

# Events Calendar

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### INSIDE OPERA

with Robert Holliston

Sunday, September 16

Two Sessions: 10 am and noon  
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall,  
University of Victoria.

Robert Holliston and guests present a guided tour of *Macbeth*. Bring your friends. It's all free, including the parking.

Please reserve before September 14, specifying which session you plan to attend. Space is limited.

250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca)

### Sense of Occasion

Thursday, October 4, 6:30 pm  
East Lobby, the Royal Theatre.

Pre-performance reception to celebrate the opening night of *Macbeth*. Gourmet finger foods and wine. Space is limited. Dress is festive.

\$25 per person.

Reserve with payment: 250-382-1641.

### The Royal Theatre Sings

Sunday, October 7, noon to 4 pm  
The Royal Theatre.

Help celebrate Victoria's 150th Anniversary (and the 99th anniversary of the Royal Theatre) with this free family event!

Enjoy a special behind-the-scenes view of POV's production of *Macbeth*.

Meet the skilled production team whose sets, costumes, and props help create operatic magic.

Explore the nooks and crannies of the Royal Theatre – the stage, backstage, the orchestra pit, the balconies, the staircases.

PLUS Random Acts of Opera by members of the POV chorus

AND Robert Holliston's stories on 135 years of Opera in Victoria

All ages welcome! No reservations needed.

FREE TO ALL!



## DONOR RECOGNITION EVENTS

### President's Circle

#### Working Rehearsal

Sunday, September 30, Royal Theatre

6 pm Coffee and cookies

6:15 pm Discussion with Artistic Director & Conductor Timothy Vernon

7 pm Sitzprobe begins

For President's Circle members, Impresario Circle members, and Conductor donors (\$500). Invitations will be sent by mail.

RSVP by September 27 to 250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca).

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE & IMPRESARIO CIRCLE SPONSOR



## POV Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 26, 5 pm  
Chateau Victoria, Salon B

Open to all members of the Society.

RSVP by November 23 to 250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca).

### Coming from Up-Island or the Saanich Peninsula?

## Ride POV's Opera Bus to the Sunday Matinée

Book now for the *Macbeth* matinée on October 14.

It's just \$25 round trip plus the cost of your ticket. And you can watch a DVD of Robert Holliston's lobby lecture during the trip.

**Up-Island bus** picks up in Nanaimo, Ladysmith, Duncan, and Mill Bay.

**Peninsula bus** picks up at Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal, Sidney, and Saanich.

Details at [www.pov.bc.ca/operabus.html](http://www.pov.bc.ca/operabus.html)

CALL 250-385-0222 to book.

## MACBETH The Royal Theatre

October 4, 6, 10, 12, at 8 pm

Matinée: Sunday, October 14, 2:30 pm

Pre-performance lobby lecture an hour before curtain in Italian with English surtitles

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## 2013 BRITTEN FESTIVAL

POV celebrates Benjamin Britten's 100th birthday with a festival of family-friendly entertainment.

### Noye's Fludde

Thursday, February 14 & Saturday, February 16, Church of St. John the Divine

Britten's irresistible opera about Noah and his Ark calls for an orchestra of both professional and student musicians. The singing roles include professionals and children, as well as a children's chorus for the procession of animals into the ark.

Presented in collaboration with the Victoria Conservatory of Music and the Victoria Children's Choir.

## Let's Make an Opera & The Little Sweep

March 3 to 10 at the Belfry Theatre

Don't miss this charming introduction to the making of an opera!

*Let's Make an Opera* is a play in which a cast of children and grown-ups conceive, create, and produce an opera – they write the libretto, hold auditions, build the set, and cope with the chaos of a dress rehearsal. Finally, they treat you to a performance of the finished opera, *The Little Sweep*.

In collaboration with the Belfry Theatre, conducted by Giuseppe Pietraroia.

**Ticket information** for the Britten Festival will be available soon. Watch for details at [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca).

### DISCOVER MORE

MACBETH  
AT [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

Listen to the music of this gorgeous opera. Find out more about the play, the opera, and the composer.

Plus links, artist bios, and your chance to sign up for POV Enews.

EDITOR  
MAUREEN WOODALL



# Key Notes

## MACBETH VERDI



## SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

*Macbeth* is one wicked opera.

Giuseppe Verdi took Shakespeare's roiling brew of dark magic, murder, and madness and shape shifted it into something even more intense – an exploration of tyranny and a mind-bending operatic trip into the disintegration of the human soul.

### Shakespeare's Play

The opera follows the play quite closely. We meet again the archetypal power couple, who are spurred on by witches' prophecies and their own ruthless ambition to kill and kill again. But as conscience prowls around the edges of sanity and impossible omens come true, their hold on power unravels.

Written around 1606, *Macbeth* is absolutely central to our literary heritage – shorthand for savage ambition, guilt, and twisted prophecy. The poetry is so deeply entangled in popular culture that it is practically part of our DNA. We all know bits of it –

- The malign glee of the witches: *Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.*
- Their announcement of Macbeth's arrival: *By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes.*
- Macbeth's hallucinatory trajectory to murder: *Is this a dagger which I see before me?*
- His lady, unhinged by the horror of what she has done, her ruthless clarity of purpose turned inside out: *Out, damned spot! Out, I say! ... who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.*

We can marvel at this creation – but let's spare a moment to pity the real Macbeth,

who should be languishing in comfortable obscurity as just another medieval Scottish king. Instead, his reputation (along with that of his wife) was trashed for posterity by a playwright who was currying favour with a royal patron.

That royal patron was James I of England, aka James VI of Scotland (we met his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, in POV's last operatic outing, *Maria Stuarda*). King James loved the arts, and shortly after ascending the throne in 1603, he granted a royal patent to Shakespeare's acting troupe. Shakespeare was happy to return the favour with a little flattery.

The witches were sure to go over well with King James, for he had interrogated suspected witches and written a book on witchcraft called *Daemonologie*.

The story of *Macbeth* (witches and all) came from one of Shakespeare's favourite sources, a massive history of Great Britain called *Holinshed's Chronicles*, published in 1587 and itself based on Hector Boece's earlier *Scotorum Historiae*.

Both sources portray Banquo as an accomplice in *Macbeth's* murder of King Duncan. Scholars today believe Banquo was invented by Boece, but at the time he was considered the founder of the Stuart dynasty; as King James fancied himself a direct descendant of Banquo, it would never do for him to be shown as an assassin. Shakespeare therefore made Banquo a voice of nobility and conscience. He even had the witches show *Macbeth* a vision of Banquo's descendants—a line of eight kings that culminated in a ruler with "twofold balls and treble scepters" – a reference to King

James who was crowned twice – as King of Scotland and then as King of England (there are two scepters for the English crown). Verdi did not feel the need to keep this little detail in the opera.

The play tinkered with history in other respects. Shakespeare's wise old King Duncan was actually killed in battle in 1040 at the age of 39, after a mere six years of apparently incompetent rule. Duncan's first cousin, the real *Macbeth*, had a legitimate claim to the throne. By defeating Duncan and seizing power, *Macbeth* was following established tradition; he was no more and no less brutal than any other ruler of the time.

He wasn't such a bad king either. Considered wise and strong, he presided over a land that was surprisingly prosperous and peaceful for that bloodthirsty era. He could even afford to leave his kingdom for several months to make a pilgrimage to Rome – a sure sign, say historians, of a stable country and effective leadership.

The action that in the play hurtles through a span of weeks or months actually covered 17 years, for *Macbeth* was ruler of Scotland from 1040 to 1057.

But historical inaccuracy rarely fazes playwrights – or opera composers. A byword for ruthless ambition, *Macbeth* and his Lady between them are among Shakespeare's most notorious villains – right up there with Richard III, who was similarly maligned by the Bard.

Now, a millennium after *Macbeth's* death, his fictional doppelgänger still holds sway – and nothing is likely to wash this stain from his reputation!

## Verdi's Opera

In 1846, when Verdi received a commission for an opera at Florence's Teatro della Pergola, he contemplated three subjects: Grillparzer's *Die Anfrau* and Schiller's *Die Räuber*, both of which would require a fine tenor, and *Macbeth*, which would need a great baritone. The decision to go with *Macbeth* came down to the availability of a specific baritone – Felice Varesi, for whom Verdi later composed the role of Rigoletto.

These were still the days when operas were composed for the voices at hand and the fluke of a singer's schedule could determine what was written for the stage. Not a note of *Macbeth* was composed until after the singers were engaged (and clearly, in Verdi's mind, Macbeth HAD to be a baritone – tenors need not apply).

Singing a line generally takes about three times as long as speaking it. So although *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, it had to be condensed for the opera stage.

The librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, worked from Verdi's prose synopsis and put up with endless harangues from the composer. Verdi's letters went on at great length about the need to keep the work concise: *I beg you to keep your verses short; the shorter they are, the more effective they will be ... there must not be a single superfluous word ... Brevity and sublimity! ... FEW WORDS ... FEW WORDS ... FEW BUT SIGNIFICANT ... CONCISE STYLE! ... FEW WORDS! Understood?*

Verdi ruthlessly cut entire scenes and characters. He reduced King Duncan's part to a walk-on. And when Macbeth is told of his wife's death, his great *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow* speech was stripped to its last desolate lines: *Life ... is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

Even with so much of Shakespeare's addictive poetry cut out, the impact is riveting. For Verdi, the drama was paramount. He was leaving *bel canto* behind, working toward something gritty, dark, even grotesque.

A control freak about every element of the opera, he coached his singers exhaustively, rehearsed and conducted the performances, and oversaw the lighting, costumes, and scenic effects.

He sent detailed stage and music directions to Varesi, admonishing him, *Study the dramatic situation and the words well; the music will come by itself. In a word, I'd rather you served the poet better than you serve the composer.*

In her memoirs, Marianna Barbieri-Nini, the first Lady Macbeth, recalls Verdi's obsessive rehearsals of the magnificent duet that takes place just after the murder of Duncan.

**Verdi had a brilliant ability to condense a drama to get to its essence: here he makes an already short play (Macbeth is the shortest of the tragedies) as swift as an already bloody knife flying through the darkness and hitting you in the chest!**  
**That should be the effect of a good performance.**

Timothy Vernon

*You might think that I exaggerate, but it was rehearsed more than 150 times: to ensure, the Maestro said, that it was closer to speech than to singing ... On the evening of the dress rehearsal ... there we were, ready, in costume, the orchestra in the pit, the chorus on stage – when Verdi beckoned to Varesi and me, called us into the wings and asked us, as a*

*favour ... to rehearse that damned duet again at the piano ...*

*Varesi, fed up with this extraordinary request, tried raising his voice a little, saying: "For God's sake, we've already rehearsed it 150 times!"*

*"In half an hour it'll be 151."*

*We were forced to obey the tyrant. I still remember the threatening looks Varesi shot at him; clenching the hilt of his sword, he seemed about to murder Verdi, as he would later murder Duncan. However, he yielded, resigning himself to his fate. The 151st rehearsal took place while the audience clamoured impatiently in the theatre.*

Verdi's perfectionism carried on long past the opera's 1847 première. He campaigned unsuccessfully to replace Eugenia Tadolini for the 1848 Naples première because she looked and sounded too beautiful: *Tadolini has a beautiful and attractive appearance; I would like Lady Macbeth to be ugly and evil. Tadolini sings to perfection; I would like the Lady not to sing. Tadolini has a stupendous voice, clear, limpid, powerful; I would like the Lady to have a harsh, stifled, and hollow voice. Tadolini's voice has an angelic quality; I would like the Lady's voice to be diabolical.*

This does not mean Verdi rejected musical beauty (there is plenty in *Macbeth*). But the dramatic truth behind the couple's emotional journey trumped the niceties of an elegant *bel canto* line.

Early in the opera, Lady Macbeth is a kind of half demon, allied with darkness and hell, goading her husband to kill and then to man up and stop falling apart. With each crime she tells him, *it is done ... it cannot be undone ... it will be forgotten ... the dead cannot return.*

But as she relives it all in her final sleepwalking scene and cries, *What's done cannot be undone*, the words are no longer a cue to move on with life, but the ultimate hellish realization that she is alone in terrible isolation with her guilt, destroyed by the implacable, unchangeable horror of what she has done.

As for Macbeth, even as he clings to the belief that victory is possible, before he learns his wife is dead, before he goes through the motions of his final battle, he says *I feel the life drying up in my veins*, sensing already that his legacy will be curses, not compassion, honour, or love.

## Synopsis

Immediately after a coven of witches prophesy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, Macbeth is indeed named Thane of Cawdor. He and his wife decide to help the second prophecy along by killing King Duncan. Macbeth stabs the king in his sleep; when he cannot bring himself to incriminate the guards by smearing them with blood, his wife pitches in, all the while urging Macbeth to pull himself together.

Macbeth broods over another of the witches' promises: that his fellow general Banquo will be the father of kings. The couple agree that Banquo and his young son must also die.

As the Macbeths host a lavish banquet, an assassin arrives and reports to Macbeth that Banquo is dead but his son has escaped. Pomp and celebration turn into dismay, embarrassment, and horror as Macbeth hallucinates seeing the bloody ghost of Banquo, and his lady desperately tries to salvage her party.

Macbeth consults the witches again. They warn him to beware of Macduff, who is rallying forces against Macbeth. They promise that no man born of woman will harm Macbeth and that he will be invincible until Birnam Wood marches toward him. Finally he is shown a vision of a line of kings – the future rulers of Scotland, Banquo's descendants.

Macbeth and his lady vow to destroy all their enemies, beginning with Macduff's wife and children. They instigate a reign of terror, leaving Scotland in ruins.

Macduff and Duncan's son Malcolm prepare to attack. Malcolm orders the soldiers to use branches from the trees in Birnam Wood as camouflage.

Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth has begun walking in her sleep, reliving the murders, trying obsessively to clean her hands of blood.

Macbeth receives news that his wife has died and that Birnam Wood is moving. Macduff attacks him and discloses that he was not born naturally but ripped from his mother's womb. He kills Macbeth and proclaims Malcolm king of Scotland.

Maureen Woodall

## Brush up your Shakespeare

### Resources at the University of Victoria

After last year's success with *The World of Mary's Wedding: Reminiscences of World War I*, the University of Victoria Libraries is excited to continue the collaboration with POV, this year with an exhibit of scores, editions, and adaptations of *Macbeth*.

*Macbeth* has a long history of incidental music and operatic adaptations, beginning with Sir William Davenant's 1664 Restoration staging with dances, musical numbers, and flying witches. The organist and composer Matthew Locke is thought to have written the witches' songs, which were performed and printed well into the 19th century. We draw on the resources of the Rare Book collection, the Shakespeare Music Project fonds, the UVic Archives, and private collections of faculty and friends to showcase the textual and performance history of *Macbeth* and its music.

The exhibit runs **October 4 until mid-November** in the Special Collections and Archives Reading Room at the UVic Libraries (Room A005, Mearns Centre for Learning). **Hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30-4:30.**

To learn more about *Macbeth*, we invite you to visit the **Internet Shakespeare Editions**. The University of Victoria Libraries has recently entered into a partnership with the ISE, an online library of the best digital editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems. Michael Best, Coordinating Editor and Professor Emeritus in the Department of English, launched this internationally recognized digital Shakespeare project on the web in 1996. He recognized the potential of the internet as a virtual library, archive, publishing platform, and teaching tool.

Start at <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays/Mac.html> – journey through old books and view 17th century facsimiles of



"Speak, sister, speak, is the deed done." This early nineteenth-century sheet music attests to the longevity of Matthew Locke's Restoration additions to *Macbeth*. Photo credit: John Frederick. Courtesy University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections

*Macbeth*, as well as the first four folios of Shakespeare's works, from 1623, 1632, 1664, and 1685. Explore some 145 productions of *Macbeth* in our ever-expanding Performance Database; browse performance materials, such as programmes, posters, prompt books, photographs, and costume designs; and discover a world of information on Shakespeare's life and times.

So if you want to brush up on Verdi's source material before you head to the Royal Theatre, fire up your web browser. You could even check a Shakespeare line during intermission. You'll have your phone off during the show, of course!

Janelle Jenstad, Associate Professor, Dept. of English  
Assistant Coordinating Editor, Internet Shakespeare Editions

## Meet the Artists



Gregory Dahl seems to cut his teeth on villainous roles with POV: we saw his first Don Giovanni, his scheming Oscar Hubbard in *Regina*, his diabolically charming Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*. Now he makes his debut as **Macbeth**. Recent and upcoming roles include another Verdi / Shakespeare villain, Iago, as well as Rigoletto, Jokanaan (*Salome*), Conte di Luna (*Il Trovatore*), Charlie (the world première of Estacio's *Filumena*), and Goulaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*).

Artistic Director Timothy Vernon sees Greg as an ideal Macbeth: *He's got the voice, he's got the stature, he's got the temperament ... hell, he's got the red hair! So it's almost an inevitability if we're doing this that we talk to Greg, and I'm very glad he's coming.*



Lyne Fortin is making her POV debut and her role debut as **Lady Macbeth**. Her staggering variety of roles includes Verdi's sweeter-natured heroines, Gilda and Violetta, and such forces of nature as Carmen, Agrippina, and the Woman in *Erwartung*, as well as Thaïs, Fiordiligi, all three heroines in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Pamina, Butterfly, Tosca, and Madame de Tourvel in the world première of Piet Swerts' *Les liaisons dangereuses*. She has performed in Europe and across Canada and the US.

Timothy Vernon notes, *Lyne is a brilliant singer with a strong lyric line verging on spinto that can still handle clean coloratura. She's an extremely strong actress – very intense, which is what you want for Lady Macbeth. She's compelling physically on stage and has a great sense of who this person is.*



**Director Morris Panych** is an iconic voice in Canadian theatre – a Governor-General award winning playwright, director, and actor. We welcome him in his POV debut.

He has written some 25 works for the stage, including *The Overcoat*, *Vigil*, *The Ends of the Earth* and *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*. His plays have been produced across Canada, the US, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. He has directed for Canadian Stage Company, the Shaw Festival, the Stratford Festival, Soulpepper, Tarragon Theatre, and the Vancouver Playhouse. His opera directing credits include *The Threepenny Opera* and *Susannah* for Vancouver Opera. His acting credits include *Da Vinci's Inquest*, *Cold Squad* and *The X-Files*, as well as many stage productions.



**Designer Ken MacDonald** is making his POV debut, but he is no stranger to Victoria, having been Resident Designer at the Belfry Theatre from 1977 to 1980. Since then he has designed for all Canada's major theatre companies, often collaborating with his partner Morris Panych. His opera credits include *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* (Banff Centre) and *Susannah*, *The Rake's Progress*, and *The Threepenny Opera*, all for Vancouver Opera. His many awards include a Gemini, 16 Jessie Richardson Awards and three Dora Mavor Moore Awards. His design for *The Overcoat* was featured at the Prague Quadrennial in 1999.

Timothy Vernon promises that Morris and Ken's vision of *Macbeth* will have *all the bleakness and all the horrific aspects you might expect, a strong Scottish presence, clean lines ... and There Will Be Blood.*

SEASON UNDERWRITERS

ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK



RBC Royal Bank®



SURTITLES SPONSOR



CHORUS DEVELOPMENT



ARTIST TRAINING



EDUCATION PROGRAMS



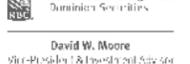
RAISING VOICES YOUTH PROGRAMS



RBC Foundation®



BRAVO SOCIETY SPONSORS



David W. Moore  
514-754-1212