National Theatre MACBETH programme notes for Act 2

Saturday 20th October 2018 at 2.30 pm

Welcome back Ladies and Gentlemen My name is Penny and I will be describing Act 2 of this National Theatre production of Macbeth for you. Act 2 last for 50 minutes.

In Act 2 we are introduced to two new characters - The Doctor, wearing a white coat, is brought in by the gentlewoman to assess Lady Macbeth’s declining sanity, and a character known only as ‘The Boy’ who is the young son of Lord and Lady Macduff.

The sets include those already seen in Act 1 with the additional scenes and sets described below.

Macbeth is haunted by the ghostly apparitions of his murder victims. Clothed in red jackets, they have messy hair with hollow eyed masks on the back of their heads. The severed head of the Thane of Fife, dolls on strings to represent the slaughtered babies, Banquo bathed in a green light- his head dripping blood, and five tall trees from Birnam wood advancing on Dunsinane.

The set changes to Macbeth talking to the Porter in front of a long, black ruched and shiny curtain which nearly fills the width of the stage. The curtain then rises to reveal the corner of the parlour in Lady Macduff’s castle. In the room are a pair of upholstered dining chairs on a Turkish style carpet with a large suitcase on the floor, from which emerges… The Boy, he is wearing turquoise tracksuit trousers and a beige jumper. He cuddles a bear soft toy. Lady Macduff wears a brown, midi length paisley pattern dress.

The sloping stage rotates to reveal Malcolm and Lord Macduff in their English sanctuary. Malcolm is wearing jeans, a white shirt and a short black waistcoat. Macduff is wearing dark jeans and a short sleeved grey T shirt. The room has a big pale leather chesterfield sofa, a long low table on which is a tray containing a decanter and shot glasses. A large map is unfurled on the floor. At the rear of the room we see the backs of two soldiers in pale camouflage combat uniforms wearing helmets. As this scene ends we see in the dark, Lady Macbeth emerging wearing pale pyjamas, to riffle through a basket of clothes, outside her room the Gentlewoman and the Doctor debate her health. Macbeth addresses us, the walls then rotate to reveal the interior of her chamber. He holds his wife in a bleak, cell like room which is smeared with blood. The final scene takes place on Dunsinane Hill.