



e-Luminations: Macbeth
Director Gale Edwards

Internationally acclaimed Gale Edwards has directed a significant portion of Shakespeare's canon as well as contemporary plays, musicals and operas on three continents—from London's West End and the Royal Shakespeare Company to Opera Australia to Broadway and Washington D.C.'s Shakespeare Theatre Company.

In the past few years, she has directed some of the bloodiest plays of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, including Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Titus Andronicus*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*. *Macbeth* in 2009 will mark her debut at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Comparing her recent work on *Titus Andronicus* at the Shakespeare Theatre to her ideas about *Macbeth*, Edwards said last year, "*Titus* is a terrifying play. It is a bloodbath; it's different from *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* is an exploration of the interior landscape of a man's mind. It's about a man who makes certain choices (and *why* he makes those choices) between good and evil. The universal human struggle."

Edwards' vision of the production is rooted in a modern, urban context. She is interested in examining violence: how we as a culture are desensitized to it by it, and how the experience of a country at war shapes and colors our lives.

"The play starts in war and ends in war," she said. "In the battlefield there are no rules. All the systems we've put in place to be moral beings don't count there. But where does the battlefield end and civilized society begin?"

Tied up in this world of violence are themes of ambition and choice. Edwards sees *Macbeth* as a man actively choosing his own destiny and not a puppet manipulated by the witches or Lady *Macbeth*. "The witches give *Macbeth* permission—or license—to act upon his secret desires."

Edwards notes that her biggest challenge in tackling *Macbeth* is the heart of the play itself: "Why is it mythological?" she asks. "Why is it the iconographic play everyone associates with Shakespeare? For 20 years I've wanted to direct this play and to have the opportunity to try to solve some of its mysteries."

—Kate McConnell

Reprinted from OSF's 2009 Illuminations, a 64-page guide to the season's plays. For more information, or to buy the full Illuminations, [click here](#). Members at the Donor level and above and teachers who bring a school group to OSF receive a free copy of Illuminations.