

# Macbeth

**Saturday, January 12, 2008 (13:30 EST; 18:30 UTC; 19:30 CET)**

**Running time: 2 hours, 50 minutes. 1 intermission**

## Act I

Scotland. Macbeth and Banquo, leaders of the Scottish army, meet a group of witches who prophesy the future. They address Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, and tell Banquo that he will be the father of kings. The two men try to learn more, but the witches vanish. Messengers arrive with news that Duncan, the current King of Scotland, has made Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. The first part of the witches' prediction has come true.

In Macbeth's castle, Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband telling her of the events that have just transpired. She resolves to follow her ambitions ("Vieni! t'affretta!"). A servant announces that Duncan will soon arrive at the castle, and when Macbeth enters, she tells him that they must kill the king. Duncan arrives, and Lady Macbeth invites him to spend the night. Macbeth has a vision of a dagger, then leaves to commit the murder. On his return, he tells his wife how the act has frightened him ("Fatal mia donna"). She replies him that he needs more courage. They both leave as Banquo enters with Macduff, a nobleman, who discovers the murder. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth pretend to be horrified and join the others in condemning the crime.

## Act II

Macbeth has become king. Duncan's son, Malcolm, is suspected of having killed his father and has fled to England. Worried about the prophecy that Banquo's children will rule, Macbeth and his wife now plan to kill him and his son, Fleance, as well. As Macbeth leaves to prepare the double murder, Lady Macbeth hopes that it will finally make the throne secure ("La luce langue").

Outside the castle, assassins wait for Banquo, who appears with his son, warning him of strange forebodings ("Come dal ciel precipita"). Banquo is killed, but Fleance escapes.

Lady Macbeth welcomes the court to the banquet hall and sings a drinking song ("Si colmi il calice"), while Macbeth receives news that Banquo is dead and his son has escaped. About to take Banquo's seat at the table, Macbeth has a terrifying vision of the dead man accusing him. His wife is unable to calm her unsettled husband, and the courtiers wonder about the king's strange behavior. Macduff vows to leave the country, which is now ruled by criminals.

## Act III

The witches gather again, and Macbeth enters their cave, demanding more prophecies. Apparitions warn him to beware of Macduff and assure him that "no man of woman born" can harm him, and that he will be invincible until Birnam Wood marches on his castle. In another vision, he sees a procession of future kings, followed by Banquo. Horrified, Macbeth collapses. The witches disappear, leaving him on the heath, where his wife finds him. They resolve to kill Macduff and his family as well as Banquo's son.

## Act IV

On the English border, Macduff has joined the Scottish refugees (Chorus: "Patria oppressa"). His wife and children have been killed ("Ah, la paterna mano"). Malcolm appears with British troops and leads them to invade Scotland.

Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking, haunted by the horrors of what she and her husband have done (“Una macchia”).

In another room in the castle, Macbeth awaits the arrival of his enemies. He realizes that he will never live to a peaceful old age (“Pietà, rispetto, amore”). Messengers bring news that Lady Macbeth has died, and that Birnam Wood appears to be moving. English soldiers appear, camouflaged with its branches. Macduff confronts Macbeth and tells him that he was not born naturally but had a Caesarean birth. He kills Macbeth and proclaims Malcolm king of Scotland.