

## THE MACBETH CURSE

*Macbeth* has been considered unlucky since its very first production – perhaps because the text supposedly contains an actual witches’ incantation: the famous “Double, double, toil and trouble; / Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.” At any rate, the play is notorious for the superstitions surrounding it – so much so that director Des McAnuff began rehearsals for the 1983 Stratford Festival production with an exorcism! It is true that some productions of the play have been marred by fatal or near-fatal incidents. Laurence Olivier was nearly killed while playing Macbeth at the Old Vic in 1937, while in 1942, four people associated with John Gielgud’s production died – including two of the actresses playing witches. Most theatre people – even those who are not normally superstitious – observe the rituals that have arisen as a result of the play’s reputation. It is considered bad luck, for instance, to mention the title or quote from the play inside a theatre. Actors and staff call it “the Scottish play,” “that play” or “Mackers.” Macbeth and his wife are referred to as “the Scottish couple.” If you break these rules, you are supposed to leave the room, turn around three times, reenter and swear in order to placate the curse.

