Programme Notes Macbeth.

This performance of Macbeth by William Shakespeare is a National Theatre Production. It opened at the Olivier theatre in March 18, and the U.K.and Ireland tour began in September 18.

It is 2hrs 30 mins long with a twenty minute interval.

These notes were prepared for NISightlines by Susie and Cara.

It is set in the present day, after a civil war.

Description of Characters and Costume.

In general the men in the play all wear combat or cargo trousers tucked into boots, and padded waistcoats and parka style overcoats with hoods

King Duncan is played by Tom Mannion. He is quite tall with shoulder length grey hair and a grey beard. He wears an elegant blood-red suit and sometimes wears a matching long blood-red overcoat around his shoulders, almost like a cloak.

Malcolm, the Kings son is played by Joseph Brown. He is small with very short hair. He has a broad forehead and above his left eye is a large birthmark. He walks with a slight limp.

He wears dark red tracksuit bottoms with a grey stripe down the side, which are tucked into his boots, and a matching tracksuit top.

His left arm is in a sling.

When he runs away to England he wears jeans , tee-shirt and a black waistcoat.

Macbeth is played by Michael Nardone. He is of average height, with a stocky build. He has short slightly greying hair and a grey moustache and short beard. At the beginning of the play he wears the combat gear of the other soldiers, but later changes into denim jeans and loose fitting denim shirt.

When he becomes King he wears the same coloured blood-red suit worn by King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth is played by Kirsty Besterman. She is tall and slender with long red hair. She wears tight-fitting skinny jeans with a sleeveless fitted t-shirt.

When King Duncan visits her Castle she wears a long green coat with an ornate silver belt around her waist, and black boots.

When she becomes queen she wears a deep red halter neck dress, which sparkles with gold glitter.

The three witches all wear oversized transparent plastic macs with hoods, which balloon as they run. Under the macs they wear pale grey leggings and matching long sleeved tops.

Banquo is played by Patrick Robinson. He is tall, slender and bald and wears the combat uniform, but with a very light-coloured parka coat.

Ross is played by Rachel Sanders. She is of average build with long very wavy hair held off her face with a headband. She wears combat trousers and a very padded puffa jacket.

Lennox is played by James Robinson. He is of slight build with a short black beard and wears a black beanie hat.

Macduff is played by Ross Wairon. He is tall and slim and wears jeans and a white t-shirt with a smart black jacket.

Lady Macduff is played by Lisa Zahra. She is petite with long dark wavy hair.

When we first see her she wears a full-length fur-trimmed coat, and later a long floaty floral dress.

The Porter is played by Deka Walmsley. When we first see him he wears a big full-length raincoat and brimmed hat, and later trousers and t-short.

Fleance is played by Nisa Cole. She is very small and wears jeans, a shiny bomber jacket and a back-to-front baseball cap.

The doctor is played by Reuben Johnson. He is tall with long dark hair. He wears jeans tucked into Wellington boots, and a white coat with the sleeves pushed up.

The murderers are played by Helen Karamba and Brad Morrison. She wears jeans and a red bomber jacket. He wears jeans and a loose grey jacket.

In this production the set has been designed to evoke a post-apocalyptic landscape. The stage is shrouded in ragged black tarpaulin which hangs in creases and folds creating shadows and gloom. The stage is generally quite dark. There is an occasional lighting effect to evoke the appearance of leaves or camouflage. Macbeth is occasionally seen by a spotlight while the rest of the stage is held frozen in darkness.

Centre stage a ramp constructed of wooden slats arcs at a steep gradient from the front to the back of the stage. At the top on the left-hand side there is a gap through which characters can enter and exit. The ramp pivots to the left or right, pushed by the cast, when the action is located at the castles of Duncan, Macbeth or Macduff. Ragged canvas and tarpaulin hangs from the sides of the ramp so it cannot be seen through when it is moved to the side – characters can push this aside to move underneath it however. About half way up the ramp there is a pole about 5 metres tall, strips of torn black material hang from the top of it. 2 more of these poles stand at either side of the stage.

To create the location for the first meeting we see between Macbeth and Duncan, white plastic is hung from 2 metal frames, about 5 feet square, placed at a wide angle beside each other. A plastic chair covered in a sheet of almost transparent plastic sits central to this.

The interior of Macbeth’s home is created by two thick concrete walls joined perpendicular and about 3 metres tall. There is a doorway to the left and a high, long, narrow, window-sized gap to the right. There is a light on the wall and a small metal chair. Against the walls there are two small platforms upon which are small plastic crates containing laundry. On occasion this is turned and the action takes place outside it. Macbeth’s home is also created with a long, thick wall with a doorway and a wide, window-shaped gap which has vertical binds hanging in it. Later, lights will festoon the exterior and tables and chairs will be added and a generator is brought on.

Macduff’s castle is created by a rectangular mat surrounded on 2 sides by 2 thick, brick, perpendicular walls about 3 feet tall. On the left and right there is a chair, and in the centre there is a suitcase. Children’s clothes are lying around.

Malcolm’s castle is created with a brown, leather settee to the right of centre stage and a small, wooden desk further right.