

***Macbeth*. By William Shakespeare. Adapted by William Davenant. Directed by Robert Richmond. Folger Theatre. September 4–23, 2018.**

Through this richly “collaborat[ive]” production of *Macbeth*, director Robert Richmond, the cast, the Folger Consort, and scholars including Amanda Winkler, Richard Schoch, and Claude Fretz have accomplished an impressive feat—bringing a Restoration adaptation of one of Shakespeare’s most popular tragedies to the stage and, moreover, demonstrating that Restoration revisions of Shakespeare are extremely fun and fascinating in performance (“Performing Restoration Shakespeare,” 7). This limited-release production is the “culmination of a . . . partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library, Shakespeare’s Globe, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust . . . bring[ing] together scholars and practitioners in theater and music to investigate how and why Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare succeeded in performance in their own time . . . and how and why they can succeed in performance today” (“Performing Restoration Shakespeare,” 7). To this end, this staging of Davenant’s *Macbeth* plays upon the combination of novelty and diversity of spectacle that so appealed to Restoration audiences, creating a playgoing experience that is evocative of the one experienced by Samuel Pepys, who after seeing the same play in 1667, recorded it to be “a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertisement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable” (“Performing Restoration Shakespeare,” 6). The similar combination of “deep tragedy,” visual interest, and musical “divertisement” in this new production—including the comic fun and operatic virtuosity of the witches and the beauty of the music and stage effects—is shown not to detract from the tragedy of the play but to further its interpretive range and richness. What results is a *Macbeth* that is both warmly familiar and wonderfully novel and strange.

The metatheatrical and intermedia approach to this production dispenses with the iconicity that is often expected when producing one of the most popular tragedies in English. The Macbeths, played by Ian Merrill Peakes and Kate Eastwood Norris, return to their roles from an acclaimed production of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* at the Folger Theatre several years earlier, which heightens the sense that performance (here, but also in general) is intended to be interpretive and referential more than definitive or iconic. To this end, a frame is added to Davenant’s text, and this *Macbeth* is a play within a play—a performance put on by inmates in Bedlam. This frame eases the audience into this encounter with a version of *Macbeth* that is rather different from the ones they are familiar with and lays the interpretive groundwork for enjoying the play for these differences, especially its distinctly Restoration-era artifice and variety. What is produced is an exciting combination of the familiar and unexpected that encourages playgoers to notice and enjoy the moments where the plays diverge.

The Bedlam framing plot renders the play an ambivalent but powerful examination of the legitimacy of power. The warden stages the performance and has sadistic guards and inmates of the asylum who are clearly unhinged and unwell play the characters while he plays King Duncan. Visually, Duncan’s costly Restoration costume (compared to the inmates’ sullied ones), rakish swagger, and elaborate wig (which looks like an auburn version

of Charles II’s black curls) reference legitimate kingship while also pointing to its artifice, bombast, and (through the Bedlam frame), its underlying violence. This connection of violence with the maintenance of power (including power that is lawfully sanctioned) is picked up throughout the production, blurring the action of *Macbeth* proper with the play-within-a-play context. Inmates acting in the play continue to be manhandled by the guards while performing. Most unsettlingly, in the background of some key parts of the tragedy—such as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth discussing the murder—inmates are tortured in a recessive section behind the main stage that resembles a jail cell with bars. The warden/King Duncan presides over these torture sessions, making it especially understandable when the warden is actually slain and real bedlam breaks loose.

The murder of Duncan occurs behind a screen made of grey cloth that is as wide as the stage. The figures seen in silhouette behind the cloth at first resemble a shadow-puppet show and dance in a stylized way that resembles the movement of clockwork automatons, visually referencing the historical use of machines to create special effects. In line with the interest throughout this production in breaking the fourth wall, the action speeds up at the end of the murder, and the stylized, highly theatrical dispatching of the king suddenly becomes vicious, suggesting that this dance quickly morphs into real violence and murder. The screen also displays, in silhouette, the murder of Banquo while his son Fleance watches outside, unable to intercede, and Macduff and Lady Macduff’s encounter with the witches on the heath, a scene added by Davenant. These uses of the screen amount to an inventive and visually interesting way of creating the effect of the moveable scenery of the Restoration stage without the prohibitive cost. The double casting of widely different roles—Malcolm and Donalbain also play the two murderers that Macbeth hires to kill Banquo, and Fleance doubles as Hecate—becomes part of this motif of intersecting theatricality and political violence. In this adaptation within an adaptation, Malcolm and Donalbain visually become the real murderers they are believed to be, and Fleance, whose royal line will surpass Macbeth’s brief kingship, is evocatively also the dark power, Hecate, who orchestrates it all.

The witches’ musical parts are the great highlight of this thoroughly entertaining play and comprise the most notable distinction between Davenant’s adaptation of *Macbeth* and Shakespeare’s original. In this production, the witches’ songs include “Speak, Sister, Speak,” “Let’s Have a Dance,” “O, Come Away,” and “Black Spirits and White.” Since the music from the earliest versions of Davenant’s play is incomplete, this staging uses John Eccles’s “music for later productions,” which, as stated in the Program, is “closer in time to our setting of the play in 1666 Bedlam” (Eisenstein, 8). In addition to Eccles’s music for the witches, pieces from other Restoration-era compositions for the theater have been added, including (but not limited to) music by Purcell and Matthew Locke’s “Curtain Tune . . . for *The Tempest*” (Eisenstein, 8). Bridging the strangeness of Restoration music in *Macbeth* for playgoers, the Folger production is also peppered with “English and Scottish country dances” and “fiddle and bagpipe music” that set the scene (Eisenstein, 9) (similarly, costuming for some characters includes Scottish elements, such as Lady Macduff’s plaid skirt). The witches’ costumes resemble Restoration period women’s partial dress or undress, with dingy linen undergarments including shifts exposed by partial

overwear, such as a purple bodice with short sleeves on one witch and a matching purple skirt on another, as if the three witches share only one complete garment among them. This costuming goes to good use, as when one witch comically holds up the long piece of stiff purple cloth at the end of her bodice to resemble an erection. The witches' makeup also appears purposefully haphazard, including exaggerated circles of blush on the apple of each cheek, parodying the aristocratic fashion. These elements draw out the "political subversion" through which they would have been interpreted by Restoration audiences, especially "as they celebrate the death of kings" in songs like "Let's Have a Dance" (Winkler, 49; 48). On one hand, they are "marginaliz[ed]" figures (they seem to live on the heath, one of them is pregnant, another a cross-dressing man) who perform, through this lens, "comical" antics and entertaining songs (Winkler, 40; 43); on the other, they are overtly politically subversive in the way they take sheer delight in the death of kings.

While the witches' subversiveness may have had more serious undertones to a Restoration audience anxious of regicide, in this twenty-first century refashioning, the witches' combination of transgression and play takes on an added element of sympathy. Considering the ironic portrayal of Duncan's kingship in this production as the vain and sadistic warden, with the setting in Bedlam placing abuses of power on display, the witches singing "We should re-joyce, re-joyce, re-joyce" at Duncan's downfall invites fascination more than intimidation (Eccles, quoted in Winkler, 54). One is led to ruminate on how the witches, who are like the inmates of Bedlam in their madness but unlike them in the freedom of their movements and songs, fit into the hierarchies of Macbeth's world. With the emphasis on their extended musical parts, the witches come off as sardonic and lively commentators that stand outside the action and dabble in it only for the fun. Their irony directed at Macbeth is especially notable—for comic effect, they laugh when Macbeth realizes he is not invincible after Macduff reveals he was not born of woman. Yet, as with Pepys's description of the play, "deep tragedy" is retained; the audience is encouraged to enjoy the witches' ironic investment in the action and simultaneously appreciate Macbeth's tragic downfall. When Macbeth is slain, Malcolm is forcibly compelled to take on the kingship (the inhabitants of Bedlam drag him to the throne). The play ends with the unsettling sense that a politics of coercion and violence, whether subtle or overt, is continued—but throughout the production, the witches' songs soar above, making subversiveness a delight to hear.

Beyond the singing witches, the strangest aspect of Davenant's *Macbeth* for lovers of Shakespeare's tragedy is no doubt Davenant's dramatically altered spoken script. This notably includes the addition of scenes and dialogue involving Lady Macduff's character (whose role is expanded by Davenant), and alterations to iconic moments such as Macbeth's "Tomorrow" soliloquy and Macduff's realization that his family has been slaughtered. On the page, Davenant's correction of the language seems flat compared to Shakespeare, which might make an audience resistant to the changes. For instance, when Malcolm tells Macduff to "cure" his loss with "our great revenge," Shakespeare's Macduff responds:

He has no children. All my pretty ones?
Did you say "all"? O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop? (Shakespeare, 90)

This Davenant changes to:

He has no Children, nor can he feel
A father's Grief: Did you say all my Children?
Oh hellish ravenous Kite! All three at one swoop! (Davenant, 90)

The excision of terms of endearment (pretty ones, chicks, dam) renders Davenant's Macduff more stately on the page, but also less impassioned. But in this production, the interpretive aspect of the revision becomes clearer. The actor's grief-stricken performance naturalizes the changes; in this way, the familiar line "He has no Children," followed by the unfamiliar "nor can he feel / A father's Grief," show the value of Davenant's changes as interpretive signposts. Macduff, with his profound expression of loss, is more clearly isolated from the men on stage, while he is in turn connected to the audience's feelings through the streamlined associations. This production's handling of changes to Macbeth's "Tomorrow" soliloquy is even more impressive, intensifying emphasis on Macbeth as a tragically isolated figure. Davenant's "I brought / Her here, to see my Victimes, and not to Die" following "She should have Di'd hereafter" (instead of Shakespeare's "There would have been a time for such a word") emphasizes Macbeth's marital affection for Lady Macbeth and dispels ambiguity in his expression of grief (102). In this production, Macbeth performs the soliloquy in intimate proximity to the audience, the stage and theater darkened to emphasize his lonely figure—encouraging the audience to listen closely for changes in language. In this format, it is exciting rather than jarring when "Creeps in this petty pace" is exchanged for "Creeps in this stealing pace," "dusty death" becomes "Eternal [night]," and "last Minute of Recorded Time" replaces "last syllable" (102; brackets in original). The horror of Macbeth's isolation becomes strangely homely through these changes and the stage direction that naturalizes them; they are not seen to efface Shakespeare's language but to stand beside it.

Also seeming to stand both within and without the action of the play is Lady Macduff, who has an extended role written by Davenant. Her anti-war sentiments and palpable unease make her especially relatable; she seems like a sane voice in an outrageously brutal world. In Davenant's revision, she is friends (of sorts) with Lady Macbeth, which highlights the brutality of Lady Macbeth's later betrayal of her. The two are introduced in the play awaiting news of the outcome of the battle in which their husbands are engaged. Compared to Lady Macbeth's calculated coolness, Lady Macduff comes across at first as excessively anxious. But in the ensuing action of the play, as she critiques the unceasing violence of war and then falls victim to it when Macduff leaves her in Scotland, her prescience and better nature are shown to be tragic. In this scene, rather than showing the slaying of her and her children onstage, Lady Macduff's figure stands as still as a statue and fades into darkness, as if receding into the tides of time. Her ghostly recession into the background brings out the beauty of the play's intertextuality—this fleshed-out Lady Macduff is shown to be a placemark or reference on which past versions of her character richly accrue. Close attention to this history of adaptation is how this play succeeds.

Tamar LeRoy
University of Maryland, College Park

Works Cited

- Davenant, William, adapt. and amend. *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare. Curated and adapted by Robert Richmond. In "Side by Side Scripts of Macbeth by William Shakespeare and Macbeth as adapted and amended by William Davenant." https://issuu.com/folger301/docs/shakespeare_and_davenant_macbeth_ju_c7a770f5859029?utm_source=wordfly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CNTHMacbethEminderSept88pm&utm_content=version_A&promo=7480. Accessed November 19, 2018.
- Eisenstein, Robert. "From the Music Director." In *Shakespeare's Macbeth*, 8–9. Washington, DC: Folger Theater, 2018. Program.
- "Performing Restoration Shakespeare: Davenant's *Macbeth*." In *Shakespeare's Macbeth*, 6–7. Washington, DC: Folger Theater, 2018. Program.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, with Michael Poston and Rebecca Niles. Reprint of the 2015 Folger Digital Texts edition, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2018. In "Side by Side Scripts of Macbeth by William Shakespeare and Macbeth as adapted and amended by William Davenant." https://issuu.com/folger301/docs/shakespeare_and_davenant_macbeth_ju_c7a770f5859029?utm_source=wordfly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CNTHMacbethEminderSept88pm&utm_content=version_A&promo=7480. Accessed November 19, 2018.
- Winkler, Amanda Eubanks. *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.



***The Man of Mode*. By George Etherege. Directed by Christopher Marino. American Shakespeare Center, Blackfriars Playhouse. September 5–December 2, 2018.**

Long after its initial run, George Etherege's *The Man of Mode, Or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) became a flashpoint in the debate that unfolded in the early eighteenth century about the purposes, effects, and affects of the comedies of the previous generation. In the taste-making periodical *The Spectator*, Richard Steele—who was developing ideas of stage comedy's potential for modeling goodwill, good nature, and other salutary influences—saw *The Man of Mode* as "a perfect contradiction to good manners, good sense, and common honesty; ... there is nothing in it but what is built upon the ruin of virtue and innocence." Excoriating its characters' "corruption" and "degeneracy," he opined that "nothing but being lost to a sense of innocence and virtue can make any one see this comedy without observing more frequent occasion to move sorrow and indignation than mirth and laughter" (Steele, 280).

Steele's acrimony toward the play and its protagonists received a delayed rebuttal from John Dennis's *A Defence of Sir Fopling Flutter* (1722). As he observed, "I remember very well that upon the first acting this comedy, it was generally believed to be an agreeable representation of the persons of condition of both sexes, both in court and town" (Dennis, 18–19). *The Man of Mode* was for the aging Dennis a tableau of a receding moment in elite London life. The polemical portion of Dennis's essay targeted Steele's new play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) as a betrayal of the purposes of comedy and harked back to Etherege's play for a counter-example. Dennis rejected the proposition that comic protagonists must "set us patterns for imitation" to assert that *The Man of Mode* suffices to edify the audience rather differently: by manifesting foolish or even vicious behaviors to avoid, for "[t]hus comedy instructs and pleases most powerfully by the ridicule" (Dennis, 10; 21). He avowed *Man of Mode*'s educative value—convinced there was one—to stem from the ridiculousness of Sir Fopling's adoption of foreign fashions and of Mrs. Loveit's absurd confidence that she can secure a bounder like Dorimant.

In his program notes to the American Shakespeare Center production of *The Man of Mode* at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, director Christopher Marino calls the play "not only unconcerned with seriousness and deeper issues, but . . . also solely exist[ing] to celebrate the artifice (both verbal and worn) of the age." In distancing Etherege's play from "deeper issues" and upholding its style over its substance, Marino's statement evokes the Steele-Dennis squabble by negating the entire proposition that anyone is meant to be *instructed* by the doings of rakes, fops, town-ladies, heiresses, and courtesans. Judging by their evident delight, which I very much shared, the audience of the Blackfriars Playhouse found much to approve—*contra* Steele, although hopefully not a sign of the dissipation of our collective sense of virtue.

The main plot of the play revolves around Dorimant, an incorrigible rake, who thrills to a newly arrived heiress, Harriet Woodvill, and discards both of his previous mistresses, Mistress Loveit (whom he loves to torment) and Bellinda, to get her. In classic Restoration fashion, the second plot involves earnest young lovers Young Bellair and Emilia, persecuted by meddling parents. The scene-stealer—who works his way into the play's