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The Farndale Avenue
Housing Estate
Townswomen's Guild
Dramatic Society's
Production of
Macbeth

A Comedy

David McGillivray and
Walter Zerlin Jnr

Samuel French – London
New York – Sydney – Toronto – Hollywood



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**THE FARNDALE AVENUE HOUSING ESTATE
TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD DRAMATIC SOCIETY'S
PRODUCTION OF
*MACBETH***

The original version was first presented on August 23rd, 1976, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This revised version was first presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on August 22nd, 1983, with the following cast of characters:

George Peach }	Walter Zerlin Jnr
Gwynneth	
Mrs Reece (playing Lady Macduff; Doctor)	Laura Cleverly
Thelma (playing Macbeth; Ross)	Susan Chapman
Henry (playing Lady Macbeth; 8 Kings)	John Hickey
Minnie (playing Banquo; Lady Macduff's Son)	Erika Poole
Plummer	David McGillivray
Dawn (playing 1st Witch; Porter; 2nd Murderer; Duncan; Fleance)	Pippa Sparkes
Felicity (playing 2nd Witch; Seyton; 1st Murderer; Malcolm; Gentlewoman)	Janet Sate
Kate (playing 3rd Witch; Macduff; Messenger)	Buffy Davis

Directed by David McGillivray

Designed by Walter Zerlin Jnr and Gerald Tagg

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(See also page ii)

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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. Ʊ 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 Ʊ 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 trouser 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

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!

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