

STUDY GUIDE

Wooden O



macbeth

by william shakespeare

union arts center

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**David Quicksall (Director) during rehearsal,
Photo by Giao Nguyen**

Characters

Macbeth, King of Scots, was a real person. He was the dux (or general) of King Duncan, whom he killed in 1040. He succeeded to the throne and ruled for fourteen years. In 1054, King Macbeth was defeated in battle by Siward, the Earl of Northumbria, who installed Malcolm, son of King Duncan, as king. Three years later Malcolm defeated and killed Macbeth at Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire. Macbeth was buried, as was Duncan before him, in St. Columba's island of Iona.

Macbeth – General in the Scottish army and Thane of Glamis, later named Thane of Cawdor, and then King of Scotland.

Lady Macbeth – The wife of Macbeth, later Queen of Scotland.

Banquo – A general in the Scottish army. Macbeth's best friend.

Duncan – The King of Scotland.

Fleance – Son of Banquo.

Macduff – The Thane of Fife. A loyalist to King Duncan and the country of Scotland.

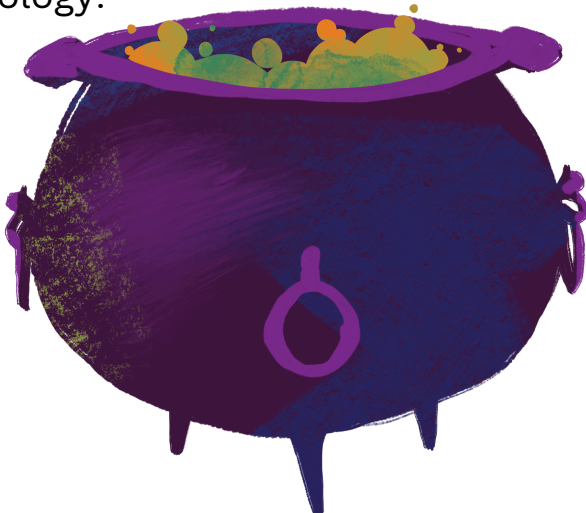
Lady Macduff – The wife of Macduff.

Malcolm – The son of King Duncan and rightful heir to the Scottish throne.

Ross – A nobleman and cousin to Macduff.

Siward – The Earl of Northumberland and leader of the English army. The uncle of Malcolm.

The Witches – Also known as the Weird Sisters, inspired by the three Fates of classical mythology.



Young Macduff – Son of Macduff.

Young Siward – Son of Siward.

Bloody Captain – A captain in the Scottish army.

Doctor – A doctor who tends to Lady Macbeth.

Porter – The doorman of Macbeth's castle.

Seyton – Macbeth's servant.

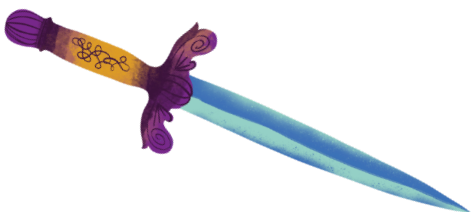
***Macbeth* mixes witchcraft, prophecy, and murder.**

Three “Weird Sisters” appear to Macbeth and his comrade Banquo after a battle and prophesy that Macbeth will be king and that Banquo’s descendants will reign in the future. When Macbeth arrives at his castle, he and Lady Macbeth plot to assassinate King Duncan, who is soon to be their guest, securing Macbeth’s sovereignty.

After Macbeth murders Duncan, the king’s son—Malcolm, flees, and Macbeth is crowned. Fearing that Banquo’s descendants will (according to the Weird Sisters’ predictions) take over the kingdom, Macbeth has Banquo killed. At a royal banquet that evening, Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost appear covered in blood. Macbeth determines to consult the Weird Sisters again. They comfort him with ambiguous promises.

Another nobleman, Macduff, rides to England to join Malcolm. Macbeth has Macduff’s wife and children murdered. Malcolm and Macduff lead an army against Macbeth, as Lady Macbeth goes mad and dies.

Macbeth confronts Malcolm’s army, trusting in the Weird Sisters’ comforting promises. He learns that the promises are tricks, but continues to fight. Macduff kills Macbeth and Malcolm becomes Scotland’s king.



**Calder Shilling (Macbeth) in rehearsal,
photo by: Giao Nguyen**

PAGEANT WAGON



The Origins of Touring Theater

Used throughout the 10th-16th Centuries, the pageant wagon was a moveable stage used to tour and perform the mystery and miracle play cycles.

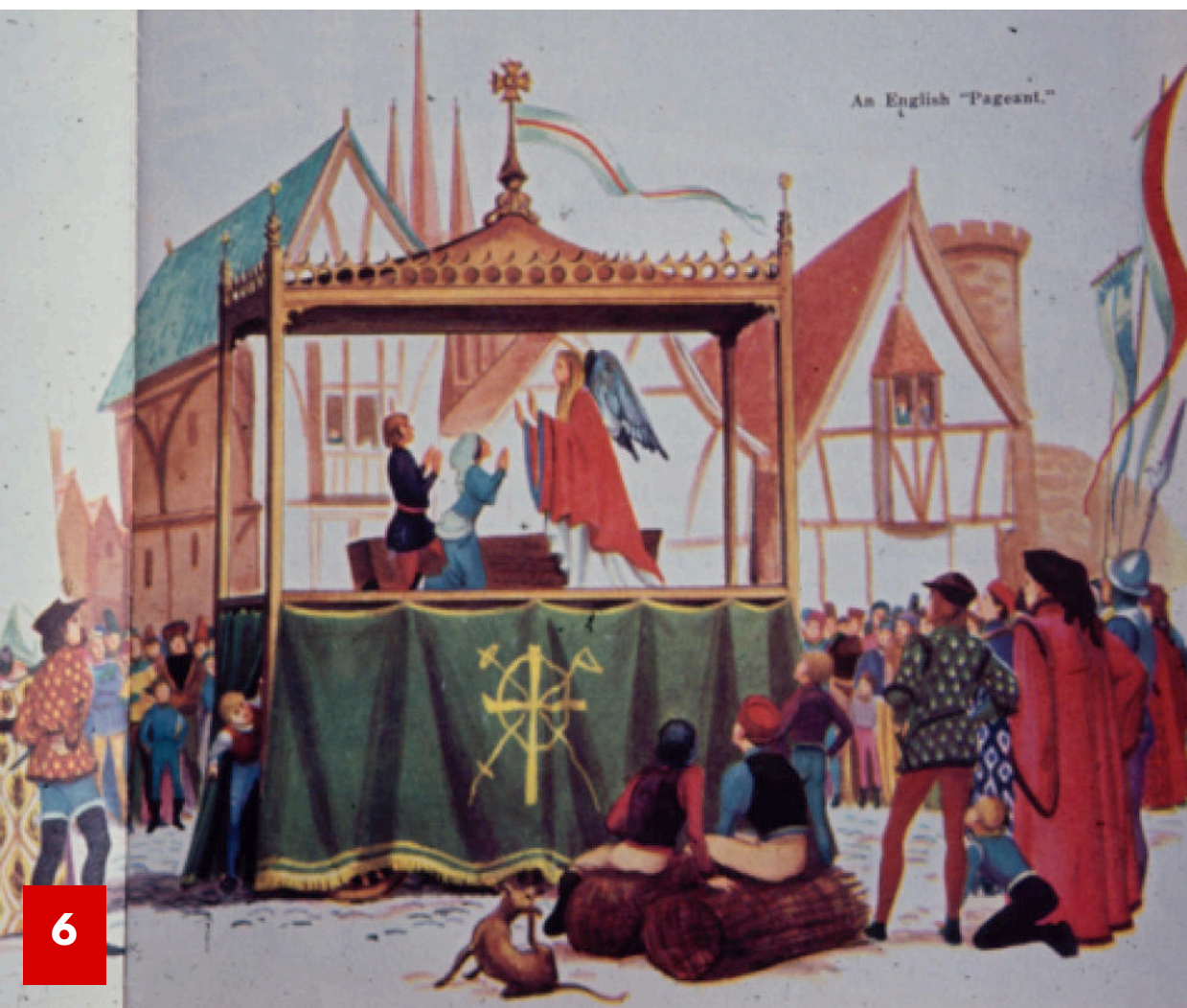
Pageant comes from the archaic word for the wagon stage, "pagyn." It is a word used to describe the movable stage on which a scene of the processional religious play was performed.

Medieval Churches, in order to spread the messages of the Bible, created the religious play. They brought to the common person a pageantry to relieve the people from the monotony of the everyday life. This new form of spectacle based theatrical representation of both Old and New Testament texts spread throughout Europe and encompassed North and Central Europe, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, and England. As the plays became more than mere pantomimes of biblical stories, they took on bigger texts and were performed at Christmas, Corpus Christi, and numerous other religious saints days or feasts.

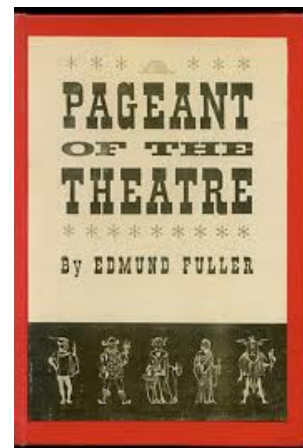
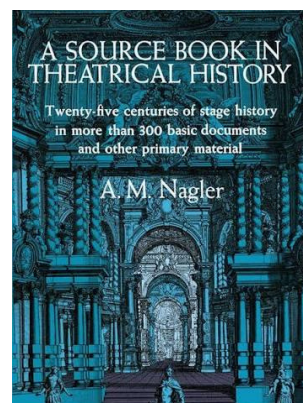
When a processional cycle play came to town, the whole city was used as a massive auditorium as the wagons were moved through the main streets of the city. The wagons would stop at key locations, where the scene of each wagon would then begin. For instance, the starting wagon would take up a position before the mayor's house and perform the first scene. When the scene ended, the wagon would move on to the next appointed spot and repeat the performance. Meanwhile, all along the predetermined route other wagons with their many varied scenes would follow in procession, each playing over and over its part in the slowly unfolding cycle.

When in the country, the wagons were lined up in stationary ranks, and the audience moved from one to another to follow the cycle. The performers did not limit themselves to the small playing space of the wagon settings, but spread out freely onto the surrounding ground.

Each wagon contained a setting and carried the actors to different scenes. As the actors moved, the members of the audience moved with them. In some cases simultaneous action occurred on a number of levels of wagon platforms. This offered a spectacle quite like that of a modern-day three-ring circus. If a town had a large enough field nearby the wagons were sometimes set all in one spot as to minimize movement. No mode of performance in the history of drama has ever occupied more territory.



Read More Here:



Witches in the Time of Shakespeare



Witchcraft persecutions began during Elizabeth I's reign - around 1563, in England. In early modern tradition, witches were stereotypically women. The common belief was that these women would make a diabolical pact with evil spirits and appeal to their intervention. They would reject Jesus and the holy sacraments, and take part in "the Witch's Sabbath" - a

parody of the mass and sacraments. By paying honor to the 'Prince of Darkness,' they would in turn receive preternatural powers - thereby becoming evil.

Folklore said that the 'Devil's Mark' would appear on the new witch's skin like a brand, to signify that the evil pact had been made. The Devil was thought to mark the individual at the end of nocturnal initiation rites. The witches' teat was a raised bump somewhere on a witch's body. It is often depicted as having a wart-like appearance. It was said during Elizabeth I's reign that the devil's mark had been spotted on Anne Boleyn - though this has been popularly seen as a cruel and unwarranted judgement.

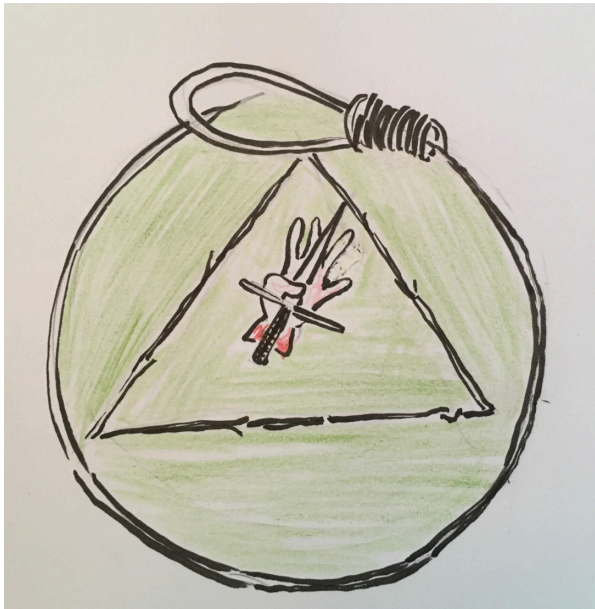


Examination of a Witch by Tompkins Harrison Matteson (1853)

Witch Fever, gripped England from 1645-1646

Matthew Hopkins (c. 1620 – 12 August 1647) was an English witch-hunter whose career flourished during the English Civil War. He was mainly active in East Anglia and claimed to hold the office of Witchfinder General, although that title was never bestowed by Parliament.

Matthew Hopkins had 68 people put to death in Bury St. Edmunds and 19 people hung in Chelmsford in a single day. He was given exorbitant amounts of money for touring England and ridding towns and villages of evil witches.



Macbeth Witch Charm Sketch, by David Quicksall

King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) was deeply obsessed with witchcraft, believing it was a very real, existential threat. His paranoia intensified after a severe storm nearly sank his bride's ship in 1590, which he blamed on a coven of witches. During his reign, the 'new world' of America was discovered - and unsurprisingly, witch hunting continued there. The Salem Witch Trials in Massachusetts in 1692 stemmed from King James' fear of witches - and that fear continued with his son Charles I, and all the way throughout the Stuart dynasty. Witches were no longer the subject of folklore and medieval myths - they were a real, tangible representation of the devil.

Setting the Stage

“Within this wooden O the very casques...Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts; Into a thousand parts divide one man, And make imaginary puissance;...Who prologue-like your humble patience pray, Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.”

-Chorus, Prologue, Henry V by William Shakespeare

“First performed around 1606, *Macbeth* appeared during a politically dangerous time: Queen Elizabeth I had died without an heir, her successor was James Stuart, King of Scotland. His recent ascension to the newly combined throne of England and Scotland was surrounded by great political upheaval that culminated in the Gunpowder Plot: a nefarious conspiracy to blow up both the King and Parliament. *Macbeth* deals with themes of treachery, treason, murder, equivocation, and...witchcraft. As you’ll see *Macbeth* delves into all these themes with a vengeance.” -David Quicksall, Director



Macbeth and the witches, by illustrator Oluf Hartmann. C. 1902. Statens Museum for Kunst

Using inspiration from the politics of England in 1606 and adding Viking and Norse inspiration, the artistic setting of this summer’s production has been brought to life.



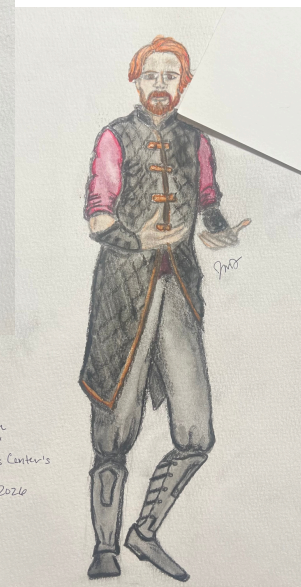
The Magic Circle by John William Waterhouse is an early research image that inspired the setting and atmosphere for Robin Macartney’s Scenic Design.

“The woman appears to be a witch or priestess endowed with magic powers,... She holds a crescent-shaped sickle in her left hand, linking her with the moon and Hecate. With the wand in her right hand, she draws a protective magic circle around her. Outside the circle, the landscape is bare and barren; a group of rooks or ravens and a frog – all symbols of evil associated with witchcraft – are excluded. Within its confines are flowers and the woman herself, objects of beauty. The meaning is unclear, but its mystery and exoticism struck a chord with contemporary observers.” -Anthony Hobson

Scenic Design by: Robin Macartney

The menhirs guide the audiences understand of a space created for rituals. Places like Stonehenge in England and The Externsteine in Germany are understood by us today to be sacred pagan sites.

Costuming for an outdoor touring show features different variables you must be aware of. The heat, where can the actors change, how much time do they have, how many characters do they need to portray. With these considerations, the costumes stylistically represent items of a medieval and viking time with the practicality of minimalism and made of materials that are lighter and more breathable.



Through silhouette, a color story, and armor, the costumes show status and relationship through visual language meant to subtly convey the essence of each characters.



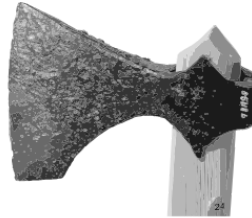
VIKING WEAPONS

Viking weapons were practical, deadly, and reflected a warrior's social status. While elites carried ornate swords, ordinary raiders relied on affordable, versatile tools like spears and battle axes



Sword

For single-handed use and to be combined with a shield. Swords had a double edged blade and were up to 35 in in length. Swords were very costly to make and a sign of high status. Many were rarely used, and some swords found in graves were probably not sturdy enough for battle or raiding, and instead were likely decorative items.



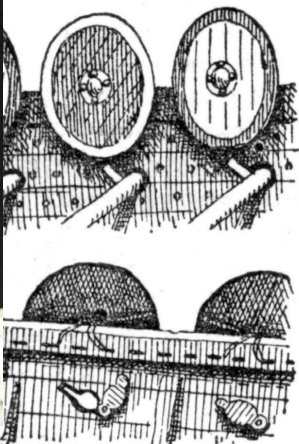
Axe

The most common hand weapon among Vikings was the axe – swords were more expensive to make and only wealthy warriors could afford them. The prevalence of axes in archaeological sites can likely be attributed to its role as not just a weapon, but also a common tool. This is supported by the large number of grave sites of female Scandinavians containing axes.

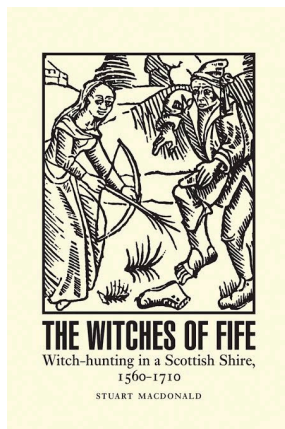
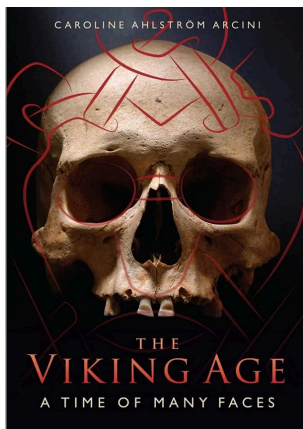
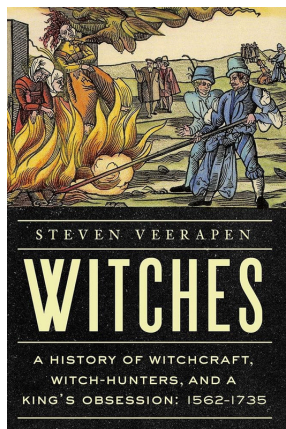


Shield

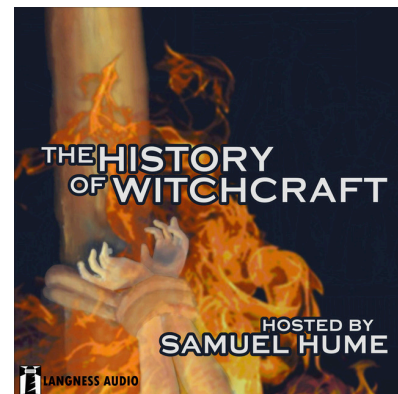
The round shield was the most common means of defence. The sagas specifically mention linden wood for shield construction, although finds from graves show mostly other timbers, such as fir, alder and poplar with steel or iron shield boss.



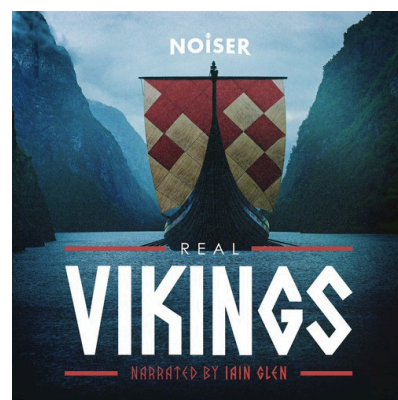
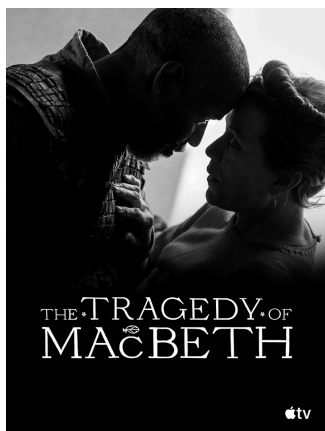
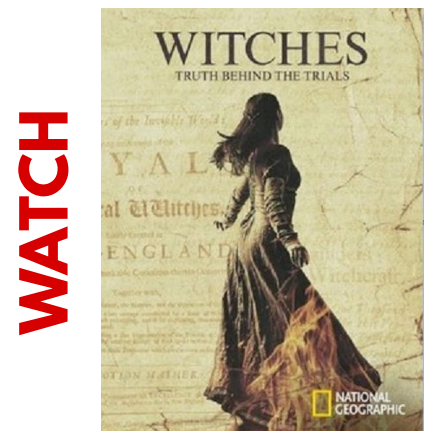
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The names you know. The stages you love. The art that brings us together. ACT and Seattle Shakespeare have come together as Union Arts Center, keeping our community connected, our artists supported, and our stories alive.

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OUR VISION

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