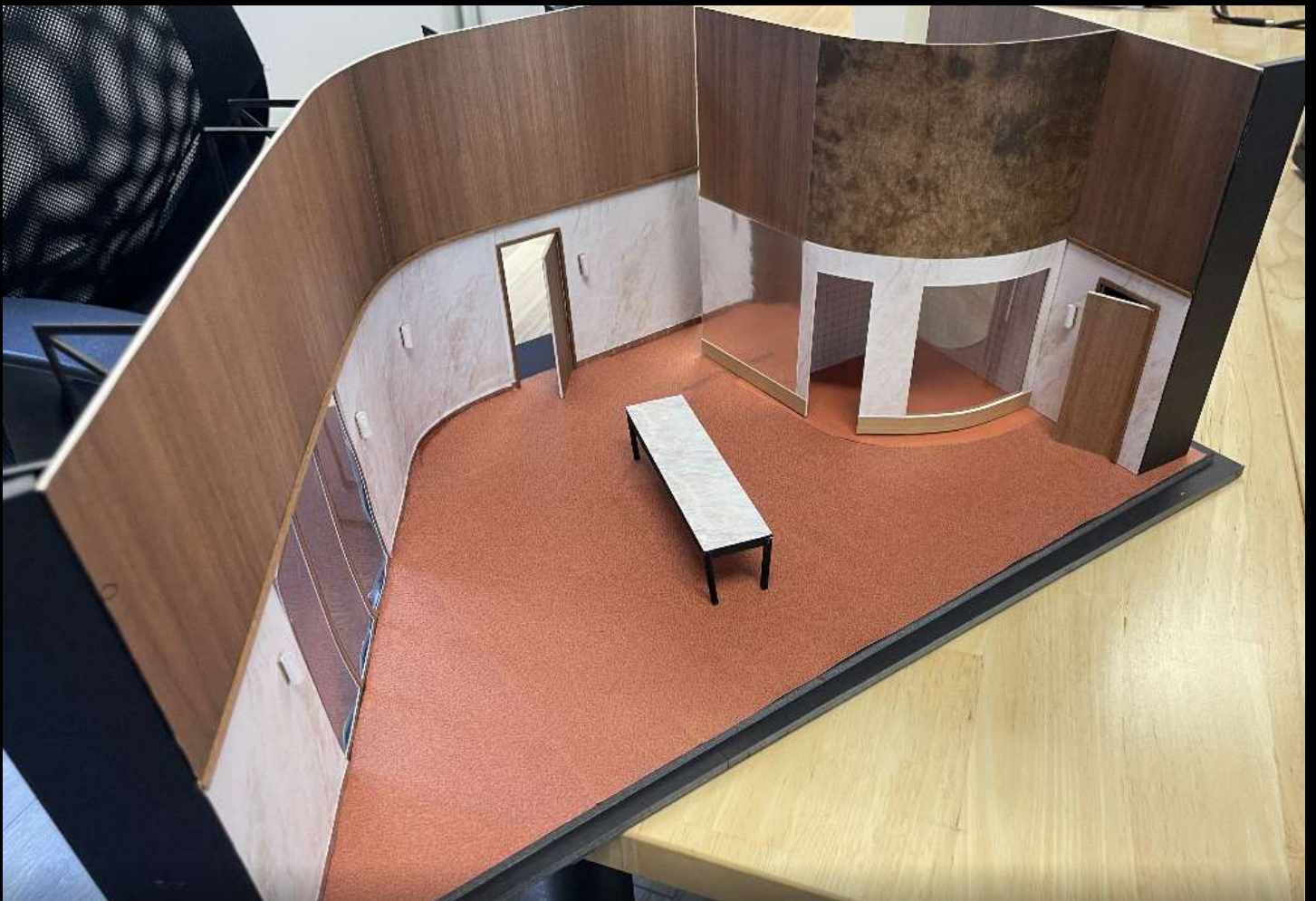
DESIGN ELEMENTS

Set Design – Basia Bińkowska

The set of this production of *Macbeth* is reflective of the decision to set this version in a modern setting, rather than Shakespearian times. The aim is to create a sense of being in the Macbeth's home: however there is deliberate mix of 'retro' items such as record players and 50s style chairs, that feel like they are from a different era, juxtaposed against present day props including smart phones and vape pens.

In the first Act there is a large table in the centre of the stage that does not look like a traditional dining table, more like a boardroom table from an office or hotel conference room.

There are many 'hard' textures in the space, like wood and metal rather than soft fabrics and couches that we might expect in a home environment. This is because this is a home where there is no softness or comfort but tension and anxiety.



Model Box design of the set. This is a scale model created of the set, before it is constructed, as part of the design process.



Photo: Richard Lakos

Costume Design – Basia Bińkowska

The costumes worn by the characters in this production of *Macbeth* are similar to the set design in that there is no specific time period or era – there is a mixture of modern 21st century items such as denim jackets and T-shirts, however there are also references to the military with combat style trousers and khaki green padded jackets. The character MacDuff wears a plain black kilt – a nod to the Scottish setting and heritage of the text.

The character Lady Macbeth is interesting in terms of costume. There are elements of her overall style that are more masculine – a jeans and jean jacket suite with brown heel boots and when she is Queen an all-black ensemble of tight, tailored trousers, sleeveless V next top with a long black faux fur coat (a sign of luxury) and black ankle boots. She is more vulnerable in terms of costume when she is dressed in her nightwear – a pair of pale, loose fitting

pyjamas with a black satin robe over the top that has a bright floral pattern.

Macbeth is mainly dressed in black combat trousers and a fitted black sweater with a silver zip from the chest to the neck. The use of black suit jacket is used when he becomes King to highlight his new status. This links to the fact that the character of King Duncan wore a similar style of jacket when he was alive.

The colour pallet of the costumes is very much blacks, grey and dark green / Khaki. This is symbolic of the dark nature and themes explore within the play, as well as the thoughts and actions of the characters. An exception is Banquo when he wears a white T-Shirt – this stands out and has various connotations including the fact that he is innocent when murdered, but also represents the fact he is a ghost when he appears in Macbeth's visions. On a practical level it is also visually striking when it is covered in bright red blood and is a shocking image for the audience when he appears at the banquet.



Photo: Richard Lakos



Lighting Design – Azusa Ono

The use of lighting in *Macbeth* supports the atmosphere and mood within the production and works in a number of ways to communicate specific meaning to the audience. Much of the action takes place in the evening and so the lighting is used to create an effect of being inside the Macbeth's home using naturalistic lighting for indoors such as strip lights and wall sconces. The wall lights can be seen in the image above with a warm wash of light across the stage.

In some scenes, the Macbeth and Lady Macbeth interact in darkness, with the illusion that it is the moonlight coming through the windows of the glass patio doors as opposed to lights being on in the house. An example of this is in the image below where a low intensity flood light is used to light the table with the rest of the stage lit with blue lighting to symbolise its night-time.



Sound Design – Tingying Dong

The use of sound within the production is a mixture of both digetic and non digetic sounds.

Digetic Sounds

These are sounds that are a part of the world of the performance. There are many sounds in this production that are vital to communicate meaning and to support the narrative. Examples include:

- Mobile phone rings and text message alerts
- House alarm when Duncan's body is discovered
- Music played on a record player
- Knocks at the door.

There is the use of music that is part of the world of the play and the characters respond to this - including the use of bagpipes for

dancing at a party then used again for Duncan funeral procession. Like the use of the Kilt as part of the costume design, the bagpipes are a uniquely Scottish symbol.

Non Digetic Sounds

These are sounds that are only meant for the audience and are not a part of the world of the play.

During several key moments within the production the use of abstract atmospheric music and sounds are used. This helps to create tension and suspense, but also represents the internal turmoil and inner conflict of the characters. When Macbeth is debating whether to kill Duncan or not there is menacing heartbeat sound repeating in the background as he delivers his soliloquy. Along with the lighting the sound creates a menacing atmosphere in places which is juxtaposed against moments of stillness and silence.



Photo: Richard Lakos

EDUCATION RESOURCES

We hope that you and your students enjoyed the production. Below are a series of tasks that can support learning and develop a deeper understanding of how a production like this is created and performed.

Task 1: Discussion points

Think about the following questions linked to this specific production with your students.

- 1) In this version of *Macbeth* the characters / presence of the 'Witches' has been reimagined.
 - a. Why do you think this decision was made?
 - b. What, if any, impact has this decision had on the production?
 - c. How were elements of the supernatural represented in this production?

After your discussion read a response from the director Richard Twyman and link your discussion points with his:

"For the supernatural in the play, the 'witches', we have explored from two directions. The first is to try and understand the impact the 'witches' would have had in Shakespeare's time and translate that to today. By staging 'witches', Shakespeare was tapping into the great cultural anxiety of the age: the sheer scale,

*fevered language, unwavering belief and sustained violence of the witch trials over this period in history show that it tapped into a deep subconscious fear in society. The theatrical coup of bringing three 'witches' onto the stage to start the play would therefore have been a challenging, visceral and unsettling moment for Shakespeare's audience: whereas today our expectation and familiarity of this moment can have the exact opposite impact. Secondly, the cultural and historical legacy of the witch trials, and violence against, (predominantly), women creates an interesting tension in a contemporary staging of *Macbeth*. Of course, we also know that all of the thousands of women that were tried and killed for witchcraft in England and Scotland were innocent. Furthermore, given the anxieties of the age and profound cultural impact of *Macbeth*, I feel certain at the very least it added fuel to the fever of the persecution of innocent women that didn't fit into the norms of society that would carry on for a hundred years after the play was written. Given this landscape the most frequently asked question for any director of *Macbeth* – how are you doing the witches? – takes on a new dimension and is something that any contemporary production of *Macbeth* needs to engage seriously with."*

- 2) This production has incorporated iconography / technology including mobile phones and security cameras. Apart from making the production feel more modern and based in the present day, are there any other reasons you can think of that it has been included in this production?
- 3) How does the set of this production of *Macbeth* support the themes and issues present in the play as a whole?
- 4) How do the costumes worn by the following characters communicate specific meaning to the audience about their status?
 - a. Macbeth
 - b. Lady Macbeth
 - c. Duncan

- 5) Look at the note from director Richard Tywman below. Discuss the questions he raises and how much you agree or disagree with this statement.

“In the final part, Shakespeare does what he does best: putting society on stage. He zooms out, and asks how this violence and grab for power affects society, and what its response might look like. What do we do when there is a tyrant in our midst? How do we try and take that down? Are we complicit in it? The play traces the incredibly painful and difficult decisions that people make in times of war and tyranny that mean that nobody comes out of it unscarred.”

Task 2: In the Rehearsal Room

Using the image below, practice using your analysis skills and use of precise details to be able to describe the way the performers are using their physicality and space and interaction to communicate meaning.

Physical drama skills:

- Facial Expressions
- Gestures
- Posture

Space and Interaction:

- Levels
- Proxemics/ distance
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Describe the characters physicality in as much detail as possible.
- How are the actors using space and interaction e.g. eye contact – what is it communicating to the audience about their relationship?



Alex Austin and Lois Chimimba. Photo: Richard Lakos

Task 3: Production artwork

This is the artwork for this production of *Macbeth*.

Discuss the following questions:

- 1) Describe the image and what it communicates to a potential audience about the production.
- 2) How is the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth portrayed in this image? Analysing the use of space and interaction what can we infer about these characters from this image?

Your turn – design your own poster for this production. What images and text would you include if you were to design an alternative artwork?



Task 4: Live Theatre Review

You might be coming to watch this production as preparation for your GCSE Drama exam and the Live Theatre Evaluation component. Here is a [link](#) to a useful resource that form part of the publication *GCSE Drama Live Theatre Evaluation* by Annie Fox, published by Illuminate Publishing:

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING ACTING

How is the acting shaped about the play?
Use this mind map to begin selecting...

Use the grid below to check your understanding of the production.

PREPARING TO VIEW A THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Verbal skills

Physical skills

Research notes

Name of production	
Date of performance	
Name of theatre, or performance space	
Synopsis	
When and where is the play set?	
Main characters and the actors playing them	
Director and designers	
New play or revival of an older play?	
Why do you think it is being staged?	
Key themes	
Critical reaction to the production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Notable reviews ▶ Any aspect of the production particularly admired or criticised ▶ Has it won awards? ▶ Was there anything controversial about the production? 	
Any key features that have been remarked on that you were particularly looking forward to seeing?	
Your expectations of the performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Traditional? ▶ Exciting? ▶ Unusual? ▶ Entertaining? ▶ Funny? ▶ Frightening? ▶ Spectacular? 	

TIP
Most exam boards do not allow notes in the exam, so use the grids in this book to help you identify and recall production details **before** the exam.

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Model Response – Performance skills

Look at the two written responses describing the same moment of the performance. Consider which example is more effective at describing how the actors use vocal and physical skills. Explain why...



Photo: Richard Lakos

Response 1

Lois Chimimba, playing Lady Macbeth, used her vocal and physical skills effectively when trying to convince Macbeth to stick to the plan to murder Duncan. She moved close to him and put her face close to his. She had a harsh and angry tone of voice when she says the line ‘When you durst do it, then you were a man’ She pointed her finger at him and had a furious facial expression. When she said how she would have ‘dashed the brains out’ when referring to their dead baby she shoved at Macbeth’s shoulders.

Response 2

Lois Chimimba, playing Lady Macbeth, expertly used vocal and physical skills when manipulating Macbeth to continue with their plan to murder King Duncan. She moved quickly over to him and grabbed his face in her hands as she stared intensely into his eyes without blinking. She breathed heavily before

hissing out the line ‘When you durst do it, then you were a man’. She put emphasis on the word ‘man’ by raising the volume of her voice that was, until that moment, more of a whisper. At the same time, she took the index finger of her right hand and prodded Macbeth’s chest followed by turning her head away from him in disgust. When she turned back to look at him her facial expression was hard, effectively showing her frustration. Her jaw was tightly set and her eyes were glaring at him. After a few deep breaths her face softened slightly, the tension in her jaw and brow dissipating and her gaze looking down at the floor when she said ‘I have given suck, and I know how tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me’. The pitch of her voice lowered and the pace of delivery was much slower when she spoke this line with her shoulders slightly hunched over as she bent her head forwards to lean on Macbeth’s chest – suddenly seeming quite vulnerable.

Task 5: Take a look at other ETT resources

Through the Cracks - App

<https://ett.org.uk/our-work/through-the-cracks/>

Through the Cracks is drama like you've never experienced it before, through the lens of augmented reality.

Download the free app now and transport yourself to a world where reality meets fantasy, where cracks open up right beneath your feet, revealing glimpses of extraordinary stories playing out below. *In Time* - is available now. A queer love story woven through the fabric of time travel.

Brought to you by English Touring Theatre and Office of Everyone.

[Download from the Apple App Store](#)

[Download for Android through Google Play Store](#)

Sir Ian McKellan

Narrator

Sophie Melville

Milly

Annabel Baldwin

Patricia / Pearl

Dorothea Meyer-Bennet

Maggie

Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/966695447/d0193cc0be>

App Links

[Apple](#)

[Android](#)



Cast

Macbeth
Alex Austin



Lady Macbeth
Lois Chimimba



Lennox
David Colvin



Duncan
Daniel Hawksford



Lady MacDuff
Bianca Stephens



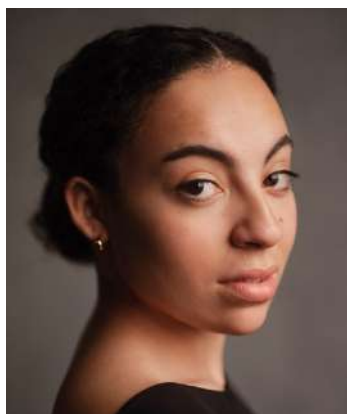
Ross
Sophie Stone



MacDuff
Ammar Haj Ahmad



Banquo
Gabriel Akuwudike



Malcolm
Bella Aubin

Credits and Acknowledgments

This education pack has been produced by Kate Newall, ETT Marketing and Communications Manager and Natalie Jim, Education Producer, Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. The designer of this pack is Hannah Yates.

Creative Team

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Rachael Walsh

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Ola Klos

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Jack Hathaway

Associate Sound Designer
Matthew Tuckey

Projection Designer
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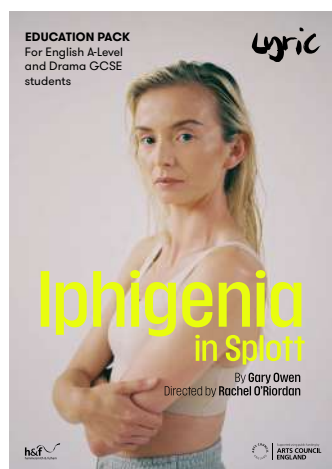
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For more information on our education work and to download other teaching resources please visit lyric.co.uk/young-lyric/education

Take a look at some of our previous Education Packs:



ETT

ABOUT ETT

(English Touring Theatre) is a UK based international touring company. We stage both new and classic productions of outstanding quality, imagination, and ambition; interrogating and celebrating contemporary England; sparking national and global conversations. You can find our work in your local theatre, online, at festivals, internationally and in the West End. We believe in the power of creative collaboration, and work in partnership with visionary artists and venues. We believe that touring is a democratic and imaginative way to meet audiences and communities in their hometowns and cities, storytelling on a national canvas. ETT has won the UK Theatre Awards Best Touring Production in 2014, 2015, 2016, Best Play Revival in 2019, Excellence in Inclusivity and Best New Play in 2022; and Excellence in Touring in 2023. Founded in 1993, ETT is a limited company and a registered charity, based in London.

ett.org.uk

Twitter/X: [@weareETT](https://twitter.com/weareETT)

Facebook / Instagram: [@EnglishTouringTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/EnglishTouringTheatre)

YouTube: [ETT](https://www.youtube.com/ETT)

Lyric

ABOUT THE LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre produces bold and relevant world-class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith, the theatre's home for 130 years. Under the leadership of its co-CEOs, Artistic Director Rachel O'Riordan and Executive Director Amy Belson, it is committed to being vital to, and representative of, the local community. A major force in London and UK theatre, the Lyric produces adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work that tells the stories that matter. The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre has a national reputation for ground breaking work to develop and nurture the next generation of talent, providing opportunities for young people to discover the power of creativity and to experience the life changing impact of theatre. We are the creative heart of Hammersmith, proud of our history and ambitious for our future.