

## Message from Maestro Myung-Whun Chung

The theme of *Macbeth* is a very harsh theme we see in the history of power, and desire for power. It is a very uncomfortable drama in that way, but you know, not everything in life can be just happiness and sunshine. This one is highly dramatic on the dark side.

Of course this completes the three Verdi-Shakespeare operas that we've presented. It's in reverse order from the last, but I think it's a very good project that we undertook.

*Macbeth* is a much earlier work of Verdi, but I think he himself felt that it was his best work of his early period. Twenty years later, he revised a lot of it, so it is both an early work, but also refined in old age.

It is also a big picture of his life as a composer. It is very interesting to follow the development of his musical life through these three operas.

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The 1004th Orchard Hall Subscription Concert

**Sun.Sep. 15, 2024, 15:00 at Bunkamura Orchard Hall**

The 1005th Suntory Subscription Concert

**Tue. Sep. 17, 2024, 19:00 at Suntory Hall**

The 164th Tokyo Opera City Subscription Concert

**Thu.Sep. 19, 2024, 19:00 at Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall**

## Myung-Whun Chung, conductor

Sebastian Catana, Macbeth (baritone)

Vittoria Yeo, Lady Macbeth (soprano)

Albert Pesendorfer, Banquo (bass)\*

Stefano Secco, Macduff (tenor)

Keiroh Ohara, Malcolm (tenor)

Yuka Tajima, Lady-in-Waiting to Lady Macbeth (mezzo-soprano)

Takayuki Ito, A Doctor (bass)

Yuichiro Ichikawa, Servant of Macbeth/Murderer/Herald (baritone)

Ryusuke Yamamoto, Apparition 1 (baritone)

Rumi Kitahara, Apparition 2 (soprano)

Momoko Yoshida, Apparition 3 (soprano)

New National Theatre Chorus (Kyohei Tomihira, chorusmaster)

Kaoru Kondo, concertmaster

Hiroshi Koizumi / Moto Kondo (Art Creation), stage managers

Kizuku Odahara / Motohiro Horii (Art Creation), assistant stage managers

Takashi Kitamura (Gekikosha), lighting

Olfeo, sound

Tokyo Isho, costume

Cho Young, hair & make-up

Art Creation, properties

Asako Honya, surtitles

Nana Shioya (Zimaku Plus), surtitles operation

Yasuko Furuse / Marin Yamanaka, musical preparation

Mari Murakami, Italian-Japanese interpreter

\*The originally scheduled bass singer, Mr. Alex Esposito, has become unavailable to sing the role of Banquo due to his personal circumstances.

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## Opera in Concert Style

# Verdi: Opera *Macbeth*

(the Paris version of 1865, Ricordi)

Concert-Style Opera in four acts with Japanese surtitles

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave and Andrea Maffei

from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

**ACT 1** (ca. 50 min)

**ACT 2** (ca. 30 min)

— intermission (ca. 20 min) —

**ACT 3** (ca. 20 min)

**ACT 4** (ca. 40 min)

Performance time: ca. 2 hours and 45 minutes (including intermission)

Presented by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra  
 Subsidized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan |  
 Japan Arts Council,  
 the Mitsubishi UFJ Trust Foundation for the Arts (Sep. 17),  
 Affinis Arts Foundation  
 Supported by the Verdi Society of Japan, the Shakespeare Society of Japan  
 In Association with **Bunkamura** (Sep. 15)



- ♪ All seats are reserved. Late admittance will be refused during the live performance. If you enter or reenter just before the concert or between movements, we may escort you to a seat different from the one to which you were originally assigned.
- ♪ Exiting during the performance will be tolerated. If you do not feel well, please exit or enter as you need. However, please mind the other listeners so that they will be minimally disturbed.
- ♪ Please refrain from using your cellphone or other electronic devices during performance.
- ♪ Please cherish the "afterglow" at the end of each piece for a moment before your applause.

## Artists Profile



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### Myung-Whun Chung, conductor

Honorary Music Director of  
the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra

Born in Seoul, Myung-Whun Chung won the silver medal at the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in 1974. After completing conducting studies at the Juilliard School, he served as assistant and subsequently associate conductor to Carlo Maria Giulini at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Since his appointment as Music Director of the Paris Opera (L'Opéra Bastille) in 1989, Maestro Chung has conducted many prominent orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, and la Filarmonica della Scala. He served as the Music Director of l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France (2000- 2015), the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra (2006-2015) and the Asia Philharmonic Orchestra, which he founded in 1997. Since 2012, he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden. In June 2022, he received the title of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy for his contributions to Italian cultural development over the years. In March 2023, he became the first-ever Conductor Emeritus of the Filarmonica della Scala in Milan.

For the TPO, Maestro Chung was Special Artistic Advisor (2001- 2010), its Honorary Conductor Laureate (2010-2016). Starting September 2016, he was appointed as Honorary Music Director. He is active in education for the younger generations and in promotion of peace especially in Asia through a variety of musical activities and serving as UNICEF Ambassador.



## Sebastian Catana, Macbeth (baritone)

Born in Cluj, Romania, Sebastian Catana is emerging as a prominent Verdi and verismo baritone of his generation. He made his operatic debut in 2001 as Thore in *Les Huguenots* at Carnegie Hall with the Opera Orchestra of New York. In 2003, he debuted at the Metropolitan Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème* under the baton of Daniel Oren and later performed as Valentin in *Faust*. His European debut came in 2007 as Paolo in *Simon Boccanegra* at Teatro Comunale in Bologna. Catana has interpreted many major Verdi baritone roles, and his career continues to thrive with a series of significant engagements. He has performed Scarpia in *Tosca* at Opera Bastille, Alfio in *La cavalleria rusticana* in Verona, Cagliari, and Barnaba in *La Gioconda*. He has also performed *Tosca* in Venezia (Teatro La Fenice), Rome (Teatro dell'Opera), Palermo, and Tokyo (tourn e del Teatro Massimo Palermo with Angela Gheorghiu); *I Due Foscari* in Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Santiago de Chile, Trieste and Toulouse; *Luisa Miller* in Torino e Lyon; *Nabucco* in Stuttgart, Rome (Caracalla) and Philadelphia Opera; *Rigoletto* in Rome (Teatro dell'Opera) and Copenhagen, and *Giovanni* in the European premiere of Tutino's *La Ciociara* in Cagliari. Recently acclaimed roles include Germont in a new production at the Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv and Santiago del Chile, Rigoletto in Li ge, and Falstaff in Tokyo. Upcoming roles include Amonasro at Arena di Verona, Nabucco at Teatro Col n, and Macbeth in Cagliari and Tokyo with Myung Whun Chung. He will return to the Arena di Verona Festival, singing Alfio, Tonio, Nabucco, and Amonasro. Additionally, Catana will reprise roles such as Nabucco and Tosca in Copenhagen, Trovatore and Otello in Tel Aviv, Alfio and Tonio at Pittsburgh Opera, and will debut Simon Boccanegra in Warsaw (Polish National Opera).

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 Sergio Ferri

## Vittoria Yeo, Lady Macbeth (soprano)

Vittoria Yeo was born in Seoul, South Korea, where she began her musical studies and earned a degree in vocal performance from Seokyeong University. She then moved to Italy to continue her training, receiving her diploma in vocal performance from the "Arrigo Boito" Conservatory of Music in Parma. She furthered her studies at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena and the Istituto Musicale Pereggiato "Vecchi-Tonelli" in Modena, studying under the celebrated soprano Raina Kabaivanska, and graduated with the highest honors. Yeo began her international career in 2015 with her debut at the Salzburg Festival, where she performed as Elvira in *Ernani* under the direction of Riccardo Muti. She later sang the title role in a new production of *Aida* at the same festival in 2017. Yeo's repertoire includes roles such as Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*, Fiordiligi in *Cos  fan tutte*, Li  in *Turandot*, Leonora in *Il trovatore*, Giovanna in *Giovanna d'Arco*, Odabella in *Attila*, Mim  in *La boh me*, Lida in *La battaglia di Legnano*, Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, Aida in *Aida*, Norma in *Norma*, and Desdemona in *Otello*. She has also performed as a soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* at the Arena di Verona (2020) and in Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* under the baton of Riccardo Muti with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (2018), the Berliner Philharmoniker at the Baden-Baden Festival (2019), and with the Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro Real in Madrid at the Cathedral de Burgos in Spain (2022).



## Albert Pesendorfer, Banquo (bass)

Austrian bass Albert Pesendorfer is highly sought after for his performances in the German repertoire, having sung at major theaters and festivals worldwide. His versatility extends to Italian and Slavic roles, earning him widespread acclaim. In 2016 and 2017 he appeared as Hunding in *Walküre* and Hagen in *Götterdämmerung* at the New National Theatre in Tokyo. Highlights of his 2024-2025 season include performing Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth* with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Hunding in *Die Walküre* at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Baron Ochs in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and roles such as Graf Waldner in *Arabella* and Veit Pogner in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Pesendorfer's operatic repertoire encompasses over 70 roles, predominantly in the German Wagnerian tradition, including Hans Sachs, Veit Pogner, Landgraf Hermann, Gurnemanz, König Heinrich, König Marke, Fasolt, Hunding, and Hagen. He also excels in the Italian repertoire, performing roles such as Filippo II, Zaccaria, Sparafucile, and Banquo. On the concert stage, Pesendorfer has appeared at prestigious venues such as the Vienna Musikverein, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Berlin Philharmonie, and the Barbican Hall in London, as well as in Japan and the USA. Additionally, he serves as a professor of voice at the Berlin University of the Arts.



## Stefano Secco, Macduff (tenor)

Born in Milan, Stefano Secco studied piano and singing under Alberto Soresina and further trained with renowned artists Franco Corelli, Franca Mattiucci, Leyla Gencer, and Renata Scottò. He has performed in all the major Italian opera houses, with notable roles including Rodolfo in *La bohème* in Bologna, Parma, and Rome; the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* in Turin and Florence; Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* in Rome; Osiride in *Mosè in Egitto* in Verona; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at the Torre del Lago Festival; and Alfredo in *La traviata* and Macduff in *Macbeth* at La Scala, Milan. Recent engagements include *Werther* and *Tosca* at the Vienna Staatsoper; *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Salerno; *Macbeth* and *Traviata* in Venice; *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto* in Cagliari; a New Year's Gala with the Teatro alla Scala in Milan in Algiers; *Un ballo in maschera* in Nantes and Rennes; *I Masnadieri* in Valencia; *Faust* in Nice; Rossini's *Stabat Mater* in Trieste; *La Bohème* in Bari; *Luisa Miller* in Marseille; *Stiffelio* in Strasbourg, Mulhouse, and Dijon; Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero* (as Grande Inquisitore) with the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Pappano; the world premiere of the orchestral version of Puccini's *Romanze* (orchestrated by Marco Quagliarini) with the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto; *Tosca* and *Norma* in Messina; and *I Vespri Siciliani* at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna.



## Keiroh Ohara, Malcolm (tenor)

Keiroh Ohara graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts, where he completed his graduate studies and earned a doctorate. He has appeared in various roles at the New National Theatre, including Rodrigo in *Chinmoku* and Edmund in *Lear* at Nissay Theatre. His powerful performance as Florestan in *Fidelio* at the ROHM Theatre Kyoto and Nikikai Opera garnered acclaim, as did his delicate portrayal of Yohyou in *Yuzuru* at the New National Theatre. Ohara has been active both in Japan and internationally,

participating in the "Year of Japan in Russia" organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and performing at the Mariinsky Theatre. He also received praise for his portrayal of the title role in *Lohengrin* in productions by Nikikai Opera and Biwako Hall. On the concert stage, he performs a wide range of repertoire from classical to contemporary works. He is a member of Nikikai.

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## Yuka Tajima, Lady-in-Waiting to Lady Macbeth (mezzo-soprano)

Yuka Tajima graduated from Musashino Academia Musicae and completed its graduate program. She was a finalist at the 50th Italy-Japan Vocal Music Concorso and won first prize at the 31st Iizuka Newcomer Music Competition. Since her debut with Fujiwara Opera Company as Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*, she has performed various roles, including Pippo in *La Gazza Ladra*, Charlotte in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Berta in *The Barber of*

*Seville*, Clotilde in *Norma*, and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. In 2018, she made her role debut as Angelina in *La Cenerentola*, receiving great acclaim. She has also appeared as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, and Mercedes in *Carmen* at the New National Theatre, Tokyo. Tajima has performed as a soloist in religious works such as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Mozart's *Requiem*, and the *Coronation Mass*. She is a member of the Fujiwara Opera Company.



## Takayuki Ito, A Doctor (bass)

Graduated from Nagoya University of Arts with honor, and completed its graduate course as well. He continued his studies in Milan, Italy. His awards include the 39th Italian Vocal Concorso Gold Prize and 2nd Prize at the G. Zecca International Vocal Competition among many. While in Milan, he performed in various operas including *La Bohème* as Colline. He also received favorable reviews for his performances at the New National Theatre in Tokyo in *Aida* (King) and *Tales of Hoffmann* (Luther/Krespel), and at the Nissay Theatre in *The Barber of Seville* (Basilio), *Faust* (Mephistopheles) by Fujiwara Opera Company etc. and has performed as soloist in Beethoven Ninth Symphony, Verdi and Mozart Requiem etc. He received the Aichi Prefecture Arts and Culture Award “Cultural Newcomer Award” in 2012 and the Toyota Cultural Encouragement Award in 2017. He is a member of Fujiwara Opera Company.

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## Yuichiro Ichikawa, Servant of Macbeth/Murderer/Herald (baritone)

Yuichiro Ichikawa graduated from Showa University of Music and completed its graduate course. He performed in concert in Seoul in 2016 as part of an exchange program between Showa University of Music and Seoul National University, and was recommended by M. Devia to perform in the “Opera Aria Concert,” a project commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2017 to foster up-and-coming artists of the next generation. Since his debut with Fujiwara Opera Company in 2018 as Dandini in *La Cenerentola*, he has appeared in various roles, including Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, and Schaunard in *La Bohème*. In 2023, he performed as Emperor Suzaku in *The Tale of Genji* with the Japan Opera Association and sang in *La Bohème* with the Seiji Ozawa Music Academy, where he received high acclaim. He is a member of the Fujiwara Opera Company.





## Ryusuke Yamamoto, Apparition 1 (baritone)

Ryusuke Yamamoto graduated from the Vocal Music Department and Music Major Department of Showa University of Music and completed the Opera Singer Training Program at the Japan Opera Foundation. He has appeared in numerous operas, including *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Il Trovatore*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, and *Pagliacci*. While studying in

Italy, he performed in various concerts, primarily in Milan, including roles such as Amonasro in *Aida* and Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*. Yamamoto has also appeared as a soloist at the Hyogo Prefecture Newcomer Concert and in performances of Mozart's and Duruflé's *Requiem*. He is a member of the Fujiwara Opera Company and the New National Theatre Chorus.



## Rumi Kitahara, Apparition 2 (soprano)

Graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts and completed her graduate studies there. Finished the training program at the Nikikai Opera Institute at the top of her class, after which she further honed her skills in Italy. Kitahara has appeared in numerous operas, including as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, one of the Ladies in *The Magic Flute*, and Giorgetta/Angelica in *Il Trittico*. In

addition to her opera performances, she has also been active in musicals. In recent years, she has performed in roles such as a Lady in *Macbeth* at the Tokyo Spring Music Festival under the baton of Riccardo Muti, and Fusako in the Nikikai Opera production of *Das verrätene Meer*, composed by Hans Werner Henze, where her acting skills also received high praise.



## Momoko Yoshida, Apparition 3 (soprano)

Momoko Yoshida graduated from Kunitachi College of Music, specializing in vocal performance. She performed in the 2013 Graduation Concert and the 36th Yomiuri Chubu Annual Concert for Rookie Musicians. She completed the Nikikai Opera Institute and performed in the concert for New Vocalists of the 60th selected members. Yoshida has appeared in roles such as Cupid in *Orphée aux Enfers*, the Young

Shepherd in *Tannhäuser*, and a Boy in *Die Zauberflöte*. In concert settings, she has performed as a soloist in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and at the "STAND UP! CLASSIC FESTIVAL 2023." She is a member of the New National Theatre Chorus.

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## New National Theatre Chorus, Chorus (Kyohei Tomihira, chorusmaster)

New National Theatre, Tokyo, has opened in October 1997 as the only national theatre for the modern performing arts of Opera, Ballet, Contemporary Dance and Play. Meanwhile, New National Theatre Chorus has started its career and plays a central role in many Opera performances all through the seasons. Their ensemble ability and rich voices achieved acclaim from costarred singers, conductors, directors, stage staffs as well as domestic and foreign media.

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Column

### The words that misled Macbeth



#### Act 1, in the forest. The witches call out to Macbeth:

"Hail, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis!"  
"Hail, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor!"  
"Hail, Macbeth, King of Scotland!"

#### Then, the witches address Banquo:

"You will be lesser than Macbeth and yet greater!"  
"Not so happy as he, but happier!"  
"Not king, but the father of kings!"

#### Upon hearing these portentous foretellings, Macbeth is shaken.



#### Act 3, once again in the forest. Apparitions summoned by the witches speak to Macbeth.

"Beware Macduff."  
"You may be bloody and fierce: no man born of woman will harm you."  
"Be strong: you will be glorious and invincible  
until you see Birnam wood come marching towards you."

**But when Macbeth asks, "Will the descendants of Banquo ever mount the throne?" the witches remain silent. Macbeth continues on his path to ruin.**

# Program Notes

Text by Robert Markow

## Verdi: Opera *Macbeth*

Over the span of just eleven years (1839-1850), Verdi turned out fifteen full-length operas – more than one a year. Of these, few remain in the active repertory; in fact, until the great middle period trilogy of *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *La traviata*, only *Nabucco* (his third opera) and *Macbeth* (his tenth) can claim repertory status. Indeed, Verdi himself claimed *Macbeth* to be the favorite of his operas up to that time.

*Macbeth* also represents one of Verdi's manifestations of his lifelong love of Shakespeare. In *Macbeth*, Verdi attempted something new, an overriding concern with the dramatic expressiveness inherent in the text rather than mere vocal display and slavish adherence to the conventions of opera in his day. Verdi's determination that his opera should reflect the dramatic elements of the play, rather than serve as a mere showcase for vocal talent, is seen in his rejection of Tadolini for the role of Lady Macbeth. "Madame Tadolini has a wonderful voice, clear, flexible and strong, while Lady Macbeth's voice should be hard, stifled and dark. Madame Tadolini has an angelic voice, but Lady Macbeth's should be diabolical." Pierluigi Petrobelli, former Director of the Verdi Institute in Parma, sums up Verdi's intentions thus: "*Macbeth* is the culminating and decisive crisis in Verdi's art. It constitutes the moment at which the composer became aware that he had to find within the musical language the elements characterizing the dramatic poles of the action in a way that creates an arc of tension transcending single moments and isolated situations."

*Macbeth* is unusual in other ways as well. It is one of the few operas with no love interest. There is no leading role for a tenor, and it has few arias in the traditional sense. Most of the best tunes go to the chorus. On the other hand, there is a stirring drinking song, a vengeance duet, a sleepwalking scene, an apparition scene, two mad scenes (one each for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth), and two extended scenes for the witches (expanded from three individuals in Shakespeare to three "covens" of six or more in Verdi) – more than enough to

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sustain interest! The cast is quite large, but there are only three leading roles: the title character, his wife (who functions more as a partner in crime than as a lover), and the witches as a collective unit. Macbeth's wife, who may be regarded as the real protagonist of the drama, is the only character in all of Verdi's 26 operas who has no name of her own; she is simply "Lady Macbeth." As for the witches, Verdi wrote that "[they] dominate the drama; everything stems from them – rude and gossipy in Act I, exalted in Act III. they make up a real character, and one of the greatest importance."

In 1846, the year Verdi began to write *Macbeth*, his greatest masterpieces were still ahead of him (*Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *La forza del destino*, *Aida*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, among others), but at 33 he was already rich and famous. In that year, opera houses in three major cities – London, Paris, and Naples – were clamoring for his next production. For a libretto, Verdi was considering Grillparzer's *Die Ahnfrau*, which he never set; Schiller's *Die Räuber*, which later became *I masnadieri*; and *Macbeth*, which went to none of the above-mentioned theaters, but rather to La Pergola in Florence. This was to be the first of Verdi's settings of his life-long love of Shakespeare, but he did not return to this author until the very end of his long career (*Otello* in 1887, *Falstaff* in 1893). Verdi's source was the first integral translation of Shakespeare into Italian, by Carlo Rusconi, published in Padua in 1838. This was only a prose rendition, which of course failed to capture the magic of Shakespeare's poetry and sonoric niceties, but that's where the music takes over. Verdi enlisted the services of the librettist Francesco Maria Piave, with whom he had previously worked on *Ernani* and *I due Foscari*, but Verdi initially drew up the entire libretto himself in prose form, choosing which scenes from Shakespeare to include, which to omit, and how to reduce the text to manageable proportions for an opera (less than half of Shakespeare's original). Piave's job was to turn Verdi's text into exact verse for the composer to set to music.

The premiere in Florence on March 14, 1847 was a huge success. Verdi was recalled to the stage 38 times. The opera made the rounds of Italy, went on to other European cities, and arrived in New York in 1858. Ironically, England, the country of Shakespeare's birth, did not see Verdi's *Macbeth* until nearly a century after its premiere, in 1938. In 1865, the French publisher Léon Escudier suggested a new version of *Macbeth* for the Théâtre lyrique in Paris, and Verdi

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agreed. It was mandatory at the time that any opera produced in Paris include a ballet sequence, whether the story required one or not, and Verdi grudgingly complied. There were other changes as well, mostly in Act III. Productions today generally respect the Paris version. The ballet scene is usually cut, but the music sometimes turns up at symphony concerts as a self-contained number.

## SYNOPSIS

### ACT I

A brief Prelude sets the mood of dark mystery and strange goings-on in the story about to unfold. Music later associated with Lady Macbeth – a nervous, jabbing figure in the strings and a haunting, lyrical line presented by violins – appropriately takes prominence, as she is the character who motivates much of the action. The scene is eleventh-century Scotland. Against the background of a storm, witches convene on a desolate heath to brag about the evil deeds they have recently committed. Macbeth and his friend Banquo, both generals in King Duncan’s army, approach. The witches hail Macbeth with three titles: Thane of Glamis (a position he already holds), Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland. They also hail Banquo as the father of future kings. Both men are astonished at these words, and voice their misgivings over these mysterious pronouncements. A moment later a messenger arrives with the news that the King has just appointed Macbeth Thane of Cawdor after deposing the previous occupant of this post. Macbeth’s hair stands on end (so he tells us), as he reflects that the ultimate symbol of power, King of Scotland, a post he had never previously considered, suddenly seems within reach. The witches return for a final chorus.

The scene moves to a hall in Macbeth’s castle. Lady Macbeth, at first speaking (not singing), is reading a letter from her husband describing the events of the previous scene. She immediately begins contemplating the murder of King Duncan, who just happens to be arriving at the castle that very evening. With fierce determination, she calls upon the ministers of hell to assist her (“Or tutti sorgete”) in her infamous designs. The moment Macbeth arrives she commands him to do the dirty work. Then follows Macbeth’s famous soliloquy, taken directly from Shakespeare, in which he imagines a dagger dangling before him in mid-air. His resolve falters, but his wife eggs him on. After killing

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Duncan in his sleep, Macbeth is further urged by his wife to erase all possibility of discovery by returning to the King's bedchamber and smearing the guards with blood so that the blame will fall on them, not on Macbeth. Macbeth is too stunned to act, so his wife proceeds apace. When the King is discovered dead the next morning, there is appropriate outcry, confusion, and horror. The act closes with a powerful ensemble.

## ACT II

Lady Macbeth is not finished with murderous thoughts. Now she wants Banquo dead, as the witches had prophesized that he would be “father of kings,” thus threatening Macbeth's title as King of Scotland. Again, the deed is to be carried out this very night. In a stirring aria (“La luce langue”), she affirms with steely resolve the necessity of further murders and exults in the power she and her husband now enjoy.

The scene shifts to a park near Macbeth's castle. A band of assassins converse in a bouncy, light-hearted chorus about their impending murder of Banquo and his son Fleance. Banquo gets his only aria in the opera (“Come dal ciel precipita”) just in time before he is dispatched. Fleance escapes.

The famous Banquet Scene is introduced with some of Verdi's most exhilarating music. Macbeth welcomes all to the festive occasion in honor of his coronation, and Lady Macbeth leads the crowd in a drinking song (“Si colmi il calice”) to what may well be the opera's most memorable tune. (This is an interpolation by Verdi and Piave; it is not found in Shakespeare.) Suddenly Macbeth imagines the ghost of Banquo before him, and for a moment loses his sanity before all the guests. His wife tries to smooth matters over, and resumes the drinking song, but the ghost returns, and Macbeth has an even longer lapse of sanity. Lady Macbeth berates him for his lack of resolve, and the act closes with another big choral number in which the crowd wonders at Macbeth's strange behavior.

## ACT III

Act III consists of a single scene. The witches are holding another convention around their boiling cauldron. They dance about and sing of the grisly ingredients that go into their unholy brew. Macbeth enters, determined to learn more about his future. The witches conjure up apparitions for him:

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one warns him of Macduff, another advises him that “no man of woman born” can harm him, a third claims that he has nothing to fear until Birnam wood marches on his castle. Macbeth is relieved: of course every man is born from a woman, and how silly to expect that trees can march, he thinks. A further apparition (omitted in this performance) brings forth a procession of future kings, including Banquo. Macbeth collapses in fear. His wife comes to his side to comfort him, and together they plan still more murders, those of Macduff, all his family, and Banquo’s son Fleance.

## ACT IV

The final act opens on the border of England and Scotland, where Scottish refugees have gathered to sing a chorus (“*Patria oppressa*”), whose dignified tone of lamentation brings to mind the analogous “*Va pensiero*” chorus of Hebrews in *Nabucco*. They are joined by Macduff, whose wife and children have been murdered by Macbeth. Macduff sings of his sorrow in his only aria in the opera, (“*Ah, la paterna mano*”). Malcolm enters leading a company of British soldiers. He orders each man to cut a branch from a tree in Birnam and take it with him into battle against Macbeth. He and Macduff lead the martial chorus (“*La patria tradita*”) that promises freedom from their oppressor.

A somber prelude introduces Lady Macbeth’s famous Sleepwalking Scene, in which she relives the horrors of what she and her husband have done. The baleful sound of the English horn underscores the sense of misery. Verdi regarded this scene and the Act I duet between Macbeth and his wife as the two most important passages in the opera. “If these two numbers fail, then the entire opera will fail,” he wrote in a letter to Salvatore Camarano. And these two numbers “must be acted and declaimed, with hollow, muffled voices.”

In another room in the castle, Macbeth enters, fuming that Scots and Englishmen have united against him. In his only full-length aria in the opera, he expresses the hopelessness and despair that now plague him (“*Pietà, rispetto, amore*”), that he will never have the comforts that other men enjoy in their advancing years – honor, respect, love. A woman enters to inform Macbeth that his wife is dead (the cause is not given; one can only assume that she has succumbed to emotional exhaustion), news that barely registers on his benumbed mind. Then comes news that *does* enflame him: Birnam wood is advancing on the castle in the form of each soldier carrying a branch for

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disguise.

The opera's final scene takes place on a battlefield, with the English soldiers led by Macduff and Malcolm. Macduff confronts Macbeth in a duel. Macbeth is convinced that he is invincible, relying on the witches' prophecy that no man born of woman can harm him. But Macduff did not have a natural birth – he was ripped from his mother's womb. Macduff runs him through. Malcolm (son of the slain King Duncan) is proclaimed the new king, and all rejoice – a tragedy with a happy ending.

**GIUSEPPE VERDI:** Born in Le Roncole, Italy, October 10, 1813; died in Milan, January 27, 1901

**Original work:** William Shakespeare's "Macbeth"

**Libretto:** Francesco Maria Piave, Andrea Maffei    **Work composed:** 1846-1847

**World premiere:** March 14, 1847 at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence, conducted by the composer    **Revised Premiere:** April 21, 1865 at Théâtre Lyrique in Paris

**Instrumentation:** piccolo, flute, 2 oboes (2nd doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, cimbasso, timpani, percussion (snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam), harp, strings  
[off-stage instruments] oboes, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets, percussion.

\*In this performance, orchestral players on stage will perform.

Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, **Robert Markow** now writes program notes for numerous orchestras and other musical organizations in North America and Asia. He taught at Montreal's McGill University for many years, has led music tours to several countries, and writes for numerous leading classical music journals.