

Our Star Theatre Company Presents
RIDICULOUS, RIOTOUS FUN. THE STUPIDEST MACBETH ON STAGE



BY ANDY GRIFFITHS | DIRECTED BY BEN MOWBRAY

EDUCATION PACK



INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

This Education Pack is designed to go hand in hand with Our Star Theatre Company's production of Just Macbeth! As well as exploring aspects of the play, it takes a look into the making of a professional theatre production, who is involved, the history behind the piece and it's characters.

We hope that this pack will be a useful and insightful resource to enhance your students enjoyment and understanding of the play. As a small company formed by Ben Mowbray, who was a school leaver himself the day Our Star was formed, it's also important that our work inspires the next generation of young theatre makers to put their hand to producing their own plays, performing work they enjoy and understanding the process that goes into the formation of their own touring theatre company.

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ABOUT OUR STAR THEATRE COMPANY

Formed in 2016, Our Star Theatre Company has produced over 25 professional touring shows since its inception, engaging with local performers, technical staff and venues in and around Herefordshire to celebrate and highlight the talent within the arts in our lovely home region and beyond.



All of the company's productions are produced from our Herefordshire base near Ledbury, and tour to theatres small, large and in-between throughout the UK. Not only do we tour our own professional shows, we actively engage with local schools and arts venues to provide youth theatre programmes, not to mention our acclaimed community-cast musicals to help educate and inspire the next generation of theatre-makers.



Ben, the company's founder, set up Our Star Theatre Company at the age of just sixteen, making the very first steps to create a successful touring company the very day after he left college. Since then, he has worked on ways to expand the company's reach to audiences, venues, actors, technicians, students and this continues to be his primary aim. Ben is thrilled to see the strides Our Star has made, which recently include producing four brand-new touring productions in the last two years, with a record-breaking number of tour dates, miles travelled and audience numbers reached.



Keen to spread his enthusiasm for making theatre to our young audiences, it's important that your students are aware that with the right mix of hard work and determination, they too can start their own successful business in touring theatre should they share the dream a young Ben Mowbray had.

We at Our Star find real satisfaction in seeing our audience numbers continue to grow, people coming back time and again to watch the company's latest offering as we become known for our quirky comedies UK-wide.



FOUNDING A THEATRE COMPANY

ACTIVITY

IN SMALL GROUPS

Ask each group to discuss what might be the very first elements to consider when starting a brand new touring theatre company. Get them to write their ideas down, as well as come up with the following:

- A name for their new theatre company
- What genre or style of theatre they aim to produce
- Who they aim to make theatre for and why

Share ideas with the class, particularly opening opportunities for discussion about the following:

FINANCES - How might a new theatre company afford their first tour?

MARKETING - How would a new theatre company let the target audience know about their work?

RECRUITMENT - Where will the company find actors who suit their vision? What steps would they need to take to employ them as performers and keep them safe while touring?

PROGRAMMING - How will the company choose which theatre venues to visit, how many tour dates to complete, and within what time frame?

REHEARSALS - Where will the performers rehearse the play and for how long? Who will direct the actors and make decisions on further elements of the piece?

ACTIVITY

Design a poster for your dream theatre show for your brand-new theatre company. Make sure to include:

- A striking image
- A title that catches peoples attention
- The dates of the show
- Venue the show will be held in
- Ticket prices
- Where to buy tickets

WHO'S WHO?



DIRECTOR

The Director is the person who makes decisions on all of the creative aspects of the play. They work with the actors to make each scene look like their vision and direct them during rehearsals so they can achieve scenes and moments which reflect the Directors ideas.

PRODUCER

The producers are in charge of the entire project. They pick and hire the entire creative team, work out an appropriate budget and organise everyone and everything that makes a tour happen.

LIGHTING & SOUND TECHNICIAN

The Lighting and Sound Technician designs and operates all lighting and sound cues that happen during the show. They make decisions on which moments require certain lighting states to create the right mood, place or time period. They also source and operate the sound effects and pieces of music you hear, choosing which of these best reflect the piece.

PRODUCTION MANAGER

The Production Manager organises all of the practical logistics of the production and tour, including the booking of theatres, coordination of tour dates, transport and accommodation for performers and touring crew, and making sure everything is on track for a smooth tour.

HEAD OF WARDROBE

The Head of Wardrobe has the task of designing the costumes for the show and then bringing them to life by sourcing, making and putting together full outfits including all accessories needed. They also take on the role of keeping costumes safe, clean and maintained, so that they are repaired and ready for every performance.

TOUR MANAGER

The Tour Manager is responsible for the smooth running of the tour and performances as they happen, dealing with any problems that arise as and when they occur, travelling from venue to venue with the performers. It is their job to make sure everyone on tour is cared for and kept informed. They are also the main point of contact for venues as the company arrives at each one, and in charge of putting the logistics already arranged by the Production Manager into place.

WHAT DOES EACH ROLE ENTAIL?

ACTIVITY

AS A CLASS

Before reading the above list, discuss and write down who the class think might be involved in creating a touring theatre production and what roles they think each person has.

IN SMALL GROUPS

Give each group one job title from the above list and ask them to write down all of the jobs you think they might do.

INDIVIDUALLY

Which role do you think you would be good at? What different skillsets do you think you need for each role on the team?

MACBETH AS AN ORIGINAL PLAY

Macbeth was written by Shakespeare in around 1606, when the early 17th century was a time of political upheaval as a new king had just come to power. The play

Macbeth is about how ambition and a fascination for power can destroy a person and everything around them.

Macbeth was one of the last plays Shakespeare ever wrote before he died in 1616.

Often referred to as "The Scottish Play", many people believe it is unlucky to say the name "Macbeth" inside a theatre as the play is thought of as cursed. It was first performed at The Globe

Theatre in London in April 1611. Though it has since been rebuilt twice, The Globe still stands today as a prominent outdoor theatre which was first built by The Lord Chamberlain's Men, which was the name of the company Shakespeare wrote for.

Audience members were packed in from the poorest playgoers, named groundlings, who stood nearest the stage, to the most expensive seats in 'the gods' which were raked for a good view of both the actors onstage, and the audience members themselves as high status individuals. Going to a theatre, even for the poor, was a huge social event. Audience members didn't sit quietly like they are expected to now, instead they would shout out, fight, boo, dance and throw things at the actors!

Macbeth remains one of the worlds most famous plays today, and is very much still relevant in exploring ideas of corruption and how ambition can lead us astray.



THE ORIGINAL PLOT

While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland. Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest. After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king. Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too. Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions. In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed and Macduff swears revenge. Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide. Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor who wrote many famous plays and poems during his life. Born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582 and had three children.

Shakespeare spent most of his professional life with an acting company in London, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1599, the acting company built the Globe Theatre.

Shakespeare's plays are still performed all over the world and have inspired many films, ballets, musicals and operas.



ACTIVITY

INDIVIDUALLY

Find out as much as you can about the playwright Shakespeare and create a fact file on him.

Make sure you include:

When and where Shakespeare was born

When and where Shakespeare died

Family history – marriage and children

Number of plays he wrote - list at least five

Five famous Shakespeare quotes

A picture of Shakespeare

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

Andy, Lisa, and Danny are school friends who are practicing a scene from Macbeth at school. Together, they make a potion filled with all sorts of gross ingredients, only they don't quite expect the results they get when they drink it! Having found themselves gone back in time to a medieval battlefield in the Macbeth story, they find three witches, who deliver a prophecy and tell them that Macbeth is going to be Thane of Cawdor and Banquo's children will be King. It's at this point they have a further realisation...they haven't just changed time and place...but who they are, too! Andy has turned into Macbeth and Danny has become Banquo, Macbeth's best friend.

Macbeth then goes back to his castle where he finds that their other friend who drank the potion, Lisa, has become Lady Macbeth. Macbeth tells her of the Witches predictions and, hungry for power and feeling jealous, Lady Macbeth tells him that he must go out and kill the current King, Duncan. That same day, Macbeth does just this, followed by the crazy killing of Banquo and his son too, as he fears they might also hinder his chances of nabbing the crown. On hearing of their fathers death, King Duncan's children flee the country for fear of their own lives.

After being haunted by King Duncan's ghost, Macbeth decides he should visit the Witches again, and they summon spirits, who tell him that he must beware of a Scottish nobleman called Macduff who felt strongly against Macbeth rising to the throne and that nobody can kill him no matter what. When he learns that Macduff has fled to England to join Malcolm, Macbeth orders that Macduff's castle be seized and, most cruelly, that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered. He orders many people to be killed by his invention: the mash and pulverizing machine.

Convinced she's going mad, Macbeth becomes increasingly guilty of what he has done and Lady Macbeth dies. He then discovers that gnomes are attacking from England, and, still convinced that no one can kill him, he fights the gnomes. MacDuff then fights Macbeth. MacDuff cuts Macbeth's head off. It is then revealed that the entire play was Andy, Danny, and Lisa's version of Macbeth.

THE WRITER OF JUST MACBETH!

Andy Griffiths is an Australian children's book author and playwright. Just Macbeth! is available as both a novel and a play, and having sold over 4 million copies of the book worldwide, Andy's work has featured on the New York Times bestseller list, as well as winning over 40 Australian children's choice awards.

The stage adaption of Just Macbeth! was produced by Bell Shakespeare at the Sydney Opera House in Summer 2010 and again at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in the same year. Now touring from September to October 2025 with Our Star Theatre Company, Just Macbeth is set to delight audiences both young and young at heart across the UK.



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

What do you like most about Just Macbeth?

I really love how silly and funny the play is, and the way it makes a Shakespeare classic so accessible to audiences of all ages. I also love that the characters Danny, Andy and Lisa don't just hop into a new world, but that they actually become the characters of Macbeth, Banquo and Lady Macbeth, too!

What does a day in the life of a theatre director look like?

This can depend on how far into the rehearsal process we are. I tend to have less input later into rehearsals as this is when the actors are most confident with what they're doing, having received the majority of direction from me early on. For the first couple of weeks, we'll go through a specific scene or part of the piece in detail, spending lots of time going over it each day. We often stop so I can give notes on what I'd like the actors to add or change about the scene, particularly focusing on their character traits, tone of voice, mood and movement. Sometimes I might stand and physically show the actors what I'd like them to do, as this helps them see my vision.

How did you prepare to direct the play?

We rehearsed Just Macbeth for three weeks and it was my job to make sure we made enough progress each week so that the show was ready to begin its tour... this can feel like a lot of pressure in the beginning, but every good director knows that you should always trust the process knowing it will all come together in that final week.

To prepare for rehearsals, I made sure to read and re-read the play several times, do lots of research on the history of Macbeth and then work out a rehearsal schedule to ensure we could work through the play scene by scene. I make notes on particular moods and feelings I want the audience to have when watching certain elements of the play, and think of ways this can be done by the actors or through the set, lighting and sound.

How did you learn to direct plays?

I first directed plays as a school leaver, trying my hand at putting on school musicals with the other students. I quickly realised you have to be meticulously organised, super creative and good at communicating your ideas. I was lucky to see numerous plays and musicals growing up - a love that has continued throughout my adult life, and certainly serves me well when taking inspiration from existing works and using it to feed my own. Over the years, I've learnt that it's very important to respect your cast and crew, and that working with other super talented people doesn't serve as a threat, but more a springboard to plummet your work further than you first thought. You have to be quite decisive and know how to communicate what's in your brain to the people who have to create it.

What advice would you give to someone who dreams of becoming a director?

I'd tell them to get as much experience as early on as possible - I really believe that me directing all of those school musicals at a young age helped propel me into learning the basics about how to direct and how to work with other people effectively. I'd also advise to start small and build your repertoire slowly over the years - all big things start from something small! If you want to become a director as your career, you'll need plenty of determination and to put in a lot of hard work too. In addition to all of that, I also think it helps to have been on the other side of the directors chair too, as an actor. Having performed in lots of plays, it's certainly helpful to know how it can feel to be a nervous actor on that first day of rehearsals, as well as the pressures they feel to get it right.



BEN MOWBRAY

ACTIVITY

Use your knowledge from the above interview to write a job description for a Director. Include:

Some information about what the role entails

The key skills that are required

Any experience that would be necessary

Information about the working hours & length of contract

DRAMA ACTIVITIES

IMPROVISATION

Stand in a circle and explain that all of the improvisation, including characters and setting, should be based on Macbeth. Invite one student as the first volunteer into the centre of the circle and ask them to begin an improvisation which allows the audience to understand what setting the actors will be in. When the time feels right, invite another volunteer into the centre, asking them to create a problem within that setting. Once the problem is established, invite a third volunteer in to make the problem worse - let the drama unfold before inviting a fourth and final volunteer in with the aim of solving the problem.

FREEZE FRAMES

In small groups, ask your students to create a set of six freeze frames which tell the Just Macbeth! story from start to finish. Ask them to focus on creating clear frozen pictures, with facial expressions and using physical theatre to depict the necessary settings that might be essential to each picture. Want to take it one step further? Ask the groups to also incorporate choreographed transitions that move them seamlessly from picture to picture.

EXPLORATION

Get each student to choose one line of speech from Macbeth - the line they choose ideally needs to be no longer than 8 words in length. To begin, ask them to walk around the space in neutral - they should do this continually throughout the next steps. Once you've tried the contexts listed below and perhaps tried some of your own, discuss the exercise as a class.

Say your line in complete monotone, with no facial expression or added gesture/movement

Now say your line with the most amount of expression and movement you can possibly muster

Next, try saying your line like a five year old child who's excited for a birthday party

Now say your line like a Court Judge speaking to an unruly defendant

Say your line like you're doing your best to be heard in a loud room

Say it like a shy, introvert who struggles to speak to strangers

Say your line like a member of the Royal Family addressing the nation

Now try saying your line like someone who's trying to get away from the person they're speaking to

CREATIVE THINKING

When Andy and Danny arrive in Scotland they hear the warriors insulting each other. For example, 'Puking jolt-head', 'Beef-witted slubgullion', 'Misbegotten toad-spotted barnacle'! Make up some funny insults similar to those and try them out in pairs. Perhaps add a gesture or a movement and create a sequence of insults to show back to the class.

PHYSICAL THEATRE

In Just Macbeth!, Macbeth uses the Mashing and Pulverising Machine to torture and murder lots of people. In small groups, encourage your students to come up with their own machine to do the same thing. It needs a name and should have different features. They should create the machine using their bodies in the form of physical theatre.

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES

LAVISH LANGUAGE

Shakespearean language is very different to modern-day English. Write down a short conversation you would have with a friend in the playground. Next to this, change the conversation into Shakespearean language. Perform your conversation for the class with a friend.

WRITING AN ACCOUNT

Write an account of someone who has taken a theatre trip to The Globe back in the 1600s. Decide whether to write as a low status Groundling or an Upper Class person in the balcony. Make sure to include descriptions of the theatre itself, the performance, the behaviour of other theatre goers and the view from your seat (or standing position!) Use books and the internet to inform your writing, making it as accurate to the time period as possible.

PLAY REVIEW

Write a review of the play "Just Macbeth!" Search the internet for examples of play reviews - look at the writing style and the information they tend to include. When writing your own, make sure to include descriptions of the set, the actors, the props, lighting and sound design. Remember to summarise in a final paragraph, giving a star rating.

CORONATION INVITATIONS

Design and make a coronation invitation for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's coronation. Use a computer program or design it by hand. Include the date, the time and the place for the coronation. To extend the activity, design and make a menu for the coronation celebration banquet.

MASHING AND PULVERISING MACHINE

Macbeth becomes so caught up in trying to kill everyone he designs a mashing and pulverising machine. Design and label your own mashing and pulverising machine, making sure to include descriptions of what each element does.

GARDEN GNOMES

Macduff was a kind of gnome in the play Just Macbeth! Create your own gnome. Give it a special name. List its personality traits and design its appearance. Draw it or make it from modelling clay.

WRITING A RECIPE

At the start of the play, Danny, Lisa and Andy are putting all sorts of ingredients into a cauldron just like the Witches do at the start of Macbeth. Write your own Recipe For Disaster. Make sure to include a list of ingredients the reader will need, and then write clear step by step instructions for how they should incorporate each ingredient.

DIARY ENTRY

Write a diary entry as Macbeth in the point of the story when he has first spoken to the Witches and learnt of their predictions. Be sure to include how he is feeling about what he has discovered and what he thinks his next move might be.

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JUST MACBETH

ABOUT...

The perfect show for Shakespeare lovers and sceptics alike!

Journey to medieval Scotland for this perfect introduction into Shakespeare for audiences young and old.

Just Macbeth! is by far the stupidest version of Shakespeare's great big gory tragedy you might ever see.

Our story follows school-aged Andy, Danny and Lisa as they prepare their homework presentation: an extract featuring the 3 witches. On reciting their lines and concocting their potion, they are transported back to medieval Scotland!

Exploring the themes and story of Macbeth through the eyes of our three hapless heros, this hilarious and irreverent take on Shakespeare's classic tragedy will have the audience in stitches!

DATES...

10-11 Sept | Taunton Brewhouse
12-13 Sept | Shaftesbury Theatre, Dawlish
18-20 Sept | Palace Theatre, Paignton
23-24 Sept | Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham
26 Sept | The Poly, Falmouth
3 Oct | Dragon Theatre, Barmouth
4 Oct | Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis
7-11 Oct | Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford
14-15 Oct | East Riding Theatre, Beverley
16-17 Oct | Old Laundry Theatre, Bowness-on-Windermere
18 Oct | Georgian Theatre Royal, Richmond
24-25 Oct | Market Theatre, Ledbury



Tickets for all performances on sale via ourstartheatrecompany.com