# Production Design Adaptation

## Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

**OPERA AMERICA**

# *How does production and visual design aid in storytelling?*

## Today's Objectives:

- Respond to the musical and storytelling elements of opera to develop criteria for visual artistic choices.

- Refine an adaptation pitch to demonstrate critical understanding of the visual elements of production design and opera to tell a story.

- Create visual representations of set and costume designs based on opera adaptation pitches.

# **Listening Activity** 🎧

As you listen to the music, write down any colors, mood, spaces/places, textures, foods, etc. you can associate with the music.

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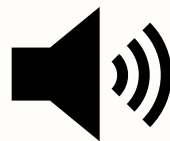
[Act I](#)
2:39 – 5:47

# *Macbeth* Synopsis

The opera *Macbeth*, based on Shakespeare's play, tells the story of a Scottish nobleman who rises to power through a series of murders to maintain his hold on the throne. After encountering witches who predict his future, Macbeth becomes consumed by ambition and, with the encouragement of his wife, Lady Macbeth, murders King Duncan and seizes the throne. However, his reign is plagued by paranoia, violence, and corruption, leading to his and Lady Macbeth's downfall as they become increasingly tyrannical and consumed by guilt.

# Key Scene #1

## Act II, Scene 6 & 7: Tu di sangue hai brutto il volto (You have blood on your face)

After Lady Macbeth entertains her courtiers with a drinking song at the banquet, Macbeth receives news of Banquo's death from his assassin. As Macbeth is about to take Banquo's seat at the table, he is suddenly overcome by a chilling apparition of the dead Banquo, who confronts him. Lady Macbeth attempts to soothe him are in vain, and the king's erratic behavior begins to raise eyebrows among the courtiers, who exchange uneasy glances at the strange display.
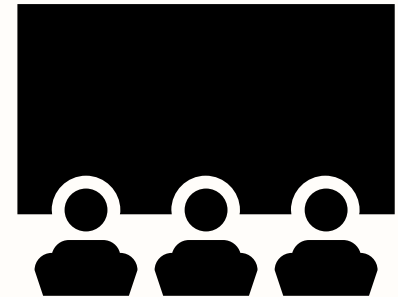


*Macbeth*, Glimmerglass Festival (photo: courtesy of Glimmerglass Festival)

# Key Scene #1 continued



Met Opera on Demand: Track #21. ACT II: Si colmi il calice
02:00 – 04:46
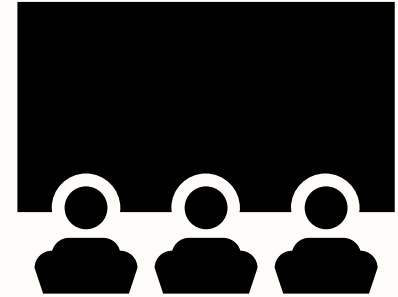


PBS LearningMedia™: Macbeth | Act II | The Metropolitan Opera
19:20 – 24:09

# Key Scene #2



*Macbeth*, Resonance Works (photo: courtesy of Resonance Works)

**Act III, Scene 2: Finché appelli, silenti m'attendete (Wait for me in silence until I call)**
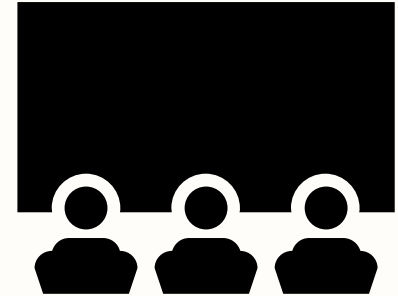
Macbeth visits the witches and demands more prophecies to secure his reign. The witches reveal three apparitions to him.

# Key Scene #2 continued

Met Opera on Demand: Track #25. ACT III: Che fate voi, misterïose donne?
& #26. ACT III: Fuggi, regal fantasima!
#25. 01:22 – 07:16 into #26. 00:00 – 00:30
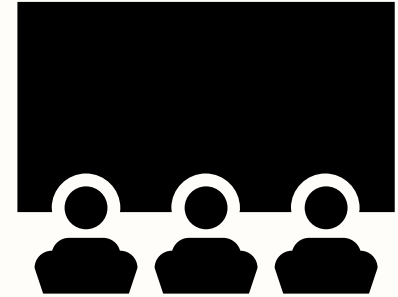
PBS LearningMedia™: Macbeth | Act III | The Metropolitan Opera
06:10 – 12:35

# Key Scene #3

## Act IV, Scene 6-10: E' morta la Regina! (The Queen is dead!)

As news arrives that Lady Macbeth has died, Macbeth is given word that Birnam Wood is moving, and English soldiers emerge. Macduff confronts Macbeth and reveals that he was not born naturally but had a Caesarean birth. This vulnerability makes him immune to Macbeth's invincibility prophecy. Macbeth meets his tragic demise and with the end to his reign, paves the way for Malcolm's ascension to the throne.
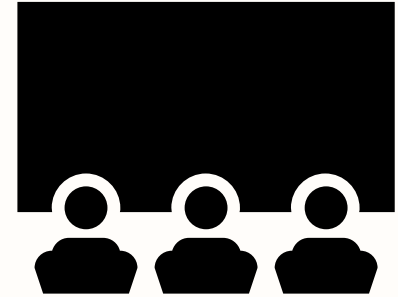
*Macbeth*, Kentucky Opera (photo: courtesy of Kentucky Opera)
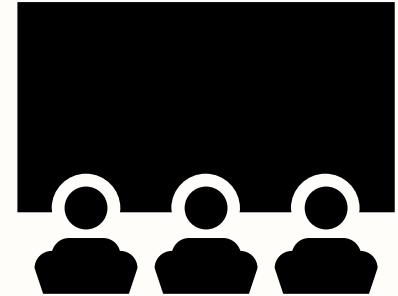
# Key Scene #3 continued

Met Opera on Demand: Track #36. ACT IV: Ella è morta!
00:00 – 03:57

PBS LearningMedia™: Macbeth | Act IV | The Metropolitan Opera
34:16 – 38:13

# Production Design Definitions

**Production Design:** The process of creating the visual aesthetic and environment for a film, television show, commercial, or other forms of media. It involves creating sets, props, as well as costumes, projections, and other visual elements that help bring the story to life and immerse the audience in the narrative. The Production Designer is responsible for overseeing the creation of these elements, working closely with the director, producers, and other key creatives to ensure that the visual style of the production aligns with the overall vision and tone of the project.

# Production Design Definitions

**Stage/Set Design:** The art and practice of creating the physical environment in a theatrical production, film, television show, or other visual medium. This includes scenic elements and design layout for sets, lighting, props, and furniture to bring the story or concept to life. It involves arranging these elements in a way that enhances the audience's visual and aesthetic experience. Stage design may also involve creating technical elements such as sound systems, special effects, and rigging to support the production. Stage designers work closely with other production team members to create a cohesive and visually appealing environment complementing the production's overall vision.

# Production Design Definitions

**Props:** A term commonly used in live performance and film production to refer to objects or items used on stage or on set to enhance the performance or scene. Props can include anything from furniture, decorations, weapons, hand-held objects, and more. Props are used to add realism and detail to a production and help bring the world of the play or film to life for the audience.

# Production Design Definitions

**Lighting Design:** Refers to the art and practice of creating and controlling the lighting for a performance. This includes designing the placement and intensity of the lights and using different colors and effects to enhance the performance's mood and atmosphere. Lighting designers play a crucial role in enhancing the storytelling and emotional impact of the production, helping to set the stage, highlight performers, create a sense of place and time, and evoke different emotions in the audience. It is an integral part of the overall visual and artistic design of the production.

# Production Design Definitions

**Projection Design:** The art of creating and manipulating projected images and videos to enhance the visual elements of a live event, such as a concert, theater production, dance performance, or installation. It involves using specialized software and hardware to project images, videos, or other visual content onto a surface, such as a screen, wall, or even the audience itself.

# Production Design Definitions

**Costume Design:** The process of creating costumes and outfits for characters in theatre, film, television, or other visual media. It involves researching the time-period, setting, and character traits to develop pieces that help bring the character to life. Costume designers work closely with directors, actors, and other production team members to ensure that the costumes accurately reflect the vision of the production. This can involve sourcing or creating garments, accessories, and props, as well as coordinating fittings and alterations. Costume design plays a crucial role in storytelling and character development, helping to enhance the overall visual and emotional impact of a production.

# Production Design Definitions

**Hair and Makeup Design:** Refers to the planning and execution of hairstyles and makeup looks for performers and actors. This creative process involves analyzing the characters or themes in the performance, researching historical or cultural references, and designing hair and makeup that enhances the overall aesthetic and storytelling of the production. Hair and makeup designers work closely with directors, costume designers, and performers to create a cohesive and visually impactful presentation on stage or screen.

# Production Design



*Macbeth*, Lyric Opera of Chicago (photo: Ken Howard)



*Macbeth*, Boston Lyric Opera (photo: Erik Jacobs)

# Elements of Design

- Color
- Line
- Shape
- Texture

- Form
- Space
- Value
- Pattern

# Elements of Design



*Macbeth*, Lyric Opera of Chicago (photo: Ken Howard)



*Macbeth*, Glimmerglass Festival (photo: courtesy of Glimmerglass Festival)

**Line and Space:** Banquo occupies center stage, wrapped in red string that forms visible lines of tension, symbolizing entrapment and murder. A red spotlight highlights him with ample space around to intensify the isolation. The open door, with snow gently falling contrasts with the sharp, angular architecture surrounding the scene.

**Color:** Red often symbolizes passion, danger, or intense emotion, which is fitting for a dramatic opera like *Macbeth*. The intensity of the red contrasts sharply with the more muted tones of the costumes. White can symbolize purity or madness, which is particularly poignant considering Lady Macbeth's complex character arc.

# **Production Design Guidelines** ✏️

Consider all that was discussed when designing your production: color, mood, textures, spaces/places, etc.

Production design should include:

o Set and costume designs based on your opera adaptation pitch
o At least 3 elements of design in your work

# Production Design Examples ✏️

**Act III, Scene 2 - Macbeth visits the witches**



*Macbeth*, Glimmerglass Festival (photo: courtesy of Glimmerglass Festival)

*Macbeth*, Kentucky Opera (photo: courtesy of Kentucky Opera)

# Production Design Examples ✏️



Set design blends modern architecture with traditional Shakespearean elements, creating a fusion of past and present. It reflects the timelessness of Macbeth's themes of ambition, power, and tragedy.

Images generated using AI



Costume design inspired by Macbeth's dark themes with a futuristic Shakespearean twist. It captures a sleek, dramatic, powerful, and sophisticated vibe using leather and rich, dark colors.

# **Production Design Questionnaire** ✎

What are the reasons behind your choices? Are your choices based on the music, story, or libretto, and/or a combination of these?

How are you visually representing the time and location?

How are you visually communicating mood and emotion?

# Present 🎭

# **Reflection**

Share thoughts on the production design process.

How has your experience with adapting a story visually change your perspective on storytelling or your approach to developing ideas?