

Macbeth's Children

A Confrontation with William Shakespeare's Macbeth

by

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Co-Written with Dev Luthra

NOTE

This script was originated with the help of thirteen young actors in the Cambridge Performance Project during the spring of 2001: Sky Rote, Sophie Blum, Amanda Catterfield, Sofia Erlien-Cerullo, William Ford, Jenni Grout, Rebecca Hecht, Marcel Moran, Henry Patterson, Felicity Slater, Elizabeth Sapiro-Mitten, Connie Tancredi-Brice, and Owen Thomas. Many thanks go to them, to the parents and friends who supported the project, and to the city of Cambridge for its support of the arts.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- DUNCAN, King of Scotland
- MALCOLM, Son of Duncan
- DONALBAIN, Son of Duncan
- BANQUO, Thane of Scotland
- FLEANCE, Banquo's son

- MACBETH, Thane of Glamis, later of Cawdor, later King of Scotland
- LADY MACBETH, his wife

- MACDUFF, Thane of Fife
- LADY MACDUFF, his wife
- ATHOLL, his son

- FIRST WITCH
- SECOND WITCH
- THIRD WITCH

A NOTE ON CASTING:

Many of the actors will double (this is indicated in the text), and casting need not follow gender: female actors have played Duncan, Donalbain, Macduff, and Atholl.

WORKSHOP NOTES:

Weapons: Weapons were 1½" painted dowels about 5' long, which served as spears and swords. There were four daggers made out of thin dowels and a simple cross-piece as a handguard.

Witches: The witches had simple painted dowels for their wands. Whenever possible, have the witches onstage; they should only rarely exit.

Crowns: Gold crowns were used for Duncan and Lady Macbeth. (Duncan's crown was later passed on to Macbeth.) There were also eight gold crowns that Banquo's lays down in the apparition scene.

Costumes: We wanted to have the actors, except for Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff, dress in some kind of military garb. The witches can dress in as wild an attire as they prefer.

Music: We used a live drummer, but recorded music and sound could be used as well.

Banner at end of Prologue: If it is too costly, it does not have to be used.

Choreography: Movements should be simple and clean, with an emphasis on both adjectives.

Epilogues: This script uses Epilogue #1; choose the one you like.

Epilogue #1: This will require that each of the actors write a brief letter to one of the characters in the play, a character to whom they want to say something or make an observation. For instance, the witches may address all the "humans" and say that they did nothing wrong but simply traded on the character flaws already in people. Lady Macduff may want to address Lady Macbeth about the nature of motherhood. And so on. The letters should come out of the actors' insights and desires to make their own statement about some aspect or idea in the play that touched or moved them. The letters can be memorized or read from sheets of paper the actors carry on them. They should be brief.

Epilogue #2: Appended to this script.

Epilogue #3: Created by the Junior Youth Repertory Company of New Hampshire Theatre Project

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PROLOGUE

Lights out — drumming begins, military style. THE WEIRD SISTERS appear and take up their places on the stage as if they were orchestrating the ensuing action.

The company, dressed as soldiers, enters the theatre in rhythm to the call of DRILL INSTRUCTOR.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Left—left—left right left—left—left—left right left—

DRILL INSTRUCTOR continues the chant as he hands off their weapons: a 5' length of 1½" dowel.

To bring the company to a halt, DRILL INSTRUCTOR chants.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Left right left right left right left—

On the last syllable, they all slam their weapons against the floor.

They then begin THE FIELD OF BATTLE, a choreographed scene of warfare and devastation. The WITCHES wander through the warfare, occasionally "correcting" or re-directing but basically watchers.

COMPANY

The children have seen so much death

"Be all that you can be."

that death means nothing to them now.

"The few, the proud—hoo-wah!"

They wait in line for bread.

"War is peace."

They wait in line for water.

"If you're not with us, you're against us."

Their eyes are black moons reflecting emptiness.

"Ignorance is truth."

We've seen them a thousand times.

"The damage is collateral."

[From Sam Hamill, "State of the Union 2003," Almost Paradise: New & Selected Poems & Translations (Shambhala Publications, 2005). Used by permission of the author.]

At the end of FIELD OF BATTLE, FLEANCE steps forward.

FLEANCE

Who would have thought the old man—and the old woman, and the father and mother aching to shield their children, and the children themselves, both ripe and unripe, all reaped by the harvest of swords—who would have thought they had so much blood in them. I never would have thought it.

(to the WITCHES)

Let's begin.

The company assembles under the chant of DRILL INSTRUCTOR, who does a “Sound off” routine.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

The children have seen so much death—

COMPANY

Be all that you can be.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

—that death means nothing to them now.

COMPANY

The few, the proud—hoo-wa!

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Sound off—

COMPANY

One, two—

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Sound off—

COMPANY

Three, four—

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

One, two, three, four, one, two, hup—

ALL

Three, four!

Transition lights and music.

FIRST WITCH

So here we are, we three again / In thunder, lightning, and in rain.

SECOND WITCH

Listen, sisters, to the drums—/ Something wicked this way comes.

THIRD WITCH

These dogs of war, cold and ironical, / Are the players in our
piercing chronicle.

ALL

Fair turns foul, foul never turns fair: / Madness hovers in this
choking air.

*The company, as one, bangs down their weapons, then takes up a posture of attack/defense,
as if in battle.*

FIRST WITCH

Our story begins in a world rich in death.

SECOND WITCH

Caused by one man—

THIRD WITCH

Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

Macbeth.

ALL (INCLUDING COMPANY)

Macbeth.

*Company bangs their weapons again, then changes to a new posture. MACBETH, LADY
MACBETH, and DUNCAN step forward out of the company.*

FIRST WITCH

The play starts in Scotland—

SECOND WITCH

It's a time of civil war—

DUNCAN

Macbeth kills the traitors for King Duncan—

THIRD WITCH

But he wants just a little bit more—

FIRST WITCH

Greedy for the crown—

SECOND WITCH

Pricked on by his wife—

DUNCAN

They kicked King Duncan up to the afterlife.

Company bangs their weapons again, then new posture. LADY MACBETH, BANQUO, and FLEANCE step forward.

FIRST WITCH

But to keep the crown firmly nailed to his head—

LADY MACBETH

Macbeth piled more dead ones on the dead—

Company bangs their weapons, then simply stands at attention.

FLEANCE

Banquo, his best friend, was the first defiled—

MALCOLM and DONALBAIN step forward.

BANQUO

Leaving his son Fleance a fatherless child.

SECOND WITCH

Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's heirs to the crown—

MALCOLM

Run away to England—

DONALBAIN

And Ireland—

MALCOLM
(thumb up)

Son up—

DONALBAIN
(thumb down)

Son down.

MACDUFF, LADY MACDUFF, and ATHOLL step forward.

FIRST WITCH

Macduff who knew the sins of Macbeth—

MACDUFF

Paid for his knowing with his own family's death.

THIRD WITCH

Lady Macbeth, her heart stuffed with remorse—

LADY MACDUFF

Killed herself—she'd backed the wrong horse.

SECOND WITCH

Here's how it ends so you won't have to wait.

ATHOLL

Macduff kills Macbeth and—

Everyone makes a slicing motion across their necks with their hands.

ALL

Decapitate. End of story.

WITCHES

(indicating the audience)

But not for you—

(indicating the COMPANY)

—or them.

FLEANCE

What about Fleance, Banquo's left-behind boy?

SECOND WITCH

Murderous dreams have murdered his joy.

MALCOLM

Or Malcolm—

DONALBAIN

Or Donalbain—

THIRD WITCH

Burning with hate—

MALCOLM AND DONALBAIN

When do we get to retaliate?

ALL WITCHES

None of these questions Mr. Shakespeare consults.

ALL CHILDREN

He's more interested in presenting his anguished adults.

FLEANCE

These adults said they'd protect us from pain—

ATHOLL

"We know what's best" was their constant refrain—

The drumming begins again, low, and the company, except for the WITCHES, marches in place but slowly moves upstage as well. The WITCHES step forward.

DUNCAN

This world of Macbeth—

BANQUO

—is like our world today—

LADY MACBETH

Where children are beaten—

LADY MACDUFF

—used up—

ATHOLL

—thrown away—

MALCOLM

No power or money—

DONALBAIN

Means they have no defense—

MACBETH

And so the world murders—

MACDUFF

—their innocence—

Drumming stops.

FIRST WITCH

What does it cost to be young in this world?

FLEANCE steps forward and takes a moment to look at the audience directly.

FLEANCE

What does it cost to be young in this world?

SECOND WITCH

Calculate the price—

THIRD WITCH

As our story's unfurled.

The drumming begins again, and there is now a much more choreographed piece of warfare as the WITCHES unfurl a banner which reads "Macbeth's Children." When it's unfurled, the WITCHES call a halt to the "war," and the play begins.

NOTE: The banner can stretch across the stage horizontally or run vertically on both sides of the stage, "Macbeth's" on one side and "Children" on the other.

Strong transition.

* * * * *

Scene 1: England

The WITCHES announce the scene. This works best if FIRST WITCH says the words while the other two do some sort of funny mime to underscore the words.

FIRST WITCH

The exiles from Scotland at the Palace of Edward the Confessor, England. Facts in evidence—please keep score—it gets pretty tricky: Macbeth has killed Duncan, Banquo, and Macduff's wife and son. We now begin the play proper; you may sit back and watch.

This scene takes place just after Macbeth: 4.3, where MACDUFF has learned about the death of his family. MACDUFF is sitting alone.

FLEANCE enters running, wiping his hands vigorously on a handkerchief, as if trying to clean off something dirty. There is also a streak of red on his face or cheek. When he shows the handkerchief, it is daubed with red, as if with blood. MALCOLM and DONALBAIN enter.

MALCOLM

Macduff?

MACDUFF

Yes.

MALCOLM

How goes your grief today?

MACDUFF

I am the cat's mouse: I am played with and still living.

MALCOLM

Our hearts go to you—yes, Fleance?

FLEANCE

(trying to clean his hands)

Yes, yes—honored Macduff.

DONALBAIN

What is the matter?

FLEANCE

I have cut my hand.

DONALBAIN

How?

FLEANCE

(embarrassed)

On my knife.

DONALBAIN

(mocking)

Practicing “gladiator,” hey?

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM and DONALBAIN)

Our warrior.

MALCOLM goes to FLEANCE and gently wraps his hand in the handkerchief.

MALCOLM

At least he was doing something. What is it that we will do?

DONALBAIN

We each have hard cause against Macbeth.

MACDUFF

And that means only one thing, agreed upon, I hope: his swift and surgical and painful death. Edward will supply the men—all we need to do is supply the will. And so, the question: when do we return to take back what was taken from us?

FLEANCE

I have had enough blood.

MACDUFF

What are you saying?

DONALBAIN

What is the “warrior” saying?

FLEANCE

Just that—blood enough. He always treated me well.

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

He unjointed your father for his table—and your every breath does not breathe “revenge”? What kind of son are you?

FLEANCE

My heart needs patience.

MACDUFF

(dismissive)

Patience.

MALCOLM

Macduff—

MACDUFF

What?!

MALCOLM

Be patient—

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

You crave patience even though a towering falcon—your father! their father!—was by that mousing owl Macbeth hawk’d at and kill’d? The world cracks, and you say “Patience”?

MALCOLM

We are doing the best our best can do with what we do not have.
A little more talk will not mar the time.

DONALBAIN

Always were one for talk.

MALCOLM

You forget, brother, that I go back not only as avenger but also as
king—

DONALBAIN

(to MACDUFF, mockingly)

And ain't I the good king's servant—

MALCOLM

—and I do not want to be a traitor-hearted king like the king we
now have. A better understanding of “why,” otherwise we lose
sight of “when” and “how.” Tell them about the encounter with the
witches—you were there. You have heard this?

MACDUFF

No.

MALCOLM
(to DONALBAIN)

You?

DONALBAIN

No.

FLEANCE

I do not want to remember this!

MALCOLM

You should—to better understand your understanding.

(to MACDUFF)

This is supposedly where began Macbeth's fall from grace.

(to FLEANCE)

We have both lost fathers—speak this for yours.

FLEANCE

I wish my father could hold me now in his arms and with his voice.

MALCOLM

I have that same ache.

MACDUFF
(in disgust)

My God!

MALCOLM

Pour his voice from the chalice of your throat. I will be here.

FLEANCE

We were coming from the battle—I was attending my father, as I always do.

MACDUFF

A young boy's place in battle.

FLEANCE

And then we saw them.

* * * * *

Scene 2: The Witches' Brew

Lights and setting change: the heath. Thunder. Enter the WITCHES. BANQUO and MACBETH prepare to enter; FLEANCE prepares to join them.

FIRST WITCH

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

SECOND WITCH

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

ALL

'Tis time, 'tis time.

The drumming begins.

THIRD WITCH

A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come.

ALL

The weird sisters, hand in hand,

Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about:
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace! the charm's wound up.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO, with FLEANCE.

MACBETH

So foul and fair a day I have not seen. Young Fleance, keep up
with us! I would not want you lost.

BANQUO

He held himself well today.

MACBETH

He did, he did—I wish I had a son of my own to follow my feet.

BANQUO

There is always time and hope—

FLEANCE

Father—

BANQUO

What are these
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't?

MACBETH

Speak, if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

FLEANCE

(pointing to MACBETH)

Father, look!

BANQUO

Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair?

MACBETH

Like the day itself, fair good news fouled with exhaustion.

MALCOLM

(interrupting, to FLEANCE)

What did you think then?

FLEANCE

Think? I could barely breathe! These witches—ugly, loud—

MALCOLM

Think, Fleance—

MACDUFF

This is a waste of time.

DONALBAIN

I agree.

MALCOLM

Did Macbeth seem just surprised or was he brimmed with fear?

FLEANCE

He looked—guilty, as if someone had guessed a secret.

BANQUO

(to the WITCHES)

My noble partner—

MALCOLM

A secret—

BANQUO

—you greet with present grace and great prediction—
to me you speak not.

MALCOLM

(to MACDUFF)

Planted early well before these witches. What happened next?

FLEANCE
My father wanted something from them.

BANQUO
If you can look into the seeds of time—

FIRST WITCH
Hail!

SECOND WITCH
Hail!

THIRD WITCH
Hail!

FIRST WITCH
Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

SECOND WITCH
Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH
Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

FIRST WITCH
Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

The WITCHES vanish. MACBETH and BANQUO pursue, then freeze.

FLEANCE
It was all very confusing.

MALCOLM
I can imagine. My father, Duncan, king—Macbeth, king—

BANQUO
(to MACBETH)
You shall be king.

MALCOLM
(to FLEANCE)
And you, Fleance, king.

MACBETH
(to BANQUO)

Your children shall be kings.

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM)

And you, at that point—king-in-waiting.

(pointing to FLEANCE)

And him—king?

MALCOLM

Yes.

MACDUFF

Four kings.

DONALBAIN

And a leftover.

MACDUFF

One throne.

MALCOLM
(to FLEANCE)

It is very confusing.

FLEANCE

I do not want to be king. I cannot bear its edge against my heart.

MACDUFF

You are a coward, Fleance—shut up. So, Macbeth had it early in his heart to kill your father. The baby verifies that. And only one course to the throne—Macbeth through a sea of blood, smile on his lips, his heart a crunch of coal without a seam of grace in it. What else is there to understand?

MACBETH breaks into the action.

MACBETH

There is more to me than that.

MACDUFF

The hollow man rings!

MACBETH

True, I had lusted to set Duncan's sun on my head—
But what the witches told me
Frightened me to the hollow of my bones...
Murder—to hear my thought, yet but fantastical,
Echoed back by the clappers of their tongues
Shook so my single state of man
And made my seated heart knock at my ribs...

MACDUFF

So, a touch of conscience—
(referring to FLEANCE)
—even this suckling—

MALCOLM

(referring to FLEANCE)
You need not insult him—

MACDUFF

—would feel as much. Much older, you should have felt it more.
More responsible, you should have cut your own throat then and
there.

MACBETH

I hoped if chance would have me king, why, chance might crown
me,
Without my stir.

MACDUFF

Add laziness!

BANQUO

(interrupting)

I tried to tell him
To be more careful of his soul,
That...the instruments of darkness tell us truths...
To betray us in deepest consequence.
But he did not hear me—stood wrapped in his own come-bloody
thoughts.

MALCOLM

Fleance, you can let the memory go. Enough.

FLEANCE walks to his father. MACBETH and BANQUO turn back.

FLEANCE

Look, how rapt he is, Father.

BANQUO

Yes, look, how our partner's rapt. Macbeth!

MACBETH

(whispering to himself)

Come what come may—

BANQUO

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

MACBETH

Let us toward the king.

Think upon what hath chanced, and...

Having weigh'd it, let us speak

Our free hearts each to other.

BANQUO

Very gladly.

MACBETH

Till then, enough. Come, Fleance, come be my traveling boy for the tumbled trip to home.

FLEANCE

(asking permission)

Father?

BANQUO

Be to both of us our homeward son and bring us three good luck!

BANQUO and MACBETH exit.

FLEANCE

He joked with me all the way. Gave me coins. Praised my arm's strength. Said he wished he had a son like me.

MACDUFF

A counterfeit heart.

FLEANCE

I liked him.

* * * * *

Scene 3

DONALBAIN

You liked him! He liked him! You are an idiot! We are wasting time!

MALCOLM

If I am—if he and I are—to measure out our lives against his, then I need to know his measure within an inch of my life.

DONALBAIN

Your life isn't worth an inch at the moment. Nor yours.

MALCOLM

(to FLEANCE and DONALBAIN)

He treated our father well, too. He saved my father's kingdom—before corruption tasted anything of him.

Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, with Attendants. Meet a bleeding SERGEANT [ATHOLL].

DUNCAN

What bloody man is that?

MALCOLM

This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
Say to king Duncan the knowledge of the broil—

SERGEANT

Doubtful it stood...

A stab of pain—then the SERGEANT continues.

SERGEANT

Fortune, on [the traitor] smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but...brave Macbeth--well he
deserves that name--
Disdaining fortune...carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave
And with his brandish'd steel
Unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

MALCOLM comments to MACDUFF, DONALBAIN, and FLEANCE.

MALCOLM

See his manly, savage, graceful bravery. My father's love made him gifts for that.

Enter DUNCAN, MACBETH and BANQUO.

DUNCAN

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me: ...only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay....
My worthy Cawdor!

FLEANCE

Then why did he do it? I do not want to be a king! He had grace, courage—why, why, why?! If he can have that grace and then lose all grace, what hope for grace is there for any of us? What hope is there for me?

MACDUFF
(to DONALBAIN)

Oh, this is rare!

DONALBAIN

Rare? Uncooked!

MACDUFF

Your joint and several purposes are blunted by "why"! You have enough cause to choke you, and yet you will not clear your throats!

(to FLEANCE)

Boy, what must I do to bake you hard?

(to MALCOLM)

And you should know better.

MALCOLM

I know better than you think I know.

DONALBAIN

You think better than you act, which is not hard since your act is nothing to think about.

MACDUFF summons the WITCHES and MACBETH and speaks to them.

FLEANCE
(fearful)

What are you doing?

MACDUFF
(directed at MACBETH)

Our devalued Scottish spawn is not the only one powered to call our worst forward. Show them the real truth of this wicked world. Begin with me.

In this scene, FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH will double as murderers of LADY MACDUFF and ATHOLL, MACDUFF's son. MACBETH will speak the lines of the MESSENGER, then join the murderers. As the scene is set, MACDUFF speaks.

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE and MALCOLM)

Let these coming wounds wound you back to your purpose.

(to the WITCHES)

You may begin.

The WITCHES circle MACDUFF.

FIRST WITCH

Macduff of Fife had a wife.

SECOND WITCH

Macduff of Fife had a son.

THIRD WITCH

Macduff of Fife left no message.

In the scene, it is clear that FLEANCE allies himself with ATHOLL.

* * * * *

Scene 4: Macduff's Castle

LADY MACDUFF

What had he done, to make him fly the land?

ATHOLL

You must have patience, madam.

DONALBAIN

There's patience again!

LADY MACDUFF

He had none:

His flight was madness...to leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion and his titles in a place

From whence himself does fly? He loves us not...

(referring to ATHOLL)

Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless.

FLEANCE

How "fatherless" rings in my ears!

MACBETH joins the murderers. FLEANCE stays near ATHOLL.

LADY MACDUFF

Sirrah, your father's dead...How will you live?

ATHOLL

As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF

What, with worms and flies?

ATHOLL

With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

LADY MACDUFF

Poor bird! thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime,

The pitfall nor the gin.

ATHOLL

Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set [traps] for.

FLEANCE

Oh, yes they are.

ATHOLL

My father is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF

Yes, he is dead—

FLEANCE

If he is wanted dead, then he will be found dead.

LADY MACDUFF

How wilt thou do for a father?

ATHOLL

Nay, how will you do for a husband?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

ATHOLL

Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

FLEANCE

Fathers are cheap and used so cheaply.

ATHOLL

Was my father a traitor, mother?

LADY MACDUFF

Ay, that he was...one that swears and lies.

ATHOLL

And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

ATHOLL

And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one.

FLEANCE

Then the world would be empty.

ATHOLL

Who must hang them?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, the honest men.

DONALBAIN

Young suckling Fleance—

ATHOLL

Then the liars and swearers are fools,
for there are liars and swearers enow to beat
the honest men and hang up them.

DONALBAIN

—you look green!

LADY MACDUFF

God help thee, poor monkey, poor prattler—

Enter a MESSENGER, who is actually MACBETH disguised. LADY MACDUFF's responses set him off balance.

LADY MACDUFF

Who are you?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Bless you, fair dame!

LADY MACDUFF

Why are you blessing me?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I am not to you known—

LADY MACDUFF

No, you are not!

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Though in your state of honour I am perfect.

LADY MACDUFF

How did you get in?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I doubt some danger—

LADY MACDUFF

How did you get in?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I doubt some danger does approach you nearly—

LADY MACDUFF

Do you know or do you not?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

If you will take a homely man's advice,
Be not found here—

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Hence, with your little ones.

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Cruelty...is too nigh your person.

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

LADY MACDUFF

I abide you no longer!

The MESSENGER exits. FLEANCE and ATHOLL act almost as one. MACBETH tries to leave, but LADY MACBETH appears to force him to join the murderers.

LADY MACDUFF

I have done no harm.

FLEANCE

It doesn't matter.

LADY MACDUFF

But I remember now
I am in this earthly world—

FLEANCE

Ashes to ashes—

LADY MACDUFF

—where to do harm—

ATHOLL

Dust to dust—

LADY MACDUFF

Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defence,
To say I have done no harm?

ATHOLL

We have done no harm.

Enter MURDERERS.

LADY MACDUFF

What are these faces?

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF

I hope, in no place...
Where such as thou mayst find him.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

He's a traitor.

ATHOLL

Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain! Mother, I protect thee!

ATHOLL attacks the MURDERER.

NOTE: The death of ATHOLL and LADY MACDUFF should be done as stylized as possible.

FLEANCE

Don't!

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

What, you egg!

The MURDERER stabs ATHOLL. He falls into FLEANCE's arms.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

Young fry of treachery!

ATHOLL

He has kill'd me, mother:

Run away, I pray you!

ATHOLL dies in FLEANCE's arms. LADY MACDUFF backs away from the MURDERERS, and as she does so, she backs into LADY MACBETH, who holds her. One of the murderers ties a red ribbon around her throat, and LADY MACDUFF collapses to the floor. A beat after LADY MACDUFF's murder, then both ATHOLL and LADY MACDUFF rise and exit, as if they are leaving the stage after completing their scene. ATHOLL and FLEANCE take a beat to acknowledge each other before ATHOLL leaves.

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

That would have been you. Young Atholl's body, my son's body, answers to the salutation of worms because you got away.

MALCOLM

That is enough.

MACDUFF

We have barely set sail. Come on, weanling—do you see me crying any more over the death of my loves? I cried as was needed, then left off crying as was needed. You know what needs next happen. Listen to this man whom you “liked” so much.

DONALBAIN

Such great and scurvy fun!

The killing of BANQUO: this is an edited combination of 3.1 and 3.3. The FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH will again play the murderers. BANQUO now plays himself, as does FLEANCE. The THIRD WITCH will play the THIRD MURDERER. MACBETH comes over and leads FLEANCE into the scene by the hand, then stands by the MURDERERS.

MACBETH

Well then, now, my catalogue of dogs,
Have you gnawed on the scraps of my speeches?...
Both of you
Know Banquo was your enemy.

BOTH MURDERERS

True, my lord.

MACBETH

So is he mine...I could
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight...
yet I must not....
[So] I to your assistance do make love,
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed that I am reckless what
I do to spite the world.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

And I another
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
That I would set my lie on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on't.

MACBETH

Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at most
I will advise you where to plant yourselves...
it must be done to-night,
And something from the palace...
Leave no rubs nor botches in the work--
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:
I'll come to you anon.

BOTH MURDERERS

We are resolved, my lord.

Exit MURDERERS. MACBETH alone—these words come just before his meeting with the MURDERERS. As he speaks, he stands next to or close to FLEANCE. The WITCHES surround him.

MACBETH

He...bade [the sister] speak to him—

FIRST WITCH

Then prophet-like
They hail'd him father to a line of kings—

SECOND WITCH

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe—

THIRD WITCH

Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding.

MACBETH

If 't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd...
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
It is concluded.

FIRST WITCH

Banquo, thy soul's flight—

SECOND WITCH

If it find heaven—

THIRD WITCH

Must find it out to-night.

FLEANCE shows some hesitation. The MURDERERS position themselves.

BANQUO

Come, son, this is the part we must play.

FLEANCE

I cannot—

MACDUFF

Think of Atholl—you owe it to him to know what he knew.

FLEANCE

I already know this.

MACDUFF

Not deeply enough.

BANQUO

Come, son—it is what all men must bear to make their lives well-borne.

This scene comes from 3.3. Enter three MURDERERS—MACBETH actually pushes the THIRD WITCH, who does not want to do the deed. When she refuses, MACBETH joins the MURDERERS, in a quick disguise.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

But who did bid thee join with us?

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Macbeth.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

He needs not our mistrust...

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Then stand with us....near approaches
The subject of our watch.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO

Give us a light there, ho!

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

Then 'tis he—

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

A light, a light!

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

'Tis he.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Stand to't.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO.

BANQUO

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!

Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

BANQUO dies in a stylized manner. FLEANCE escapes, then stands by MACBETH, watching the scene.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Who did strike out the light?

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Wast not the way?

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

There's but one down; the son is fled.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

We have lost

Best half of our affair.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH exit. MACBETH puts a hand on FLEANCE while he speaks.

MACBETH

No son of mine succeeding—

To make...the seed of Banquo kings!

MACBETH shoves FLEANCE away.

Enough.
MALCOLM

MACDUFF
And you think you escape the visions?

FLEANCE
Enough!
(to DUNCAN)
There is no need!

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM)
You wanted to know better the “why.”
(to ALL)
If we unite to fight against Macbeth, we cross ourselves on the
crucifix that blood nails us to—no other “why” will do.

FLEANCE
It is just blood now, isn't it? Not principle, not justice, not “greater
good”—but whose thirst is the first to be gorged!
(to MALCOLM)
Stop them!

DONALBAIN
(mocking)
“Stop them!” You have no choice—see what your manhood
makes it clear you cannot escape, ever.

*MACDUFF signals DUNCAN to take his place his place in his “bed,” a chair set stage center.
MACBETH and LADY MACBETH enter, as does BANQUO, who signals FLEANCE, who
reluctantly joins him again. MACDUFF signals to begin.*

Enter BANQUO and FLEANCE.

BANQUO
How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE
The moon is down...

BANQUO
...A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

Enter MACBETH.

Who's there?
BANQUO

A friend.
MACBETH

BANQUO
What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed....
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH
...When we can entreat an hour...
We would spend it in some words upon that business...

At your kind'st leisure.
BANQUO

MACBETH
If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.

So I lose none
In seeking to augment it...
BANQUO

Good repose the while!
MACBETH

Thanks, sir: the like to you!
BANQUO

Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE, but then FLEANCE turns away from his father and sneaks back to the scene as LADY MACBETH enters the scene. She has a knife in her hand. They will play a game of "hide-and-seek" all the way into DUNCAN's bedroom.

MACBETH
Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?

MALCOLM
Wait! You watched? Wait! Why?

MACBETH and LADY MACBETH wait.

FLEANCE

Curiosity. To learn something good for my father, since Macbeth had won gifts for doing only what my father had done.

MALCOLM

And then did nothing? Said nothing?

FLEANCE

Look at me—a child, not a man, but—
(indicating MACDUFF and DONALBAIN)
—according to them, a man nonetheless—then a weak man—

DONALBAIN

Weaky squeaky—

FLEANCE

—with no power to prevent, only buckle and bleach my eyes with knowledge too soon seen, too little soothed.

(to MALCOLM)

And whom to trust?

MALCOLM

Your father?

FLEANCE

And put him in danger? If chance could find the murderers, then that same chance might save my father.

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM)

Satisfied?

MACDUFF signals to MACBETH.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

LADY MACBETH pulls just out of his reach, plays hide-and-seek with it behind her back.

LADY MACBETH

[Oh, but I] do fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness—

MACBETH

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

LADY MACBETH

[Let me] chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round.

MACBETH

Art thou...fatal vision...but
A dagger of the mind...?

LADY MACBETH

Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.

LADY MACBETH laughs quietly, and leads him into DUNCAN's bedroom. She places the knife in DUNCAN's hand.

MACBETH

I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.

MACBETH takes out his own knife. As he does, DUNCAN takes the knife in his hand and smears it with red coloring, to resemble blood. MACBETH is now in DUNCAN's bedroom.

MACBETH

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.

DUNCAN exchanges knives with MACBETH; MACBETH now holds the bloody one. DUNCAN bloodies the second knife.

MACBETH

There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

LADY MACBETH

Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?

MACBETH

It is the bloody business!

LADY MACBETH

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man...

MACBETH

I am still manned!

LADY MACBETH

But now too full o' the milk of human kindness!
I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

MACBETH

Bring forth men-children only
[As you have brought me forth];
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males.

LADY MACBETH takes the second knife out of DUNCAN's hand and puts it in MACBETH's hand. He now holds two bloody knives. He stands behind DUNCAN.

MACBETH

I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

LADY MACBETH leaves the room. FLEANCE half-looks at MACBETH. MACBETH raises the daggers over his head and slowly brings them down until the tips touch DUNCAN's chest as the WITCHES speak.

FIRST WITCH

Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead—

SECOND WITCH

—and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep—

THIRD WITCH

Witchcraft celebrates

Pale Hecate's offerings—

FIRST WITCH

—and wither'd murder—

SECOND WITCH

—alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf...

THIRD WITCH

—towards his design
Moves like a ghost....

The knives are against DUNCAN's chest. A bell rings.

MACBETH

....Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

MACBETH lays the daggers in an "X" on DUNCAN's chest. DUNCAN takes some of the red coloring he used on the knives and smears MACBETH's hands with it. MACBETH pulls the knives away. DUNCAN falls and dies.

FLEANCE

Murder!

MACBETH spins around but FLEANCE flies, and MACBETH does not see him. He immediately joins LADY MACBETH.

MALCOLM

God bless us!

DONALBAIN

Amen!

MACBETH

(looking on his hands)

This is a sorry sight.

LADY MACBETH

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH

There's one...cried 'Murder!'
One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' another...
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH

Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH

But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH

These deeds...thought...these ways...will make us mad.

MACBETH

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep"—

MALCOLM

Macbeth murders all our sleep.

MACDUFF

—the innocent sleep—

FLEANCE

Enough pity!

MACBETH

—"Macbeth shall sleep no more."

LADY MACBETH

....Get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH

I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil—

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)

Do you fear him?

LADY MACBETH

If he do bleed—

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)

Do you fear this painted devil?

LADY MACBETH takes some of the blood from the knives and smears his cheek with it.

LADY MACBETH

I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;
For it must seem their guilt.

LADY MACBETH exits, taking the daggers. She places one in FLEANCE's hand, the other in MALCOLM's. She returns to DUNCAN and smears her own hands. Meanwhile, MACBETH looks at his hands.

MACBETH

....What hands are here?..
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white....
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it, then!....
Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

MACDUFF motions to the WITCHES, and they gather the actors together. FLEANCE and MALCOLM (holding the daggers), DONALBAIN, MACDUFF, and MACBETH remain.

MACDUFF

'Twere best to know ourselves in order to know our deeds. Now, knowing, what will we do? We have seen all we need to know.

No one moves.

DONALBAIN

Silence! We are no further along than when we started all this "remembering." They stand there like blunted sheep. They will not move in revolt against the revolt done to us, and we cannot move without them moving.

(to MACDUFF)

As a good lord you will not move without—

(indicating MALCOLM)

—his consent, and this one—

(indicating FLEANCE)

—is the wild card that makes jokers of us all: not yet king but king to be. And I? I've nothing to give but spleen and malice, and they are rated common stuff—like me.

MACBETH

(to MACDUFF)

Look at them—upon them you rest your rebellious anger? Upon them you plant your siege? You have already lost, for I have powers and truths beyond any measures you can measure out against me. Come, witches, once again.

MACBETH motions for the WITCHES to enter. DUNCAN, LADY MACDUFF, and BANQUO will play the apparitions. From 4.1.

FIRST WITCH

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

SECOND WITCH

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

FIRST WITCH

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw....

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

MACBETH

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!...
I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come to know [my future], answer me:

FIRST WITCH

Speak.

SECOND WITCH

Demand.

THIRD WITCH

We'll answer.

Thunder. First Apparition: a bloody Child.

FIRST APPARITION

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

MACBETH

Then I will live...

MACBETH points at MALCOLM, MACDUFF, DONALBAIN, and FLEANCE.

MACBETH

—what need I fear of thee, all woman-born and women-fed?

Thunder. Second Apparition: a Child crowned, with a tree in his hand.

SECOND APPARITION

Be lion-mettled, proud...
For Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until

Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

MACBETH

That will never be—Sweet bodements! good!...
Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing more: tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?....

FIRST WITCH

Show!

SECOND WITCH

Show!

THIRD WITCH

Show!...

Third Apparition: a show of Eight Kings. BANQUO lays down eight crowns as MACBETH speaks.

MACBETH

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!
And thy hair...is like the first.
A third! A fourth! Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet! A seventh!...
Yet the eighth appears....
Horrible sight!...

BANQUO moves away from MACBETH.

MACBETH

What, is this so?

ALL WITCHES AND APPARITIONS

Ay, sir, all this is so....

The WITCHES and APPARITIONS vanish, taking the crowns.

MACBETH

(to MACDUFF)

So, you see—I am fortified, bolstered in blood against all coming
blood. Every man is of woman born, every tree must stay within its
roots. Fleance, you are the one mystery I cannot crack—but crack
it I will to keep the golden round from squaring itself on you. Save
yourselves your selves; Scotland is mine.

MACBETH exits. There is a long pause.

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM)

Face it, my lord—for you are my lord, though not yet crowned at
Scone—it is upon him—

(indicating FLEANCE)
—that Scotland's fairness hangs.

DONALBAIN

But the apparitions?

MACDUFF

I will be the one to set the conditions of Macbeth's death.

DONALBAIN

Your mother was not of this world?

MACDUFF

Try not to exercise thy charm...
Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

MALCOLM

Thou opposed, being of no woman born?

DONALBAIN

And I suppose you can coax trees to engage in close formation?

MALCOLM

(understanding what MACDUFF is thinking)
Yes, he can.

DONALBAIN

Oh?

MALCOLM

Let every soldier hew him down a bough
And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host and make discovery
Err in report of us.

DONALBAIN

If two can be fulfilled—
(looks at FLEANCE)
Then surely three will be our lucky number.

MALCOLM

Lucky for some.

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM)

Your luck will be to king our kingdom for the term of your heart's length—but the health of our body politic rests on this young prate's friable bones.

(to FLEANCE)

Well? The decision is yours—rebellion or exile.

MALCOLM
(looking at FLEANCE)

You are my rival, now, you know.

DONALBAIN

And you are both now mine.

FLEANCE

I don't want to be anything to anyone but son to my father.

DONALBAIN

Too late for that.

MALCOLM

And I must add my weight on your friable bones.

MACDUFF

As I said, Edward has pledged 10,000 men, Fleance. Plus what we raise in arms at home. But we need your word. We need the man's word, the word of the man today and the man to come.

FLEANCE
(to MALCOLM)

What should I do?

MALCOLM

There is no real choice here. What is soft must be baked hard; what is already hardened must shatter in service. That is your path. From now on political bread feeds your daily plate.

FLEANCE looks at them all, looking very much like a frightened child. He indicates for MALCOLM to give him his dagger, which he does. Then, putting one blade against another, he scrapes them together, as if he were sharpening one blade against the other.

FLEANCE

This is how my soul feels.

The rest of the actors, except MACBETH, take up their weapons. They circle FLEANCE and say the following as they slowly crowd in on him.

DUNCAN

Fight.

ALL

Fight.

MACDUFF

Kill.

ALL

Kill.

BANQUO

Prove it.

ALL

Prove it.

FIRST WITCH

Rebellion or exile.

ALL

Rebellion.

LADY MACDUFF

Revenge is sweet.

ALL

Revenge.

LADY MACBETH

When you durst do it, then you were a man.

ALL

Be a man.

ATHOLL

Avenge your father.

Avenge. ALL

Be a warrior. SECOND WITCH

Warrior. ALL

What kind of son are you? THIRD WITCH

Son. ALL

Be a faithful son. DONALBAIN

Faithful. ALL

To be a hero—or not to be. ALL WITCHES

FLEANCE crosses the daggers on his chest, then raises them over his head and yells as loudly as he can.

YES!!! FLEANCE

Everyone stops, faces the audience, as the lights come to ghost light. Everyone exits except the WITCHES and FLEANCE.

* * * * *

Scene 5

Foul whisperings are abroad— THIRD WITCH

Unnatural deeds— FIRST WITCH

SECOND WITCH

Do breed unnatural troubles—

FIRST WITCH

Infected minds—

THIRD WITCH

—to their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets—

SECOND WITCH

(indicating FLEANCE)

More needs he the divine than the physician.

THIRD WITCH

Malcolm and Donalbain and Macduff came back.

SECOND WITCH

They brought 10,000 men to spring the attack.

FIRST WITCH holds her paper in front of her face.

FIRST WITCH

They cut branches down for camouflage.

SECOND WITCH and THIRD WITCH do the same, peeking out from behind.

FIRST WITCH

This faked out Macbeth when they launched their barrage.

SECOND WITCH

And Lady Macbeth used a hundred brands—

THIRD WITCH

—of soap to scrape the blood off her hands.

The WITCHES mock-wash their hands while mock-saying the phrase.

SECOND WITCH

And when she couldn't wash them clean—

THIRD WITCH

She killed herself—

FIRST WITCH

End of that scene.

They grab their backpacks and move to FLEANCE. From their backpacks they pull a variety of articles that they use to dress FLEANCE as a “warrior”—but because of what they pull out of their bags, he looks more like a clown warrior than a “real” warrior. [NOTE: It is director’s choice about what to pull out and put on FLEANCE.]

FIRST WITCH

And now it’s time for Fleance to be strong—

THIRD WITCH

Not show any fears—

FIRST WITCH

Make hard his heart, deafen his ears—

SECOND WITCH

Show the adults he can be killingly wild—

THIRD WITCH

And never think twice that he was once a child.

The WITCHES step back to admire their work. FLEANCE looks the fool, but he doesn’t protest. The other actors enter, “dressed” for war.

SECOND WITCH

Macbeth waits for you.

FLEANCE

The mind I sway by and the heart I bear
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

Without hesitation, FLEANCE rips off his “armor” until he holds nothing but his “sword.” The WITCHES back off but keep smiling.

FLEANCE

To-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow—

MALCOLM

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day—

MACDUFF

To the last syllable of recorded time—

DUNCAN
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools—

DONALBAIN
The way to dusty death.

LADY MACDUFF
Out, out, brief candle!

BANQUO
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player—

LADY MACBETH
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage—

ATHOLL
And then is heard no more—

MACBETH
It is a tale told by an idiot—

FLEANCE
Full of sound and fury—

MACBETH AND FLEANCE
Signifying nothing.

A SERVANT (ATHOLL) steps forward.

MACBETH
Thy story quickly.

SERVANT [ATHOLL]
As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,
The wood began to move.

MALCOLM AND WITCHES
“Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane.”

MACBETH
And now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinane.

MACDUFF

Arm, arm, and out!

MACBETH

I gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.

SOLDIER [DUNCAN]

Ring the alarum-bell!

SOLDIER [BANQUO]

Blow, wind! come, wrack!

ALL (EXCEPT FOR FLEANCE AND MACBETH)

At least they will die with harness on their back!

* * * * *

Scene 6: Dunsinane.

Drumming begins. The COMPANY performs THE FIELD OF BATTLE, and FLEANCE fights. From the pack come MACBETH, MACDUFF, and FLEANCE. The company continues the choreography, but now in slow motion and in silence.

MACBETH

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none.

MACDUFF comes up behind MACBETH. FLEANCE stands to the side.

MACDUFF

Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH

Get thee back; my soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already—
(seeing FLEANCE)
—and thine in addition.

MACDUFF

My voice is in my sword.

MACBETH

Thou lovest labour—
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield,
To one of woman born.

FLEANCE

Despair thy charm—
Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

MACBETH

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so—

MACDUFF

Then yield thee, coward,

MACBETH

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
Nor honor [indicating FLEANCE] his eight-fold continuous crown—
I will try to the last. Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

A short, choreographed fight between MACDUFF and MACBETH, but MACBETH is defeated, thrown down. The COMPANY forms a half-circle around MACDUFF, MACBETH, and FLEANCE. MACBETH waits to be killed by MACDUFF. He is on his knees with MACDUFF's his sword across his throat.

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)

Come here. Come here.

ALL

Come here.

FLEANCE walks slowly to MACDUFF.

MACDUFF

This is what you must do.

ALL

Must do.

FLEANCE

I cannot.

ALL

Cannot.

MACDUFF

The death for traitors is beheading. Macbeth is a traitor nonpareil.
Therefore—

MALCOLM

Fleance, you have no choice.

ALL

No choice.

(beat of the weapons)

No choice.

(beat of the weapons)

No choice—

The beat of the weapons continues throughout until the decapitation.

MACDUFF

This is what you must do to complete yourself.

ALL

Complete yourself.

MACDUFF

This must happen if your spirit stays strong enough for eight generations.

MACDUFF urges FLEANCE to grab the other end of the sword and pull up on it, thus completing the beheading.

FLEANCE reaches, then walks away to talk himself into doing the deed.

FLEANCE

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts...
Fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose—

the company recites the same lines in a hoarse whisper echoing him.

COMPANY

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts...
Fill him from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick his blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake his fell purpose—

FLEANCE finally grabs the other end of the sword. Just as they are about to complete the act, the company bangs their weapons on the floor. With a slight jerk upwards, MACDUFF and FLEANCE complete the act. To indicate the beheading, MACBETH simply drops his head over the sword: the movement should be clean and simple, with no melodrama.

* * * * *

Epilogue #1

(See note above.)

There is a very slight pause, and then all the actors, one by one, act as if they have just awakened from a dream: they are making a transition from the world of the stage back into their own world. They look surprised, a little befuddled, unsure what they have done, getting their bearings while putting their weapons down. The following lines should be said clearly, distinctly, without any need to “act” at this point. MACBETH remains with his head bowed. The WITCHES remain the WITCHES in their behavior, though: slightly sarcastic, always curious.

FLEANCE

Our revels now are ended.

WITCHES

Yes.

BANQUO

(pointing to MACBETH)

Look what we have done.

MACBETH raises his head.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone—

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others—

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

DUNCAN

So we had reasons to make it right—

LADY MACBETH

More than reasons enough.

MALCOLM

More than “more than enough”—remember, all those “reasons” he killed had names—

Faces— BANQUO

Family— ATHOLL

Friends— DONALBAIN

MACDUFF
And all who kill others should die themselves—

Eye for an eye— DONALBAIN

Heart for a heart— LADY MACDUFF

Vengeance and revenge. DUNCAN

Yes. Yes. ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

FIRST WITCH
And does this execution bring you peace?

SECOND WITCH
And is this world better off?

THIRD WITCH
(indicating MACBETH)
And what does doing that make all of you?

We thought— FIRST WITCH

We'd just ask you— SECOND WITCH

These questions. THIRD WITCH

I have a feeling— FLEANCE

Everyone looks at FLEANCE.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling that this is not where we should end.

MACBETH

So what would you suggest?

FLEANCE

(indicating the audience)

I think we need to talk with them.

MACBETH

Them?

FLEANCE

Yes.

MACBETH

All right.

The COMPANY faces the audience, perhaps even comes downstage to be as close as possible. FLEANCE gestures to LADY MACDUFF to begin. The ACTORS read their brief letters to one of the characters in the play, a character to whom they want to say something or make an observation. The letters can be memorized or read from sheets of paper the actors carry on them.

When they are finished, the company, as one, speaks to the audience.

ALL

"What does it cost to be young in this world?"

FLEANCE

Being young in this world should never have a cost.

All at the same, the COMPANY clap their hands and do a vaudeville-type button, with the arms outspread and on an angle, with a step forward, using "Hah!" to punctuate the movement. Then they all bow simply and exit as music comes up.

* * * * *

Epilogue #2

FLEANCE

Our revels now are ended.

WITCHES

Yes.

BANQUO

(pointing to MACBETH)

Look what we have done.

MACBETH raises his head.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone—

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others—

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

DUNCAN

So we had reasons to make it right—

LADY MACBETH

More than enough reasons.

MALCOLM

More than “more than enough”—remember, all those “reasons” he killed had names—

BANQUO

Faces—

ATHOLL

Family—

DONALBAIN

Friends—

MACDUFF

And those who kill others should die themselves—

DONALBAIN

Eye for an eye—

LADY MACDUFF

Heart for a heart—

DUNCAN

Vengeance and revenge.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes. Yes.

FIRST WITCH

And does this execution bring you peace?

SECOND WITCH

And is this world better off?

THIRD WITCH
(indicating MACBETH)

And what does that make all of you?

FIRST WITCH

We thought—

SECOND WITCH

We'd just ask you—

THIRD WITCH

These questions.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling—

Everyone looks at FLEANCE.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling that this is not where we should end.

MACBETH

So what would you suggest?

FLEANCE
(indicating the audience)

I think we need to talk with them.

MACBETH

Them?

FLEANCE
Yes.

MACBETH
All right.

The COMPANY turns to face the audience directly. FLEANCE gestures to LADY MACDUFF to begin.

LADY MACDUFF
We get confused.

ALL
Yes. We get confused.

DUNCAN
We get confused by the world—

MACDUFF
Adults have created—

LACY MACBETH
We get confused when so many really good things—

BANQUO
Get abbreviated.

ATHOLL
We get confused when we're told—

MALCOLM
To be kind and considerate—

FIRST WITCH
And then look at the world—

FLEANCE
And see almost everything opposite.

DUNCAN
We get confused why adults have children—

MALCOLM
And why they make such a fuss—

DONALBAIN
And then raise a world that—

ALL
Efficiently—

DONALBAIN
Gets rid of us.

MACDUFF
Makes children soldiers—

LADY MACDUFF
Makes children slaves—

LADY MACBETH
Turns them into prostitutes—

SECOND WITCH
Then dumps them into graves.

THIRD WITCH
Fills us with junk—

ATHOLL
Gives us falling-down schools—

FIRST WITCH
Sells off our innocence—

SECOND WITCH
Standard-tests us till we're fools—

LADY MACDUFF
Medicates our behaviors—

MACDUFF
Then sets the speed to overload—

LADY MACBETH
Acts surprised when we're depressed—

MACBETH
Acts surprised when we—

Explode! ALL

The COMPANY strikes the same melodramatic poses that they struck earlier in the play as the “adults”—make it broad, for comic effect.

BANQUO
(to the audience)
We do have an answer.

ATHOLL
An antidote.

LADY MACDUFF
A way forward.

MACDUFF
A way out.

DUNCAN
(indicating the audience)
You were all once children—

FIRST WITCH
Don't forget that.

ATHOLL
Re-connect.

ALL
Connect with that.

MACBETH
Against the odds set against us—

FLEANCE
We are still full of life—

DONALBAIN
And love—

LADY MACDUFF
And laughter—

SECOND WITCH

And hope—

BANQUO

We are not yet ground down.

MALCOLM

We are the best—the only—second chance this world has.

THIRD WITCH

Our bright-edged souls are what should carve the future.

LADY MACBETH

Take our measure for your measure.

MACBETH

We wait for you.

MALCOLM

Our lives—and yours—depend upon your coming to meet us.

FLEANCE

Our love for life calls out to you endlessly.

ALL

Re-connect.

The stagelights cut out and the houselights come up immediately. The cast looks deliberately at the audience.

FIRST WITCH

What does it cost—

SECOND WITCH

To be young—

THIRD WITCH

In this world?

FLEANCE

Being young in this world should never have a cost.

All at the same, they clap their hands and do a vaudeville-type button, with the arms outspread and on an angle, with a step forward, using “Hah!” to punctuate the movement. Then they all bow simply and exit.

* * * * *

Epilogue #3

NOTE: The following ending was created by The Junior Youth Repertory Company of New Hampshire Theatre Project, which performed Macbeth's Children April 13-15, 2007. Company members: Siobhan Carty, Grace Derby, Cory Flanagan, Luke Gajewski, Brigid Hornig, Punit Matta, Robbie McCluskey, Becca Millstein, Elijah Ober, Jessica Pickford, Jake Pleadwell, Danielle Sanchez, Cairns Smith, Cantey Smith. Directed by Meghann Beauchamp and Christy Cloutier Holmes. Script adaptations by Punit Matta and Colby Senior.

FLEANCE

It is done.

BANQUO

(pointing to MACBETH)

Look what we have done.

MACDUFF

We did what we had to do. There is no shame in that.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone—

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others—

DUNCAN

We had reasons to make it right—

LADY MACBETH

More than enough reasons.

MALCOLM

More than “more than enough”—remember, all those “reasons” he killed had names—

BANQUO

Faces—

ATHOLL

Family—

DONALBAIN

Friends—

MACDUFF

You avenged your father, their father, my family. Those who kill others deserve to die.

DONALBAIN

Eye for an eye—

FIRST WITCH

Makes the whole world blind.

SECOND WITCH

Does this execution bring you peace?

THIRD WITCH

And is this world better off?

FIRST WITCH

Ask yourself that question.

FLEANCE

He killed them, yes, but if—

MACDUFF

Fleance!

MALCOLM

Fleance, it's over. He's dead.

FLEANCE

He killed Duncan in his bed. Your family, attacked your home. My father—ambushed. He came to me broken. If he is evil, what does that make me?

MACDDUFF

Still more waffling? You have done the deed. Let it be, child.

FLEANCE

You don't understand.

FIRST WITCH

Is he a child still?

SECOND WITCH

His mind become stretched and twisted?

THIRD WITCH

Torn between his duty to the world and himself?

ALL WITCHES

Hail to thee, destroyer of Cawdor! No longer a child. Soon to be king.

FLEANCE takes the scepter handed to him by the WITCHES. Everyone watches and waits. As the company speaks, they hand off their weapons to the WITCHES.

ATHOLL

It's a wild world out there.

LADY MACDUFF

No place for innocence.

MACDUFF

Childhood cut short.

BANQUO

Youth ripped from us so quickly.

DONALBAIN

Forced into slavery.

MALCOLM

Forced into war.

DUNCAN

Do we have a choice?

MACBETH

We're just children, and sometime we all forget—

LADY MACBETH

Just how vulnerable children are.

FLEANCE

Not always protected, though some try so hard.

MACBETH

Also not respected.

BANQUO

Some say their way is right way—some say they understand.

ATHOLL

They want us to succeed.

LADY MACDUFF

But their examples aren't so clear.

MACDUFF

We don't want to grow cynical.

DONALBAIN

But we feel overlooked.

MALCOLM

Rejected.

MACBETH

We want you to see us.

MACDUFF

We want a way forward.

LADY MACBETH

A way out.

ALL

You were all children once.

FLEANCE

Don't forget that.

BANQUO

Reconnect.

ATHOLL

Connect with us.

FLEANCE

We are not yet ground down.

MACBETH

And neither are you.

MACDUFF
Despite the odds set against us—

LADY MACDUFF
We're still full of life—

LADY MACBETH
And love—

MALCOLM
And laughter—

DONALBAIN
And hope—

DUNCAN
We are the best—

MACBETH
The only chance this world has.

MACDUFF
Our bright-edged souls can carve the future.

DUNCAN
Our love for life calls out to you.

BANQUO
What does it cost to be young in this world?

FLEANCE
Being young in this world should never have a cost.

End of play.