

# DIRECTING SHAKESPEARE

## STUDENT WORKSHEET #3

Discovering the world and intentions of the characters.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED



- A copy of *Macbeth*, Act 3, Scene 2 (edited version) see attached.
- A space for rehearsal.
- A computer with internet connection ready to play [this video](#).

### BEFORE THE ACTIVITY



Watch [this video](#) on Directing Shakespeare featuring actor / director Janine Watson. Note down **three** tips mentioned by Janine for directing a play or a film.

### ACTIVITY



Try these exercises to put some of the ideas discussed in the video into practice.

1. In a group of three, **read** the attached scene aloud from *Macbeth*. One person is the director, one person plays Macbeth, and one person plays Lady Macbeth. Take turns being the director as you run through the next exercises.
2. First, do some detective work to discover the **given imaginary circumstances** of the scene. Ask as many questions as you can to determine these circumstances. For example:
  - Who are the characters in this scene?
  - What is their relationship to one another?
  - Where are they located geographically? Inside or outside?
  - Is it a private or public space?
  - What is the tone of the scene? Is it casual, or perhaps dangerous?
3. Next, think about each character's **intentions**:
  - What are they fighting for and why?
  - Do both characters want the same thing or are their intentions conflicting?
  - Why is what they want important to them?
  - What would it mean to achieve what they want?
  - What would it feel like to achieve it?
  - How much do they want it?
  - What do you think they would be willing to do to get what they want?

## ACTIVITY CONT.

4. Now, **read the scene out loud again**. Did the actors' performances change from the way the actors performed it in your first reading? What did you notice that was different this time, and why do you think it was different? What was the **conflict** between the two characters, and how was it presented?
5. Add a **physical task** for one of the characters to complete during the performing of the scene. Note: This can be a very simple task that doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the scene. For example, one of the characters could be tidying up or stacking and unstacking some chairs. The other character must work to undo the actions of the other character, i.e., unstack the chairs or make a mess of what they have just cleaned. **Play the scene again**, adding in these physical tasks. **Swap** the physical tasks, so now the other person is trying to complete the task, and the other is trying to undo their work. Play the scene.
6. Now **'debrief'** or **discuss** those performances of the scene as a group.
7. For the actors, how did it feel to have a physical task to focus on? Did it make you engage with the text in different ways? When the other actor tried to stop you from achieving your task did it change your intentions? Did it make you fight more strongly for what you wanted? What was surprising? What felt different? Did it change the scene in any way?
8. Finally, **remove** the physical tasks and play the scene as written but retain the same feelings and intentions that you just played in the previous scene.
9. **Discuss** what differences you saw in the different versions of the same scene. What differences did the actors notice, and what differences did the director notice? Which version was more interesting to watch, and why?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY



See what happens when you change the stakes of the scene.

Note: **Stakes** refers to what the characters might win or lose in the scene. For example, your character could win or lose great love (*Romeo and Juliet*) or they could win or lose significant power (*Macbeth*). By 'raising the stakes', you increase the intensity of the drama happening in a scene.

Give the actors a number between 1 and 10 on which to play their stakes – 1 being the lowest stakes and 10 being 'life or death' stakes. Both actors play the scene at 1 to start with, very casually, with little to no stakes. Then play around with different numbers – you might raise the stakes from 1 to 3, or 5 to 8. You may choose to go straight to 10, which should be 'life or death' stakes.

Discuss the similarities and differences of the performances. Which versions were more powerful to watch? Which one did you prefer and why?

As a final exercise, try giving the two actors different numbers (ie. *Macbeth* is playing 8 and *Lady Macbeth* is playing 3). What happens to the scene now?

## SCENE EXTRACT



### MACBETH ACT 3, SCENE 2 (EDITED)

*After murdering King Duncan to become the new King of Scotland, Macbeth's mental state deteriorates as he becomes plagued by guilt. He fears losing the crown and worries that the witches' prophecy about Banquo's sons becoming king will come true. Lady Macbeth tries to comfort him.*

Lady Macbeth    How now, my lord! why do you keep alone?

Macbeth        We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it...

Lady Macbeth    You must leave this.

Macbeth        O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

Lady Macbeth    But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

Macbeth        There's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
Then be thou jocund: there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macbeth    What's to be done?

Macbeth        Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed.

## ABOUT JANINE WATSON

Janine is a graduate of the National Theatre Drama School, Melbourne. For Bell Shakespeare she has previously appeared in *The Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Players*. As a director for Bell Shakespeare, she has directed *Romeo and Juliet* (Sydney Opera House, Arts Centre Melbourne), *The Players*, and was Assistant Director of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Her other theatre credits include *Unqualified* (Ensemble Theatre, director), *A View From The Bridge* and *Dolores* for Redline Production/Old Fitz Theatre; *Measure For Measure*, *Antigone* and *Three Sisters* for Sport for Jove; *The Happy Prince*, *Dracula* and *Dangerous Liaisons* for Little Ones Theatre; *American Beauty Shop* for KXT; *Or Forever Hold Your Peace* for La Boite; *Dangerous Liaisons* for MTC Neon/Darwin Festival; *Triangle* and *J.A.T.O* for MKA Theatre; *Cordelia* for Little Dove and *Agatha* for Melbourne Fringe. Her film credits include *That's Not Me*, *The Outside Light*, and *Picking Up At Auschwitz*. Her television credits include *The Code 2*, *Neighbours*, *Crash Burn*, and *The Secret Life Of Us*. Janine was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the 2017 Sydney Theatre Awards, was nominated for Best Female Performer at the 2012 Green Room Awards and received the 2016 Sandra Bates Directors Award.