

STUDY GUIDE



TANGO MACBETH

"We, the viewers, are invited to engage in the film's tango of power, responsibility, and consequences through director Nadine Patterson's artistic choices to recast and re-present Shakespeare's Macbeth in ways that reflect cultural histories and rhythms with African and multicultural roots."

---- Dr. Joan May T. Cordova @ForCommunities

SUMMARY

Shakespeare, world music, and dance! A theater company rehearses *MACBETH*. A film crew documents their every move. The drama of the play intertwines with the drama of making the film. This adaptation is unlike any version of *MACBETH* you have ever seen.

The film is excellent for multicultural studies of classic texts; dramatic arts; leadership, management, and ethics; gender and women's studies; creative problem solving; documentary filmmaking; avant-garde cinema; movement/dance studies; world music; creative writing; and African American studies.

MACBETH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Noted author Lorene Cary says: "TANGO MACBETH is a fabulous fresh look at the classic. There's a dancing, lively, refreshing look at Shakespeare's drama in Macbeth--and also a classy OMG reality show behind the scenes of the actors and director. Each scene makes us 21st century viewers hear the words new. I saw the relationship between Lady Macbeth and her husband with renewed fascination. And the way Patterson casts Banquo's face takes the old ghost story to a new, haunting, moving level. We think about character and casting, about conflict and resolution, about love and compromise. It's brilliant."

Lorene Cary is the founder of Art Sanctuary, a multi-disciplinary arts center in Philadelphia. She currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. She has written several award winning books including: *Black Ice*, *The Price of a Child*, and *If Sons Then Heirs*. The Art Sanctuary served as the fiscal conduit for the production of TANGO MACBETH.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I screen TANGO MACBETH audiences often ask me **why did I make the film**. I want to provide opportunities for women and people of color to perform some of the greatest work of the English language. I want to see films with a diversity of players in all parts, not just color for the background.

The second reason is that I love Shakespeare. I want to spread the good news, and share Shakespeare with everyone. His work is for the entire human family, not just the privileged few. I think **MACBETH** is the perfect mix of tragedy, passion, and mystery.

The third reason why I created this film is for educators to use in today's classroom, where students from various backgrounds can see themselves on the screen. I made a work that will encourage discussion about the artistic process, and the ethical dilemmas in the text. It is a film that demonstrates an alternative to traditional filmmaking practice. For example, in the opening of the film you find the following aesthetic choices: switching between color and black and white; handheld camera; frequent close-ups, and freeze framing. The structural choice of having a fluid cast that play different roles, re-ordering the acts of the play, and cutting key scenes from the text causes the viewer to actively engage the film as it is unfolding because of the unexpected shifts.

A key point of directing is making choices and living with the consequences thereof. I hope this helps in your journey towards creating your own work.

How did I come up with the title? I thought tango dance fit Macbeth and Lady Macbeth well in terms their relationship as a couple.

In social dance were two people interact as partners, each coupling has it's own intensity and power dynamics. The word tango comes from the Congo in central Africa and means drum circle. A place where people in the community are invited to dance and share. We use the word tango in this literal sense. The film audience is invited into a space to experience and share. The music is very percussive, keeping in line with the traditional African drum music used in tango circles. **Source:** *Tango: The Art History of Love* by Robert Farris Thompson.



Justin Bryant and Valerie Heckel

FILM STRUCTURE

IT'S A PLAY

Actors in a theater company rehearse and perform **MACBETH** at Plays and Players Theater in Philadelphia during two of the hottest weeks of the year in 100°F heat.

WITHIN A DOCUMENTARY

A documentary film crew follows their every move. Three cameras are used to capture the rehearsal process on stage and what the actors do in the dressing rooms while they are waiting for their scenes.

WITHIN A FILM

The choreographer, director and actors are not part of a real theater company. The actors were cast only for the making of the film. Additional scenes were shot at other locations to represent how the actors imagine their scenes within their own minds. Key scenes from the play were cut in order to make the film more dynamic. The film opens in the middle of play at the point of crisis--- King Duncan is dead.

THE PLAY

Shakespeare's **MACBETH** was originally set in 11th century Scotland. King Duncan's army has just defeated the Norwegians and General Macbeth has received a new title and lands in acknowledgement of his victories. The Witches tell Macbeth and his co-commander, Banquo, that one day Macbeth will be king and Banquo's descendants will be kings. Macbeth writes of this prophesy to Lady Macbeth. She is thrilled at the news and plots a way to speed their ascension to the throne. Eventually the Macbeths murder Duncan and anyone who stands in their way. The killing takes a toll on Lady Macbeth, who goes mad and eventually commits suicide after she learns of the slaughter of MacDuff's family. In the final scenes General MacDuff makes a bold military strike against Macbeth, to save Scotland and avenge his family.

Shakespeare's play is broken into five Acts.
This film adaptation has five points of
action:

Act I The Prophecy

Act II Tango Muerte

Act III Guess Whose Ghost
is Coming to Dinner?

Act IV Slaughter House

Act V Heart to Heart,
Even in Death We Will Not Part

BIG QUESTIONS THEMES

- A. As a filmmaker, what I consider to be beautiful or attractive affects all aspects of production. How does our personal viewpoint on things such as beauty and aesthetics influence our choices in casting, design and cinematography?

I wanted the cast and crew to think deeply about this. I had the actors audition with this sonnet. We also had parts of Sonnet 127 placed throughout the dressing room area during filming.

SONNET 127 by William Shakespeare

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so.

Beauty comes in many shapes, sizes, and skin tones. My appreciation of all kinds of beauty is evident in the casting of TANGO MACBETH and in how the actors are filmed.

The close-up shot is the shot in film that allows the audience to connect with a characters' humanity. Act 1 Scene 7 where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth discuss whether or not to go through with their plot to kill King Duncan (chapter 3 on the DVD 13:39) is a good example . I have seen too many films where people of color are not granted the close-up or if they are, the actors are under lit.

This is just one example of the kind of choices director's have to make every minute during the shooting of a film.

We often equate beauty with being human. What happens when a people are demonized in the public sphere over hundreds of years? What happens when that which is black is not considered fair? Shakespeare raised this question over 400 years ago and it is still relevant today.

- B. When you read Shakespeare's play and watch the film, think about the moral issues each raise. What does the phrase "none can hold our power to account" mean? What is the responsibility of those in power? What is the responsibility of a director?



- C. Observe relationship dynamics between characters within the play; the actors; and the crew. What are signs of harmony? What are signs of tension?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION

1. What is the core message of the play? What is the core message of the film? What did you discover?
2. What character/actor do you most identify with in the film? In the play? Why?
3. What scene sticks with you the most after viewing the film? What happens? How does it make you feel?



Comfort Dassin as Fleance

4. If you were going to audition for a part in MACBETH, which character(s) would you audition for?
5. If you were the director and had to make a choice, which Macbeth would you choose and why?
6. What is the most memorable music track in the film? How did it make you feel?
7. What confuses you in the film?
8. How effective was dance used in telling the story of MACBETH? Did you enjoy moments when there was no dialog and just music and dance/movement? Why?
9. What sections of Shakespeare's MACBETH are missing from the film? How does that affect your understanding of the plot of the play?

FILMMAKING EXERCISES

1. Shoot a scene in medium close-ups with a tripod. Then shoot the same scene with handheld camera. Then shoot the scene again with a mono-pod or steadicam. How does the scene play out in each take? How do the various methods of camera support effect the feeling of the scene? Which method do the actors feel most comfortable with?
2. Create a scene with foreground, middle ground, and background action. Also think of the same dynamic in regards to sound.



(L to R) Carlo Campbell, Alexandra Bailey
and Daniel Armella

3. Select a group of actors with various skin tones. Light them all to make sure that each one is properly exposed. Mold the faces by creating shadows on people with pale complexions and create highlights on people with brown skin tones. Also be aware of the actors costume and surroundings. Are you creating enough separation from the background for each actor?
4. Research the term “chiaroscuro”. In film we use this method to define space and create visually interesting scenes. In the photos used in this study guide, light and dark areas alternate with each other to help separate the actors from the background and other characters. Create a scene using this method. Shoot it in color and then black and white.

IN-CLASS DRAMATIC ARTS EXERCISES

- A. Select a scene from **MACBETH**, such as Act 4 Scene 3, when Ross tells Macduff and Malcolm that Macduff's family has been murdered. Read the original text and discuss the meaning of the scene. Perform the scene in contemporary English as an improvised scene. Then perform the scene in Shakespeare's original text. How has your understanding of the scene changed?
- B. Create a new scene, such as the scene where Macduff tells his family he is leaving for England, and perform as an improvised scene in contemporary English.
- C. Select a scene from **MACBETH** and perform without any dialog.



Brian Anthony Wilson as Macduff

- D. Each actor in the film had to prepare Sonnet 127 for their audition. As an in class exercise recite Shakespear's Sonnet #127. Stand and recite the sonnet directly to a person standing in front of you. Make as much eye contact as possible. Try performing the sonnet as different characters (i.e. as a certain well known fictional Philadelphia boxer). Perform it as yourself. How does it make you feel as you are reciting it? What does it feel like when someone is saying it to you? Discuss your impressions.

ABOUT THE FILM TANGO MACBETH

TANGO MACBETH is a 73 minute feature length film. It is an observational documentary that is also an improvised dramatic film. It is a play, within a documentary, within a film.

The purpose is to provide the viewer with a contemporary multicultural experience of the play MACBETH in the original Shakesperean language. Shakespeare is truly for everyone. By setting the action of the play primarily in the process of the cast and crew making the film, the viewer is brought closer to the emotional experience of the drama.

Production specs: The film was shot on the Canon 7D and 5D Mark ii. It was edited with Final Cut Pro 7. The sound mix was done with Pro Tools.

The Educational DVD includes Closed Captioning and French Language subtitles.

The DVD is segmented into the following 11 chapters:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Introduction, main characters, Witches | 00:00 |
| 2. Old Theater; Lady Macbeth; The News | 04:14 |
| 3. King Duncan & His Entourage;
Macbeths plan murder | 11:56 |
| 4. Court Dance;
Banquo & Fleance talk to Macbeth | 18:49 |
| 5. Behind the Scenes;
After Duncan's Murder | 23:34 |
| 6. Drunken Porter; AWAKE! ;
Witches Incantation | 28:36 |
| 7. MacDuff Family Conference;
Witches Incantation | 35:57 |
| 8. End of Part One; Director's Speech;
Auditions | 45:00 |
| 9. The Macbeths; MacDuff's Family
is Slaughtered | 56:43 |
| 10. Bleed Poor Country; Sleep Walk;
Freedom Fighters | 1:01:10 |
| 11. Closing and Credits | 1:10:07 |

THE PLAYERS

In Order of Appearance

Brian Anthony Wilson: Macduff

Nadine M. Patterson: Director

Zane Booker: Choreographer

Wendy Staton: Witch/Old Woman

Valerie Heckel: Witch/Murderer/Mistress

Eric Suter: Witch/Murderer/Macbeth

Carlo Campbell: Macbeth

Veronica Wathome: Banquo

Alexandra Bailey: Lady Macbeth

Jessyca Marie Lam: Attendant to Lady Macbeth

James Tolbert: King Duncan

Comfort Dassin: Fleance

Rashan Jackson: Donalbain/Angus

Adrianna Poindexter: Lady Macduff

Erin Callahan: Boy (Samuel, Son of Macduff)/Mistress

Janice McDuffy: Lennox

Davon Williams: Ross

Daniel Armella: Seyton/Murderer

Justin Bryant: Malcolm

Matia Johnson: Murderer/Mistress

Titilola Verissimo: Mistress

Diane Wilder: Porter/Doctor

THE CREW

Nadine M. Patterson: Director/Producer

Marlene G. Patterson: Producer

Zane Booker: Choreographer/Associate Producer

Lenny Seidman: Composer

Sharon Mullally: Editor

Gail Lloyd: DP/Camera Operator

John Roberts: Art Direction/Camera Operator

Martha Conley: Assistant Director



Rashan Jackson: Assistant Choreographer

Justin Bryant: Associate Choreographer

Matia Johnson: Associate Choreographer

Alexandra Bailey: Associate Producer/Make-Up

Peter Price: Music Sound Engineer

Dan Scholnick: Assistant Music Sound Engineer

Brother Daoud Bey: Key Grip

Michelle Bullard: Production Assistant/Sound

Serena Reed: Sound Recordist/Boom Operator

Nadine M. Patterson: DP 2nd Unit/Camera Operator

Monique Payton: Camera Operator/Production Assistant

Nadine Schnieder: Continuity

Gary Smalls: Props and Wardrobe

Carmella Vassor: Camera Operator

Federico Spoliansky: Production Consultant (Argentina)

Jennifer Braxton: Production Manager

Kimberly Fonville: Caterer

Adele David: French Language Translation & Subtitles

Glenn Barratt: Sound Mixer @ Morning Star Studios

William Shakespeare: Writer of "Macbeth"

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WEB LINKS

For more information about the film go to:

www.tangomacbeth.com.

Harmony Image Productions is at www.hipcinema.net.

A slide show presentation about the making of the film is at

Project:<https://projeqt.com/tangomacbeth/making-tango-macbeth/open/>

If you wish to purchase an educational edition of the TANGO MACBETH DVD please go to TransitMedia:

http://transitmedia.net/shop/index.lasso?fsid=Tango_Macbeth

To see TANGO MACBETH at a theater near you go to:

<http://www.tugg.com/titles/tango-macbeth>

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Thompson, Robert Farris. *Tango: The Art History of Love*. Vintage, 2006.

CONTACT US

The film and educational brochure are produced and designed by Harmony Image Productions, Inc. a company that specializes in arts, educational and multicultural content development and creation.

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