

Macbeth Goes Hollywood

By Dwayne Yancey

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DEDICATION

*For Trina, Rain and Keith,
whose support made this possible.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare's agent options his script "Macbeth" to a Hollywood producer who wants a "few" changes to make the play more contemporary. The trouble is the producer isn't sure what changes exactly should be made. Soon Shakespeare is casting the poor witches alternately as country singers, rappers, and punk rockers, while Macbeth and Lady Macbeth perform their lines as gangsters, farmers and Goths. A member of the audience is even pulled onstage at one point to help Macbeth rehearse a murder scene.

If that's not bad enough, the final showdown between Macbeth and Macduff is revised and becomes a scene straight from a Western! The agent says the script doesn't matter, it's just the concept, and all part of the process of "goin' Hollywood." But after this, will the great Bard ever be the same?

Performance time: About 70 minutes.

ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE

The opening scene was performed September 10, 2004 at No Shame Theatre, a program of Mill Mountain Theatre, Roanoke, VA. It was directed by Keith Yancey. The original cast included:

WITCH 1: Trina Yancey

WITCH 2: Marycatherine Smith

WITCH 3: Laura Tuggle Anderson

SHAKESPEARE: Dwayne Yancey

AGENT: Simon Adkins

PRODUCER: John Bryant

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 m, 4 w, 19 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 4 m, 4 w, 5 flexible, extras)

AGENT: Shakespeare's agent who options the script for *Macbeth*.

PRODUCER: Hollywood producer who wants a "few" script changes.

SHAKESPEARE: The Bard himself.

WITCH 1: One of the weird sisters from "Macbeth."

WITCH 2: Another.

WITCH 3: Another.

MACBETH: Scottish thane who kills the king to become king.

STAGEHAND: Non-speaking role.

BANQUO: Macbeth's best friend and potential rival.

LADY MACBETH: Power-hungry wife of Macbeth.

MACDUFF: Scottish lord who eventually kills Macbeth.

MURDERER 1, 2

CATERER 1, 2

GANGSTER 1, 2

SOLDIER 1, 2

COWBOY 1, 2

SECURITY GUARDS 1, 2

MUSICIANS 1, 2

CAMERA PEOPLE 1, 2

EXTRAS: As needed.

Note: *The same two actors can double as murderers, caterers, gangsters, soldiers, cowboys, security guards, musicians, and camera crew.*

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PROPS

Pad of paper	Plumed pen
3 cowboy hats (at least 1 white, 1 black)	
Guitars	Microphones
Table and chairs	Fog machine (optional)
Barbecue potato chips	Golf clubs
TV cameras	Cell phone
Answering machine	Frying pan
2 plastic daggers	Barbells or Thigh Master
Can of air freshener	Cheap lawn chair
TV remote control	Broom or dish towel
Screwdriver	Deck of cards
Crystal ball	Violin case
Contracts	Tambourine, bongo drum
Chinese take-out boxes	Cans of soft drink
Briefcase holding a can of	diet soft drink
Tray of hors d'oeuvres	Cauldron, wooden spoon
and drinks	Briefcase , security chain
Sunglasses	Microphone ear pieces
Pitchfork (optional)	Basket of laundry
Box of laundry detergent	Map
Two wooden barrels	Tumbleweeds
2 plastic guns	Lasso

SOUND EFFECTS

Show-tune music
Tone on answering machine
Gunshots
Cell phone ringing

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(AT RISE: A theatre stage set for a production of "Macbeth." The WITCHES are dressed in classic witch costumes. They act out the opening scene of the play while SHAKESPEARE stands at the side of the stage and writes something down on a pad of paper with a large plumed pen.)

WITCH 1: "When shall we three meet again? In thunder,
lightning or in rain?"

WITCH 2: "When the hurlyburly's done, when the battle's lost
and won."

WITCH 3: "That will be ere the set of sun."

WITCH 1: "Where the place?"

WITCH 2: "Upon the heath."

WITCH 3: "There to meet Macbeth."

(Shakespeare's AGENT ENTERS all aflutter with good news. The PRODUCER follows. WITCHES exit quietly.)

AGENT: Good news, Will. I've optioned your script to
Megaplex Studios in Hollywood! They want to make a
blockbuster out of it!

SHAKESPEARE: Which script are you talking about?

AGENT: You know, the one with all the murders in it.

SHAKESPEARE: Like I said, which one?

AGENT: You know, that ... that ... that Scottish one! Yeah,
that one. They really like all the stabbing and the killing and
the blood and the gore. They really like the gore. Oh, just
one thing ... they want to know if you could, you know, sex it
up a little.

SHAKESPEARE: Sex it up a little?

AGENT: Yeah, you know, give it a more ... contemporary feel.

SHAKESPEARE: More contemporary?

AGENT: Yeah, you know, drop all the old English —

SHAKESPEARE: It's not old English —

AGENT: Well, whatever, all those clunky old words and stuff.
Here, why don't you just talk to Max.

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AGENT: *(Continued.)* He's the producer with Megaplex. Max, Will. Will, Max. There. We'll all have to do lunch sometime. Well, I've got to run. More scripts to option, you know. I'm feeling good about that "Taming of the Shrew" one, too. I think we might have a real winner there. Might have to change a few things, though. Don't want to play to any stereotypes, now do we? *(AGENT EXITS.)*

PRODUCER: Pleased to meet you, Bill.

SHAKESPEARE: It's Will.

PRODUCER: Bill, Will, whatever. Interesting nom de plume you have ... Shakespeare. Very ... pointy. How'd you come up with that?

SHAKESPEARE: It's my real name, actually.

PRODUCER: Oh, that's a good one. Your agent said you were just as funny in person as you are on stage.

SHAKESPEARE: No, really, it's my name.

PRODUCER: I can certainly understand why you went with a stage name there, Bill.

SHAKESPEARE: It's Will.

PRODUCER: I mean, your real name is, what, Francis Bacon or something like that? That's almost as bad as Marilyn Monroe's real name. I mean, can you imagine a sex symbol named Norma Jean? Or —

SHAKESPEARE: It's Shakespeare!

PRODUCER: Yes, yes, yes, whatever. Just make up your mind and stick with it. Well, let's get on with the script revisions, shall we?

SHAKESPEARE: Revisions?

PRODUCER: Yes, you know ... to make it more marketable ... more saleable ... more contemporary.

SHAKESPEARE: So what do you mean "more contemporary"?

PRODUCER: *(Highbrow.)* I see this Macbeth character as kind of an archetypal figure ... the protagonist with the fatal flaw who battles forces beyond his control. It's a classic tale ... man's inhumanity to man, a tragedy of epic proportions. Sort of a modern morality play. *(HE turns practical.)* So I was thinking, could you perhaps put it more in the language of the people?

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SHAKESPEARE: The language of the people? Okay, well, I suppose I could do that. I'm not as elitist as all those academics have made me out to be, you know. Hit it, girls!

(The WEIRD SISTERS ENTER as country singers. They are wearing cowboy hats. WITCH 1 sings while WITCH 2 and WITCH 3 strum on guitars.)

WITCH 1: *(Sings.)*

I was walkin' 'cross the heath one stormy night
When, oh, I saw such a terrible sight
Something in the air sure wasn't like it oughta
Macbeth is gonna be Thane of Cawdor
And king too!

PRODUCER: Ummm. Interesting. Interesting. But I'm not sure the country thing works. Not the target market we're aiming for with this one. I was thinking something, well, a little more urban.

(WITCHES EXIT.)

SHAKESPEARE: More urban? All right, I can do urban. Let me just make a few changes here *(HE starts writing. Ad-libs some ridiculous words out loud.)* This won't take but a second ... *(HE writes some more. Ad-libs some more ridiculous words out loud.)* There.

(WITCHES ENTER, dressed as rappers.)

WITCH 2: *(Raps.)* Yo!

Me and the sisters
Be down in the hood.
Now don't call us "weird" --
Just misunderstood.
We got connections
Some call it the "eye."
Now listen up, chump,
Some king's gonna die!
You might think we're just

End of Freeview

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