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PROLOGUE

Running across the front of the stage is a white cable. Above the proscenium arch is an electric sign—Macbeth—to be illuminated later. L of the stage, on a rostrum, is a chair and a table bearing a cloth, notepad, carafe of water and glass. Elsewhere in the auditorium is another table and on this is a scrapbook of cuttings about Guild activities, some copies of The Townswoman, good-luck cards, and a plate of fudge made by Mrs Dabney for the delectation of the audience

Mrs Reece, chairman of the Dramatic Society, stands at the door of the auditorium greeting the audience and handing out programmes and raffle tickets. Gwynneth, the pianist, is seated below the stage playing selections from The Sound of Music. Her idiosyncrasy is continually to hit the same note while trying to turn the page of music. She reaches a rousing finale then thumps out the National Anthem

Gwynneth collects her music and exits through the auditorium door

As she does so, the House Lights go down and a spot comes up on the tabs. Mrs Reece mounts the stage

Mrs Reece Good-evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome—

The spot goes out

I'd like to welcome you here tonight I think we must have blown a fuse. (*She peers through the C of the tabs*) Could you switch the light back on, please?

No reply

Could you switch the light back on, please?

Adrian (*off*) Which one?

Mrs Reece The round one. On me.

Adrian (*off*) It's on.

Mrs Reece sighs then disappears through the tabs

There are some subdued voices off, then a succession of incorrect lights is switched on and off

Occasionally Mrs Reece peers out through the tabs, then reports back that the correct light has not yet appeared

Finally the spot comes up again

Mrs Reece resumes her position

Mrs Reece I'd like to welcome you to the first round of the Townswomen's Guild Drama Festival Area Finals——

The spot goes out

I think I'll have to peer at you from the gloom, I'm afraid. Tonight I'm very pleased to be able to introduce my own Society from the Farndale Avenue Guild. And they're going to do a serious play for you, *Hamlet*, which I'm sure many of you . . . I'm sorry, I mean *Macbeth*, which I'm sure many of you will know.

Henry, a small, moustachioed, bespectacled stage manager, appears through the auditorium door with a hammer and proceeds to nail up a No smoking sign

Now unfortunately one of our cast, Mrs Parry-Jones, who is playing the Third Witch and Macduff, had rather a nasty accident last week. She sustained a very unpleasant leg injury and, as you can imagine, it threw us into a bit of a tizwoz. But we needn't have worried because she's been an absolute trouper and insisted on coming along to be in the play tonight. I think that's jolly courageous. Incidentally, Mrs Parry-Jones has just given birth to a bouncing baby boy. In fact it was a spoonful of his Gerber's stewed apple that she skidded on. Henry, dear!

No response

Henry, dear!

Henry stops hammering

Are you going to do that all the way through the play?

Henry gives the sign a final blow with the hammer, then exits

Now without further ado I'd like to welcome our very special guest of honour, who's come all the way from London to adjudicate the Festival for us: Mr George Grape.

The spot goes on

Peach, an epicene sycophant, appears through the tabs

Peach Peach.

Mrs Reece Mr Peach Grape.

Peach No. George Peach.

Mrs Reece Not Grape?

Peach No.

Mrs Reece Oh, I've done such a silly thing. I've booked you into the *Queens Hotel* as George Grape, Mr Plum.

Peach My goodness, all we need now is some Dream Topping and we can have a fruit salad. Super to see all you friends of the Drama.

Mrs Reece Your podium awaits.

Peach I shall mount it with pleasure. (*He makes his way to the rostrum and sits at his table*)

Mrs Reece (*consulting her notes*) Now as you'll have read in your programmes, Mr Lemon is——

Peach Peach!

Mrs Reece Our guest is extremely well-known in London for his work for the BBC. He's produced a number of plays for Radio Three including a semi-operatic version of Pope's "The Dunciad", which was sung in Polynesian, and a fifteen-part dramatization of Sir Robert Walpole's letters to his wigmaker. I think I remember that. We're also very pleased to have with us Mrs Wolstenholme of the Mid-Surrey Federation, and Mrs McKendrick of the Afternoon Guild, who very generously supplied Mr . . .

Peach P . . . p . . . p . . .

Mrs Reece Mr Papaw's tablecloth. Well, I'm sure you didn't come to hear me chattering away all night, so on with the show.

Mrs Reece exits through the tabs

The spot goes out. Very little happens. There are some bumps behind the tabs then a crash of something falling, followed by a wail of despair. The spot comes up on Peach, revealing him yawning. He recovers himself as the spot goes out. The spot comes up on the tabs

Mrs Reece reappears

I'm afraid they're not quite ready back there so I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you something about the Guild. We've just celebrated our thirtieth anniversary——

Felicity (*off*) Fiftieth! It was the fiftieth anniversary.

Mrs Reece That was just a slip of the tongue, Felicity.

Felicity (*off*) We began in nineteen thirty-two. It was our Golden Jubilee.

Mrs Reece pulls aside one of the tabs

Felicity is revealed in her dressing-gown

Mrs Reece Would you like to make the announcements, dear?

Felicity Well, I would just like to say that on September seventh . . .

Mrs Reece drops the tab on her

Felicity exits

Mrs Reece Yes, I'm coming to that. On September seventh—my birthday!—Mrs Rollett will be reading Chapter Seventeen of her unpublished book "Raffia and Its Uses in Pre-Republican Sri Lanka".

The tabs jerk open. Mrs Reece notices and sidles off L

If anyone would like enrolment forms I'll be in the corridor during the interval.

Mrs Reece exits

ACT I

The Lights come up on a set consisting of five arches side by side. They have been erected back to front so that the weights and braces holding them up are visible to the audience

Felicity, a nervous young housewife, and Dawn, a flighty older woman in large spectacles, are seen in the wings R dressed as the 2nd and 1st Witch respectively with black cloaks, pointed hats and false hooked noses. They have their backs to the audience and for the next few minutes the entire action of the play is directed at the back wall of the stage. We hear the sound of a finger under a gramophone needle, then the needle being very badly balanced on the edge of a record, some surface noise and finally a crack of thunder. Lightning effects. The two Witches hobble on to the stage, cackling

They are followed by the 3rd Witch, played by the tall and refined Kate. She has her leg in a plaster cast and walks on crutches

The Witches go through the middle three arches, or rather the 3rd Witch at first attempts to get through the same arch as the 2nd Witch and has to be directed accordingly

1st Witch When shall we three meet again

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

2nd Witch When the hurlyburly's done,

When the battle's lost and won.

3rd Witch That will be ere the set of sun.

1st Witch Where the place?

2nd Witch Upon the heath.

3rd Witch There to meet with Macbeth.

1st Witch I come, Graymalkin!

2nd Witch Paddock calls.

3rd Witch Anon.

The Witches plod off L while saying:

All Fair is foul, and foul is fair:

Hover through the fog and filthy air.

More thunder and lightning

The Witches enter upstage and, as background action, perform elaborate mimes to accompany Act I, Scene 3 of "Macbeth" ("Where hast thou been, sister?" to "Peace! the charm's wound up"). Downstage, the quick-tempered prima donna, Thelma, appears in the wings L as Macbeth and mouths lines to herself while waiting for her cue. The tubby and good-natured Minnie appears in the wings R as Banquo

Act I

5

Banquo (trying to attract Macbeth's attention) Psst! Psst!

Macbeth looks up in annoyance

(Hoarsely) I can't speak.

Macbeth What?

Banquo I can't speak. I've lost my voice.

Macbeth Don't understand.

Banquo takes out a throat spray and sprays it down her throat very dramatically

Banquo Throat! Throat! (She continues gesticulating)

Macbeth Get back!

Henry comes up behind Banquo

Henry Where's Lady Macbeth?

Banquo What am I going to do, Henry? I can't go on. Look, I'm speaking my loudest: hello? hello?

Henry Have you seen her? She's on in five minutes.

Macbeth Shut up!

Henry Where's Lady Macbeth?

Macbeth Shut up, will you?

Henry Is she over there?

Macbeth I'll kill you, Henry, so help me God.

Henry What's the matter with you?

Macbeth Get back! You can be seen.

Henry Don't be stupid.

Macbeth They can see you.

Henry You're crackers.

Macbeth I'm telling Mrs Reece about this. You won't work on another of our plays. You're incompetent, totally incompetent and I hate you.

Henry You're on.

Macbeth quickly prepares herself and strolls on to the stage, joining the Witches behind the arches. Banquo attempts a final remonstrance with Henry, but he pushes her after Macbeth. A telephone is heard ringing

Henry dives off to answer it

Macbeth So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

The next speech is virtually inaudible

Banquo How far is't call'd to Forres? 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? Live you? or are you aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,

By each at once her chappy finger laying

Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,

And yet your beards forbid me to interpret

That you are so.

Pause

(Slightly louder; to Macbeth) It's your line.

Macbeth Speak if you can: what are you?

1st Witch kneels

1st Witch All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

2nd Witch kneels

2nd Witch All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

3rd Witch attempts to kneel but stops short with a strangled cry

3rd Witch All hail, Macbeth! thou shalt be king hereafter!

Banquo's next speech is again inaudible. Macbeth looks in disbelief at the Witches, but they are too busy listening for their cue. They keep coming in with their next lines, but realize their mistake when Banquo's mouth continues to open and close

Simultaneously, David Plummer, a flustered and ineffectual producer, peers on stage from the wings L, holding a script. He strains to hear the dialogue

Banquo Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.

Mrs Reece, holding a book of cloakroom tickets, comes up behind Plummer

Mrs Reece Can I interest you in a raffle ticket, Mr Plummer?

Plummer Listen.

Mrs Reece I can't hear anything.

Plummer Exactly. There's supposed to be a play going on.

Mrs Reece Oh, crumbs.

1st Witch Hail!

2nd Witch Hail!

Plummer *(prompting the 3rd Witch)* Hail!

3rd Witch Hail!

Mrs Reece They must have hit a little snag.

Plummer Yes. They can't act.

Plummer exits L

Mrs Reece Did you say yes to a raffle ticket?

Mrs Reece follows him off L

1st Witch Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2nd Witch Not so happy, yet much happier.

3rd Witch Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

1st Witch Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

The Witches move DL to the wings, cackling

Macbeth Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.

2nd Witch We shouldn't have come off.

They return to the arches

Macbeth Whither are they vanish'd? Would they had stay'd!

2nd Witch Sorry.

The Witches return DL to the wings. During the ensuing dialogue Macbeth and Banquo stride around behind the arches miming to each other

Messed it up.

1st Witch No, I messed it up.

2nd Witch Yes, what happened?

1st Witch I left out a great chunk. I went straight from "I will drain him dry as hay" to "Look what I have". I left out all that stuff about something or other hanging on his pent-house lid.

2nd Witch I didn't know what to do.

1st Witch I know. There was that great pause.

3rd Witch And where was the drum?

1st Witch The drum! There was no drum.

Henry enters the wings L

1st Witch Henry! Where was the drum?

Henry Hilda just phoned.

3rd Witch I'm supposed to say, "A drum, a drum! Macbeth doth come."

Henry Will you listen to me? Hilda just phoned.

1st Witch Hilda who?

Henry Hilda Bristow! Who do you think?

1st Witch Phoned? Where from?

2nd Witch She's on in a minute.

Henry She went out to get something from the chemist. She got on the wrong bus. Now she's gone and got lost.

Consternation from the Witches

3rd Witch What are we going to do?

Henry Scrap the play.

1st Witch We can't!

2nd Witch Mother's out there tonight.

Henry We've got no Lady Macbeth.

3rd Witch Have you told Mr Plummer?

Henry (*nodding*) He's lying down.

More consternation

Mrs Reece enters the wings L with a script

Witches Mrs Reece!

Mrs Reece Calmly, ladies, please.

2nd Witch Oh, Mrs Reece, and just as we were doing so well.

Everyone turns upstage to look at Macbeth and Banquo

Macbeth (*to Banquo*) I can't hear a word you're saying, you fool!

Clutching her throat, Banquo takes a couple of steps towards Mrs Reece, but Macbeth heaves her back behind the arches

Mrs Reece Everything is under control.

3rd Witch Where's Hilda?

Mrs Reece I haven't the foggiest. We'll manage without her.

3rd Witch Oh, don't talk nonsense. How can we?

Mrs Reece What happened when the ladies' lavatory flooded the dressing-room at the Maidenhead Festival? Mmmmm, what happened? The play went on. And when the samovar exploded in *The Cherry Orchard*? The play went on, didn't it?

3rd Witch We can't go on without Lady Macbeth.

Mrs Reece There are plenty of people capable of playing the part.

3rd Witch Name one.

Mrs Reece Henry, dear: how long have you been with us now?

Henry Dunno.

Mrs Reece He's one of the most reliable members of the Society, isn't he, ladies? (*She mouths "Yes" at them*)

Witches Yes, very reliable.

Mrs Reece hands a script to Henry

Mrs Reece Take it, Henry. The part's yours.

Henry Leave it out.

Mrs Reece I've seen you mouthing the lines at rehearsals. You know them.

Henry I can't act.

Mrs Reece We both know that's not true.

Henry No... I...

Mrs Reece Well, what else could be worrying you?

Henry I don't look right.

Mrs Reece Why don't you take off those glasses?

Henry does so

(To the Witches) Seek ye no more.

Henry Oh, give it a rest.

Mrs Reece It's a wonderful part, Henry. It's very well written, you know. I mean Shakespeare's one of our most talented writers. He's on a par with Noël Coward and Ivor Novello. You can't pass up a chance like this.

Henry I'm not playing a woman.

Mrs Reece There's nothing cissy about playing a woman. And Lady Macbeth's a tough, determined person. She tells all the men what to do, doesn't she? I'm sure if she were around today she'd be getting into scraps, and having a pint with the boys, and... what else would she be doing, Felicity?

2nd Witch She'd be going down to the disco to pick up girls.

Mrs Reece She wouldn't be going down to the disco, Felicity. Be sensible.

Henry Forget it.

Mrs Reece Henry, this is a question of teamwork, you know. We've been rehearsing twice a week for nine months. Do you want to throw all that away? Throw away our chance to go through to the National Finals in Welwyn Garden City? Is that what you want? Of course it isn't. Now let's forget all this bashfulness and all this silly nonsense about being a cissy. Dawn, Kate: warm up the Carmen rollers and get him into Hilda's liberty bodice.

The 1st and 3rd Witches hustle him off L

Henry (*as he goes*) I'm gonna look a right wally.

Mrs Reece I want you to go out there a stage manager and come back a star.

Mrs Reece follows them off L

Remaining behind, the 2nd Witch is adjusting her underwear when she notices with a slow burn the true position of the audience. She shrinks back. Simultaneously Macbeth and Banquo come to the end of their scene

Banquo Very gladly.

Macbeth Till then, enough. Come, friend.

They move DL to the wings

Macbeth What the hell's the matter with you?

Banquo I told you. I've lost my voice.

Macbeth finds the 2nd Witch blocking her way

Macbeth If you wouldn't mind.

She tries to push past the Witch, who grabs Macbeth's wrist

Don't crumple the material. They were my best curtains.

2nd Witch Look.

Macbeth looks; so does Banquo. They turn in unison to the back wall. The awful truth dawns

Macbeth Oh, God.

Plummer flaps into the wings L

Plummer Scene four, scene four! Where's scene four?

Macbeth That imbecile has ruined the play.

Producer What imbecile? What do you mean, "ruined"?

Macbeth If Henry doesn't leave this Society, I will. I mean it. I'm not joking.

Producer Tell me what you're talking about!

Macbeth I'm talking about the set. Look at it! "I can put up a set in the dark," he said, "No problem at all," he said.

Plummer pushes forward, looking at the set

Plummer What's the matter with it? It looks all right.

The 2nd Witch whispers in his ear. He scoffs briefly, but then realizes that what she has said is the truth. After looking aghast at the audience and the back wall, he collapses

Macbeth Curtain! Curtain! Draw the curtain!

Macbeth exits L

Banquo and the 2nd Witch try to drag Plummer away. Dawn and Mrs Reece rush to loosen the braces. During this the tabs jerk close. Incongruously jolly music is heard. Plummer's leg appears for a while underneath the tabs and is then pulled away

Banquo, the 2nd Witch, Plummer, Dawn and Mrs Reece exit

We hear crashes and shouts as the set is reconstructed. A brace falls through the C of the tabs and is retrieved. The spot comes up on Peach, catching him examining his teeth in a hand mirror. He disposes of it and pours himself a glass of water. The spot goes out. The noise gradually subsides and the jolly music cuts off abruptly. The tabs open. The Lights come up to full revealing the set turned round the correct way and a hardboard fountain erected C. After a pause it falls down. There is a long and dramatic fanfare.

Felicity, as Malcolm, appears briefly but steps back again when it continues for longer than expected. Malcolm re-enters

Malcolm Peace, my noble . . .

The fanfare's final flourish is heard

Peace, my noble lords, for here comes Duncan, King of Scotland.

There is the sound of the fanfare being rewound. Malcolm picks up the fountain

Dawn enters as Duncan, but has forgotten to take off the false, hooked nose which she wore as the Witch

Duncan Good kinsmen, I bring fair tidings;
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name,—
Hath vanquished merciless Macdonwald,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

Malcolm Good my liege, shall we make haste to greet our loyal cap—tain . . . *(She notices Duncan's nose, drops the fountain in surprise, and turns away to suppress a fit of giggling)*

Duncan In sooth we shall; bid Ross prepare the steeds.

Malcolm tries to reply, but is convulsed

What's the matter?

Malcolm tries to indicate the nose

What is it?

Malcolm Nose!

Duncan feels her nose, squeaks with laughter and dashes off L. Malcolm follows, taking the fountain with her

Black-out. The Lights come up

Behind the far R arch, Plummer can be seen waving to Henry to enter. From behind another arch Henry's face appears, then he steps forward. He is dressed as Lady Macbeth in a gown obviously intended for a much taller actress

Lady Macbeth They met me in the day of success: and I have learned they have more in them than mortal knowledge . . .

Plummer can be seen in the R arch shouting at somebody on the other side of the stage

Plummer He hasn't got his letter!

Lady Macbeth When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. While I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who all-hailed me "Thane of Cawdor" . . .

In an unsuccessful attempt to remain invisible, Mrs Reece enters L and jumps from arch to arch to C, comes forward, hiding her face, and hands Lady Macbeth an envelope

Mrs Reece *(sotto voce)* You're supposed to have a letter.

Lady Macbeth What?

Mrs Reece Hail and farewell, milady.

(Sotto voce) Read the letter.

She backs through the C arch and hides. Lady Macbeth opens the envelope and finds nothing inside

Lady Macbeth There's nothing in it.

Mrs Reece *(peering round the arch)* Oh, fiddle.

Lady Macbeth "Thane of Cawdor"; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with, "Hail, king that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness . . .

Mrs Reece darts to the next arch

Mrs Reece *(calling into the wings)*
My handbag! My handbag!

Felicity enters L with the handbag

She nips across the arches to Mrs Reece, who removes a paper from the handbag

Mrs Reece comes down to Lady Macbeth and hands over the paper

Mrs Reece Here is the letter. Hey nonny no.

Lady MacBeth (*reading*) "Two pounds of scrag end, one pound of King Edwards" . . . what is this?

Mrs Reece Irish stew. Serves six.

Plummer looks out from behind the arch R. Felicity also looks out from C, and Dawn from L

Plummer Pull yourself together, will you?

Mrs Reece (*to Lady Macbeth*) Read not thou my shopping list, milady. (*She turns the paper over. Turning upstage, she sees everybody peering out*)
Shoo!

During the following, Mrs Reece returns behind the C arch, tries to jump off R, but collides with Plummer, who is jumping L. They both jump R and collide with Minnie, who jumps on from R. Then they all exit R. Simultaneously Dawn and Felicity jump from arch to arch, and exit L

Lady Macbeth That thou mightest not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promis'd thee.
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promis'd. Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full of the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way.

Kate enters L, as a Messenger

Messenger The king comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth What is your tidings?

Messenger The king comes here tonight.

The Messenger exits

Lady Macbeth Thou'rt mad to say it.
Is not thy master with him?

The Messenger enters

Messenger So please you, it is true.

Lady Macbeth Give him tending.

Messenger Right.

The Messenger exits

Lady Macbeth He brings great news. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here.
Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall. Come, thick night,
And pall thee . . .

Black-out

That's not a black-out!

Macbeth enters

The stage is bathed successively in blue, red and green. Then Peach's spot comes up revealing him writing notes

Peach (*looking up in surprise*) Oh.

The spot goes out. Full stage lights come up

Macbeth (*prompting Lady Macbeth*) Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor.

Lady Macbeth Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!

He stands where he is. Macbeth beckons to him. He crosses to her

Plummer (*off*) Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!

Macbeth He just said that.

Plummer (*off*) Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter.

Lady Macbeth Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!

Thy letters have transported me beyond

This ignorant present, and I feel now

The future in the instant.

When it becomes obvious that Lady Macbeth is not going to embrace her, Macbeth grabs hold of him and tries to kiss him while he cowers backwards

Macbeth My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth And when goes hence?

Macbeth Tomorrow as he purposes.

Lady Macbeth attempts to move downstage, but finds that Macbeth is standing on the hem of his dress. He tugs it away

Lady Macbeth O, never shall sun that morrow see!

Your face, my thane, is as a book where men

May read strange matters.

Macbeth If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

It were done quickly.

Lady Macbeth Be so much more the man.

Macbeth If we should fail?

Lady Macbeth We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,

And we'll not fail.

Macbeth I am settled, and bend up

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

With a flail of her arm she swipes Lady Macbeth round the face with her sleeve

Away, and mock the time with fairest show:

False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

The 3rd Witch hobbles on R

3rd Witch Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd—

A hand pulls her back into the wings

There are sounds of a brief struggle, then screams and thuds and a simultaneous Black-out

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth exit. Dawn, as Fleance, enters

The Lights come up. A moon hangs behind the arches

Banquo enters

Banquo How goes the night, boy?

The moon crashes to the ground

Fleance The moon is down.

Banquo Hold, take my sword—

She has forgotten to bring it with her and is forced to improvise

Take my brooch. There's husbandry in heaven;
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.

She hands over a shoe to Fleance

It casts a warming glow.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers!
A stealthy shape approaches.

Macbeth enters R

Fleance Illumin'd in thy burning . . . shoe . . . his gait appears familiar.

Banquo Give me my swo—brooch. Who's there?

Macbeth A friend.

Banquo What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed.

Macbeth walks directly in front of Banquo, masking her

Macbeth Being unprepared,
Our will became the servant to defect;
Which else should free have wrought.

Banquo steps out from behind Macbeth

Banquo All's well.
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth.

Macbeth claps Banquo on the shoulder, thereby pushing her back to the rear

Macbeth I think not of them:
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

Banquo (over Macbeth's shoulder) At your kindest leisure.

Macbeth Good repose the while!

Banquo Thanks, sir: (ambiguously) the like to you!

Banquo exits R

Fleance is fiddling about with the moon, trying to get somebody in the wings to raise it

Macbeth Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

Fleance The moon is down.

Macbeth Get thee to bed!

Fleance Oh, please yourself.

Fleance exits L

Macbeth (moving R) Is this a dagger which I see before me?

The 3rd Witch enters R

3rd Witch Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd—

Macbeth shoves her

The 3rd Witch totters back into the wings with a cry

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

She looks expectantly into the wings R, but nothing emerges. She crosses L

Come, let me clutch thee.

What she was expecting appears from the wings R—a large hardboard dagger—is swung out on a wire then disappears

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

She returns R

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain.

The dagger swings out again

I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest:

The dagger swings out once more. A second dagger also swings out from R

(Perturbed) I see thee still;
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:

Again the two daggers swing out. Macbeth waves at the operator of the L one to remove it. Not trusting the operator to understand, she then strolls L

It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep;

Sure enough the L dagger appears again

Macbeth grabs it and throws it violently into the wings

(Off) Get rid of this thing!

She returns, moving R

Witchcraft celebrates

Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,
With his stealthy pace, toward his design
Moves like a ghost.

She waits for the dagger to return, but it doesn't. She beckons it surreptitiously, then backs away in surprise as it flies out a little too vigorously

While I threat he lives.
I go, and it is done;

A ding-dong door chime is heard

the bell invites me.

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

Black-out

Macbeth exits and Lady Macbeth enters L, carrying a hammer

In the darkness a rhythmical banging is heard. The Lights come up L revealing Lady Macbeth banging a nail into one of the arches. He flourishes the hammer as if it were a hand prop, and moves downstage

Lady Macbeth That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold,
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark!

Macbeth (off) Who's there? What, ho!

Lady Macbeth My husband!

Macbeth enters R, in darkness

Macbeth I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

During the ensuing dialogue Lady Macbeth tries to beckon Macbeth into the light. She ignores him.

Lady Macbeth I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

Macbeth When?

Lady Macbeth Now.

Macbeth As I descended?

Lady Macbeth Ay.

Macbeth Hark! who lies i' the second chamber?

Lady Macbeth Donalbien.

Plummer (off) Donalbain.

Lady Macbeth And him as well.

Macbeth crosses L, looking at her hands

Macbeth This is a sorry sight.

The Lights crossfade to R. Lady Macbeth takes Macbeth's hands and drops the hammer on her foot

Lady Macbeth My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking
At the south entry:

Knocking is heard

retire we to our chamber;

A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy it is, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. Hark! more knocking.

Knocking is heard

Macbeth To know my deed, 'twere best not to know myself to know indeed
not my deed nohow.

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

(To Lady Macbeth) Thank you for messing up the entire scene.

Lady Macbeth You came on the wrong side.

Macbeth What difference does that make?

They exit L, arguing

The Lights come up to full

Dawn enters C as the Porter, with a cocktail glass

Porter Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he
should have old turning the key. Hic.

Knocking. Snow falls on the Porter from the flies

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there i' the name of Beezlybub? Here's a
farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time;
have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't.

Knocking

Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an
equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who
committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to
heaven: O, come in, equivocator.

The cardboard box, supposedly holding the snow, falls from the flies on to the Porter's head, knocking her spectacles to the ground. Unable to see anything, she feels around the floor, moving R, while she continues her speech

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come

hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose.

Knocking

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

She collides with the proscenium arch

(Into the wings) Henry, I've lost my glasses.

Kate, who, in addition to her other injuries, now has her arm in a sling, enters L as Macduff

Macduff Is thy master stirring?

Macbeth can be seen standing behind an arch

Macbeth Not yet!

Macduff turns to face her

Macduff Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.
Good morrow, noble sir.

Macbeth moves downstage

Macbeth Good morrow.

Her dialogue with Macduff is disturbed by the Porter, who has been unable to find the exit, and wanders back across the stage, feeling Macduff and Macbeth when she reaches them

Macduff Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

Macbeth Not yet.

Macduff He did command me to call timely on him:
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

Macbeth I'll bring you to him.

Macduff I know this is a joyful trouble to you;
But yet 'tis one.

Macbeth The labour we delight in physics pain.
This is the door.

Porter Thank you. *(She tries to exit L)*

Macduff I'll make so bold to call,
For 'tis my limited service.

Macduff tries to exit L and finds the Porter in the way. Macbeth collects the Porter

Macduff exits L

Macbeth *(pushing the Porter off R)* This way, dear.

The Porter exits. Macduff enters L

Macduff O horror, horror . . .

Plummer *(off)* Horror.

Macduff Horror.

Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!

Macbeth What's the matter?

Macduff Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon; do not bid me speak;
See, and then speak yourselves.

Macbeth exits L

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself! Ring the bell.

The ding-dong door chime is heard and the tabs close. The Lights come up on the tabs and rostrum revealing Peach applying mascara. He hurriedly collects his notes and walks c.

During the following, Felicity, as Seyton, joins Macduff behind the tabs. She carries a trumpet

Peach Well, tonight we've seen a highly individual production of *Macbeth* done by a group of ladies who certainly know the meaning of the word "daring" . . .

Henry pokes his head round the L side of the proscenium arch

Henry We haven't finished.

Peach What's that?

Henry There's another three hours.

Henry disappears

Peach *(returning to his seat)* What cheering news. Anyway, it's gripping stuff, isn't it? *(He writes on his notes)* Grip-ping.

Waiting for the tabs to open, he writes a few more ostentatious notes, then flourishes the pencil and makes it disappear. Following this he takes a page of his notes, folds it into a cone, pours his water into it and shows it has vanished. He next puts a box on his head, pierces it with a dagger and is about to insert a second when there is a Black-out and the tabs open. The Lights come up on Macduff and Seyton, who puts the trumpet to her lips. There is no sound. Seyton looks around in puzzlement then quickly replaces the trumpet to her lips when we hear a quick snatch of incongruous trumpet music by Herb Alpert or suchlike

Lady Macbeth enters L and Seyton exits R

Lady Macbeth What's the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

Macduff O gentle lady!

'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak.

O Banquo!

Macduff and Lady Macbeth turn to the wings L but Banquo does not enter

O Banquo!

Lady Macbeth Banquo!

Macduff Hello!

Lady Macbeth gestures to Macduff to join him behind an arch, where they will pretend Banquo is present

Lady Macbeth Ah, Banquo, here you are.

Macduff Our royal master's murder'd!

Lady Macbeth Woe, alas! What! in our house?

Banquo enters L in dressing-gown and cold cream, carrying a sandwich

Banquo I thought it was the interval.

Lady Macbeth Say your line.

Banquo Look to the lady.

Startled, Lady Macbeth falls down

Macduff No!

Banquo What, then?

Macduff Dear Duff, I prithee . . .

Lady Macbeth gets up

Banquo Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,
And say it is not so . . . er . . . Look to the lady.

Lady Macbeth falls down

Macduff (to Lady Macbeth) No, it's your line.

Lady Macbeth gets up

Lady Macbeth Help me hence, ho! (He falls down)

Macduff (prompting Banquo) Look to the lady.

Banquo Look to the lady.

Supposed to carry Lady Macbeth off, Macduff can only prod him with her crutches, causing him some anguish. Eventually they shuffle off R. Macbeth enters L

Banquo Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all.

Macbeth We hear our bloody cousins are bestow'd

In England and in Ireland, filling their hearers

With strange invention. Ride you this afternoon?

Banquo Ay, my good Lord.

Macbeth I wish your horses swift and sure of foot. Farewell.

Banquo Toodle-pip.

Black-out

Banquo and Macbeth exit

We hear horses galloping past, plus a snatch of Peter O'Sullivan commenting on their progress, before the sound effect gives way to loud, rumbling thunder. The Lights come up

Macbeth enters L with Felicity as the 1st Murderer

Macbeth Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

1st Murderer It was, so please your highness.

Macbeth You know Banquo was your enemy?

1st Murderer True, my lord.

Macbeth is becoming increasingly irritated by having to make herself heard above the thunder

Macbeth So is he mine; and in such bloody distance,

That every minute of his being thrusts

Against my near'st of life.

1st Murderer I shall, my lord,

Perform what you command me.

Macbeth It must be done tonight . . .

Macbeth storms off L

(Off) Turn that bloody thunder off!

The thunder terminates abruptly

Macbeth re-enters

It must be done tonight.

1st Murderer I am resolv'd, my lord.

Macbeth I'll call upon you straight: abide within.

The 1st Murderer has to be nudged before she will exit

It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,

If it find heaven, must find it out tonight.

Deafening thunder. Black-out

Macbeth exits. In the darkness we hear Felicity and Dawn, as the 1st and 2nd Murderer respectively, mumbling to each other that they cannot see where they are supposed to enter. Dawn is reaffirming that her spectacles are missing. The Lights come up revealing the two of them stumbling blindly round the arches. They pull themselves together and the 1st Murderer pulls the 2nd Murderer downstage

1st Murderer But who did bid thee join with me?

2nd Murderer Macbeth.

1st Murderer Then stand with me.

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:

Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn; and near approaches
The subject of our watch.

2nd Murderer Hark! I hear horses.

No horses are heard

Banquo (off) Give us a torch there, ho!

The 1st Murderer switches on an electric torch and shines it into the wings

Banquo enters

When she is fully visible, the sound of approaching horses is heard. Hearing this, Banquo mimes riding a horse

1st Murderer 'Tis he.

2nd Murderer Stand to't.

Banquo It will rain tonight.

2nd Murderer Let it come down.

Music: "The Ride of the Valkyries". Banquo and the Murderers draw their swords. The 1st pushes the 2nd forward. Counting out the strokes, Banquo and the 2nd Murderer fight. The 2nd Murderer backs Banquo through the arches, which she then begins striking instead of her opponent. Banquo approaches from another direction and gives her a poke

Banquo Over here.

The 2nd Murderer turns and, blindly flailing her sword in front of her, goes straight past Banquo and disappears into the wings

Banquo looks quizzically at the 1st Murderer, who encourages her to continue the fight. Banquo fences alternately with the 1st Murderer and the invisible 2nd

Suddenly, with a cry, the 2nd Murderer charges on from R, entangled in a cable, which proves to be attached to a giant prop left over from another production. The 1st Murderer hands Banquo her sword and rushes R, bundling off the 2nd Murderer and her encumbrance

Left holding the two swords, Banquo fills in by putting them on the floor and dancing a Highland Fling on them

This is interrupted by the entrance of the Murderers, both of whom are now bound to the prop with the cable

Seeing them struggling, Banquo goes over to the cable running across the front of the stage, picks it up and begins tugging

1st Murderer No, Minnie, don't touch that!

An explosion. Black-out. The tabs close. Mrs Reece's voice is heard over the tannoy

Mrs Reece (off) It's not on. One, two three, four . . . oh, it is now. Ladies and gentlemen, if anyone would like to spend a penny, now's your chance.

We're having a fifteen-minute interval, refreshments are now on sale, and if anyone's found a bunch of keys with a fried egg attached to them, could they let me know? Thanks awfully.

The House Lights come up

Peach exits through the auditorium doors

As if the microphone has been left on by accident, we then hear Mrs Reece and the ladies talking as they clear up from Act I; discussing whose turn it is to help with the teas; criticizing people not present; and preparing for Act II. This continues throughout the interval