

GIUSEPPE VERDI'S *MACBETH* – PART II.

JÚLIA KÖPECZI-KIRKÓSA¹

SUMMARY. In part two, we continue the analysis of one of Verdi's most complex operas - *Macbeth*, and try to immerse ourselves in the creative genius of the composer, who has managed to utterly as well as beautifully marry music and drama to shed some light on the intricacies of the human spirit.

Keywords: drama, music, *Macbeth*, psyche, guilt.

Macbeth develops a highly complex dramatic plot. We can easily distinguish between three different narrative threads – one of the witches, which, by way of their predictions aid in the development of the monstrous characters; another one that follows the perpetuation of the Duncan dynasty and finally a third one, which concentrates on the relationship between *Macbeth* and Banquo. The conflict of the work is built on two levels, an interior one – of a mind sickened by the pursuit of absolute power, and an exterior one – of the way in which the hero chases after the fulfilment of his dreams toward achieving that power. Not linking the two levels would mean not determining the true realm of causality. How does *Macbeth* evolve? He follows the path predicted by the Witches to the letter, starting from the successive murders of his enemies, up until the final prophecy, that he will never “*vanquish'd be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him*”². This man is starved for power and he exhibits the behaviour of a fanatic. He embodies the cruelty, the mercilessness, the thirst for power, the reconciliation with his fate, insensitivity, as well as a bizarre behaviour (towards all of this) in the face of death. All these traits are defined during the unravelling of the tragedy, constructing, outlining the dark image of the human existence. *Macbeth* is dominated by larger than life ambitions; still this is not a harmful thing in itself as long as they are exhibited in the normal realm. However, the boundaries of this realm were surpassed. There is a major universal shift between the actions carried out for honour and glory – in service of saving an entire kingdom – and the murder of the king. His motive? The ambition of becoming the first. Why does *Macbeth* keep killing innocent women and children? This is because of the same ambition of staying on the first place.

¹ Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Reformed Theology, Musical Pedagogy Department, RO-400174 Cluj-Napoca, Horea str. 7. E-mail: kir_kor_sah@yahoo.com

² Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, Act IV. scene I

The hideous behaviours that are strange to the human norm will lead him toward his own death. Fully aware and resigned with his fate, he wanders amidst troubled apparitions while following the same path of self-destruction.

Lady Macbeth is the wife of a high-ranking nobleman, a nobleman who has lived a life of honour as well as military success. In a paradoxical fashion, precisely the short gap between their social position and that of the king's creates absolute power syndrome. More than that, her husband of Lady Macbeth thus becomes obsessed by this dream. Her behaviour alters, her womanly soul changes, cruelty takes the place of tenderness, iciness that of warmth, while her smile is replaced by the sight of blood. A de-feminization process is triggered by this obsession, giving birth to a monstrous conduct.

The absolute power becomes an ideal as well as a lifestyle. After achieving this power, the burden of the murders committed crushes her. She will eventually give in, for her true womanly essence cannot be modified.

After killing Duncan in his sleep and thus achieving their dream to take the throne, Macbeth and his Lady are obsessively haunted by the thought according to which the sons of the victim will return to avenge their father. This obsession takes over their entire behaviour. They see only enemies around them, and as a result, murder becomes a means to remove peril, an instrument to protect their daily existence. The feeling of despair that overcomes them is a sickness of the minds and souls that are ruined by ambition.

By way of transposing the work of Shakespeare into music, Verdi tries to show that his own art is able to rise to the level of such a masterpiece.

With Macbeth, Verdi overcomes his usual modesty in saying that his music rises to the level of one of the greatest tragedies ever written. Through Macbeth, not only Verdi's mature period as a composer, but also a new era in the history of opera begins. Opera, as a costumed concert meant to serve the art of the singer before all others, is visibly superseded in the middle of the 19th century, for lyrical theatre is about to take its place. Verdi accomplishes a synthesis between the metaphysic English tragedy and the Italian *belcanto* opera, which although has somewhat adapted to the requirements of the time, did not maintain its own characteristic traits and prestige. The composer does not intend to invent his craft, but merely to discover the musical equivalent of Shakespeare; still, by chance, his compositional technique expands, his style becomes lithe, and innovation springs inherently out of this creation.

Fascinated by Shakespeare from a young age, Verdi had worked passionately on Macbeth, writing the prose libretto himself, dividing it into acts and scenes, and only then turning it over to Piave for versification. In the last months of 1846, the composer is already fully absorbed by his new work, and other than the arias, he manages to finish two whole acts by Christmas. Verdi worked daily on the opera; starting at eight o'clock in the morning and usually finishing at midnight. He intended to construct the entire musical frame of the story, so that he could later depict each character by way of their melodic line. By the end of January 1847, he will be finishing the final two acts, and he will need no more than 15 days to orchestrate the work.

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With *Macbeth*, Verdi raised entirely new questions for the Italian opera of the time. The usual love story is omitted, and the experience of musically depicting the spiritual life of the individual is revealed, thus achieving a first step toward the creation of the musical psychological drama. For Verdi, the principal character is not Macbeth as for Shakespeare – the character of who is noticeably simplified - but that of Lady Macbeth, the woman who incites her husband to commit treacherous crimes.

Ex. 1

*If it were done when 'tis done, then 'were well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.*³

Ex. 2



The words put by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*'s mouth are the key to the ideological content of the tragedy, the beginning of the punishment is concealed precisely in the crime itself. The main new trait of the opera is the newly appointed role of the *recitativo*, musical declamation, which makes up episodes of equal importance as the scenes between Lady Macbeth and her husband in act I as well as the sleepwalking scene. Verdi will make use of this particular technique to accomplish a distinct dramatic force.

He writes to Cammarano⁴: "*Bear in mind the fact that the opera has two main scenes. If they get lost, the entire opera will crumble, for these scenes must not be sung, but acted and declaimed with a very sombre and wispy voice, without which no definitive impression can be made.*"⁵

³ Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, Act 1, scene VII.

⁴ Cammarano, Salvatore (1801-1852); Italian librettist and playwright.

⁵ Morazzoni, G., *Lettere inedite di G. Verdi*, Milano, Scola, 1929

As a conclusion, the composer wants the singers to only use half of their voices, emphasizing only some phrases by way of a mysterious whisper. The orchestra will be given a new purpose in this opera, for they take an active part in the drama that illustrates the different states of mind of the characters. The role of the orchestra is pivotal in certain psychologically essential moments, the composer making use of the plasticity of the orchestral tones throughout the opera.

We can easily notice the general atmosphere of a scene depicted by the orchestra; the quiet silence of the night as well as the theatrical illustration of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. Full of emotion and passionate in its tempo at times, the orchestra receives a Beethoven-like energy.

The connection to Beethoven's music is even more evident in a series of musical episodes in the first act, the final Appassionata scene, as well as the sextet in the same act.

Seeking dramatic expressivity, Verdi enriches his harmonic language, showing signs of a remarkable psychological instinct. We can already identify some of the germs of future nightmares in the short musical episode from the first act.

Ex. 3

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of two systems. The first system is a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The piano part features a series of chords and a melodic line in the right hand, with dynamics markings of *p* and *pp*. The second system includes a vocal line with the instruction *sempre sotto voce* above it. The lyrics are: "Re - gna il son - no su tut - ti Oh qual la - men - te!". Below the vocal line is the piano accompaniment, which includes a *lento* section marked *pp* and *lamentoso*, and another *pp* section.

This is an essential moment in the dramaturgy of the opera. Verdi bestows the same implication to this musical fragment, as did Shakespeare to the words of the murdering Macbeth.

*Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,--⁶*

⁶ Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene II
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The composer finds the rhythmic-intonation musical formula of the prophecy in act I to be impressive, a solemn hymn tempo, accompanied by a hallucination-like, dead third movement.

Ex. 4

Andante sostenuto

Intia vrăjitoare: (profetic) *A doua vrăjitoare*

Sal - ve, o Mac - bet - to, di Gla - mis si re! Sal - ve, o Mac - bet to,

A treia vrăjitoare

di Cău - dor si - re! Sal ve, o Mac - bet - to, di Sco - zia - re!

In the second act, Verdi resorts to other musically dramatic means to convey the sinister facet of Lady Macbeth's toast, a toast held in the honour of Banquo, who has just been murdered. Lady Macbeth's *Brindisi* could have had the unique quality of several other toast songs, if it weren't for the harsh accents which sharpened the melody, the pause in the musical material as well as the sudden shifts from *pp* to *ff*.

Ex. 5

Brillante

Si col - mi il ca - li - ce di vi - noe -

pp

con forza *marcato*

- let - to, na - sca il di - let - to muo - ja il do - lor

The toast has an infernal, grotesque nuance to it, and it becomes dreadful when it is taken over after the appearance of Banquo's spectre at the feast. The orchestra illustrates this by way of the descending semitone passage of the bassoon.

We have to especially stress the role of the short musical motifs present within the orchestral score of the opera, characteristic for Verdi's later works. For instance, for Lady Macbeth's character he uses the descending minor second interval in order to give the impression of a painful sigh, an element continuously used in the sleepwalking scene in the fourth act.

Ex. 6

Andante assai sostenuto

Ex. 7

Andante sostenuto soprani

D'or - fa - nel - lie di pian - gen ti

ppp dolente

Verdi, being a genuine composer whose works were going to be performed on stage, knew and counted on the entire complex array of musical as well as theatrical means of expression. He himself had personally ordered the costume sketches for the Macbeth premiere from London, and intensely corresponded with the La Pergola Theater in Milan, describing the era of King Duncan to the letter for the benefit of the Italian impresario of the theatre. Thoroughly studying every single detail of the stage setting, Verdi recommended that a *magical lantern* be used on stage, also giving precise instructions regarding the appearance of the murdered Banquo's spectre: "*Draped in a smoky fabric, with dishevelled hair, he must have visible wounds on his neck; I have gathered all this information from London, where this tragedy had been performed constantly well over the past two hundred years.*"⁷

⁷ Hussey, Dyneley, *Verdi*, London, New York, 1948, p. 53-54

After finishing the score in February 1847, Verdi left for Florence, actively taking part in the rehearsals, giving precise instructions regarding the cast, for he wished for the supporting roles to be also sung by good singers, since the Macbeth score, and especially the ensemble parts in this regard needed skilful singers. “*The singers, says Verdi, must be able to sing but also to act, the time has come to relinquish some of these types of concessions.*”⁸

The composer demanded severe discipline and expected blind submission. The scene and duet of the spouses was rehearsed over 150 times, and still, even on the night of the premiere, the audience had to wait for the performance to begin, for Verdi himself was rehearsing that crucial moment of the opera with the singers of that evening. It is a well-known fact that he awarded realistic acting the same importance as he did to smart singing.

The premiere of Macbeth had enormous success, was very well received by the press, while the new techniques used for the orchestra as well as the expressivity of the declamation were greatly appreciated. As a rarity, even Verdi himself was content of his work.

Around the 1848 revolution, the premiere itself was considered a very important social event. Animated by the idea of liberation, the Spanish tenor Palma, who played Macduff, sang “*La patria tradita*”⁹ with such colossal passion, that the entire audience joined him in an impressive choir, a manifestation that could only be stopped by the intervention of the Austrian troops.

Synopsis

ACT 1

Scene 1: A Heath

Groups of witches gather in a wood beside a battlefield. The victorious generals Macbeth and Banquo enter. The witches hail Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and king "hereafter." Banquo is greeted as the founder of a great line of future kings. The witches vanish, and messengers from the king appear naming Macbeth Thane of Cawdor.

Scene 2: Macbeth's Castle

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband telling of the encounter with the witches. She is determined to propel Macbeth to the throne.

[Revised version only: *Vieni! t'affretta!* - "*Come! Hurry!*"].

Lady Macbeth is advised that King Duncan will stay in the castle that night; she is determined to see him killed (*Or tutti, sorgete* - "*Arise now, all you ministers of hell!*"). When Macbeth returns she urges him to take the opportunity to kill the King. The King and the nobles arrive and Macbeth is emboldened to

⁸ Hussey, Dyneley, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁹ “*Our country betrayed*”

carry out the murder (*Mi si affaccia un pugnale? - "Is this a dagger which I see before me?"*), but afterwards is filled with horror. Disgusted at his cowardice, Lady Macbeth completes the crime, incriminating the sleeping guards by smearing them with Duncan's blood and planting on them Macbeth's dagger. The murder is discovered by Macduff. A chorus calls on God to avenge the killing (*Schiudi, inferno, . . - "Open wide thy gaping maw, O Hell"*).

ACT 2

Scene 1: A Room in the Castle

Macbeth is now king, but disturbed by the prophecy that Banquo, not he, will found a great royal line. To prevent this he tells his wife that he will have both Banquo and his son murdered as they come to a banquet.

[Revised version only: *In her aria, La luce langue - "The light fades"*, Lady Macbeth exults in the powers of darkness]

Scene 2: Outside the Castle

A gang of murderers lie in wait. Banquo is apprehensive (*Come dal ciel precipita - "O, how the darkness falls from heaven"*). He is caught, but enables his son Fleanzio to escape.

Scene 3: A Dining Hall in the Castle

Macbeth receives the guests and Lady Macbeth sings a brindisi (*Si colmi il calice - "Fill up the cup"*). The assassination is reported to Macbeth, but when he returns to the table the ghost of Banquo is sitting in his place. Macbeth raves at the ghost and the horrified guests believe he has gone mad. The banquet ends abruptly with their hurried, frightened departure.

ACT 3

The Witches' Cave

The witches gather around a cauldron in a dark cave. Macbeth enters and they conjure up three apparitions for him. The first advises him to beware of Macduff. The second tells him that he cannot be harmed by a man '*born of woman*'. The third that he cannot be conquered until Birnam Wood marches against him. (*Macbeth: O lieto augurio - "O, happy augury! No wood has ever moved by magic power"*)

Macbeth is then shown the ghost of Banquo and his descendants, eight future Kings of Scotland, verifying the original prophecy. (*Macbeth: Fuggi regal fantasima - "Begone, royal phantom that reminds me of Banquo"*). He collapses, but regains consciousness in the castle.

[Original version: The act ends with Macbeth recovering and resolving to assert his authority: *Vada in fiamme, e in polve cada - "Macduff's lofty stronghold shall / Be set fire...."*.]

A herald announces the arrival of the Queen. Macbeth tells his wife of his encounter with the witches and they resolve to track down and kill Banquo's son and Macduff's family (Duet: *Ora di morte e di vendetta* - "*Hour of death and of vengeance*").

ACT 4

Scene 1: Near the Border between England and Scotland

Scottish refugees stand near the English border (Chorus: *Patria oppressa* - "*Down-trodden country*")

[Original version: While each version uses the same libretto, the music of this chorus is different. It begins with a less ominous, much shorter orchestral introduction and is sung straight through by the entire chorus compared to the later version's division of the music into sections for the male and female members, and then they are unite towards the end. The revised version is two minutes longer than the original.]

In the distance lies Birnam Wood. Macduff is determined to avenge the deaths of his wife and children at the hands of the tyrant (*Ah, la paterna mano* - "*Ah, the paternal hand*"). He is joined by Malcolm, the son of King Duncan, and the English army. Malcolm orders each soldier to cut a branch from a tree in Birnam Wood and carry it as they attack Macbeth's army. They are determined to liberate Scotland from tyranny (Chorus: *La patria tradita* - "*Our country betrayed*").

Scene 2: Macbeth's Castle

A doctor and a servant observe the Queen as she walks in her sleep, wringing her hands and attempting to clean them of blood (*Una macchia è qui tuttora!* - "*Yet here's a spot*").

Scene 3: The Battlefield

Macbeth has learned that an army is advancing against him but is reassured by remembering the words of the apparitions (*Pietà, rispetto, amore* - "*Compassion, honour, love*"). He receives the news of the Queen's death with indifference. Rallying his troops, he learns that Birnam Wood has indeed come to his castle. The battle is joined.

[Ending of the original version:] Macduff pursues and fights Macbeth who falls. He tells Macbeth that he was not "born of woman" but "ripped" from his mother's womb. Fighting continues. Mortally wounded, Macbeth, in a final aria - *Mal per me che m'affidai* - "*Trusting in the prophecies of Hell*" - proclaims that trusting in the prophecies of hell caused his downfall. He dies on stage, while Macduff's men proclaim Macduff to be the new King.

Macduff pursues and fights Macbeth who falls wounded. He tells Macbeth that he was not "born of woman" but "ripped" from his mother's womb. Macbeth responds in anguish (*Cielo!* - "*Heaven*") and the two continue fighting, and then disappear from view. Macduff returns indicating to his men that he

has killed Macbeth. The scene ends with a hymn to victory sung by bards, soldiers, and Scottish women (*Salva, o re!* - "Hail, oh King!").

The facts presented by this drama can be somewhat traced back to history, for there really was a tyrannical and cruel king in the 11th century Scotland, named Macbeth.

Nevertheless, the focus rests upon the deep psychological study which organically intertwines with the analysis of historic facts, and that leads to an impressive moral as well as political lesson. If in order to create a tragic atmosphere the author resorts to minimal means – storm, witches - what truly impresses the audience and raises its interest will be the journey of the hero. With the character of Macbeth, Shakespeare will illustrate how a man who possesses actual positive qualities is perverted within the deepest parts of his soul by great vices, vanity, and hunger for absolute power. This leads him to breach his obligations, his own vows of allegiance, even the holy obligation of hospitality and commit the murder that will ensure him the throne. We are witnessing the painful tormenting of his soul, torn between his ambitions and obligations. The path that leads Macbeth from his initial vague aspirations to the heinous crime is one, which is depicted in the most marvellous manner. We observe extremely powerful moments within the drama, where Macbeth is tormented by the idea of the crime in such a way, that he develops frightening hallucinations, which materialize this inner turmoil along especially with the remorse felt about the murder he had committed.

Fig. 1



Felice Varesi (*Macbeth*)

Shakespeare allows us to witness Lady Macbeth's dark soul, in the same manner in which he analyzes the different states of mind Macbeth is going through. Lady Macbeth has a much more unyielding personality in contrast with her husband, for her ambition is not in any way controlled by a sense of responsibility or honour. She jostles Macbeth to murder, attempts to support him when he is tortured by remorse, but eventually, she cannot escape 'moral sanctions' either.

Here lies the profound meaning of this works: she dramatizes that any crime is inevitably followed by punishment and that the most severe sanction is remorse. This tormenting remorse will be the one to lead Lady Macbeth to suicide. Macbeth also receives his punishment. He is a hideous tyrant, who can only be compared with Richard the Third, and whose moments of hesitation and remorse cannot be expected to lessen the aversion felt by the audience toward him. However, this character has that certain physical courage that makes him fearlessly confront any danger put before him, and which stands relentless – being born out of his inhuman pride – even in the face of death.

The depth of the psychological analysis makes *Macbeth* into a *tragedy of consciousness*, making it one of the most powerful Shakespearean dramas, in which the tragic naturally intertwines with the grotesque and numerous performance elements appear to enhance the psychological drama.

Fig. 2



**1952 – Teatro alla Scala, Milan; Director: Carl Ebert;
Costumes and directions: Nicola Benois**

Musical Characterization of Lady Macbeth

The musical motifs that accompany Lady Macbeth are – similarly to Macbeth's musical motifs – unitary. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they are monotone, quite the contrary; they are different by way of the traits they portray in depicting the character, but also in nuance or divergent aspects. As a definitive characteristic of Lady Macbeth's melodic motif, we would like to mention the extensive passages as well as large intervals. Unlike the Shakespearean drama, Verdi gives a greater importance to the female character, letting her sometimes to take over the "reins" of the action, both musically as well as from the point of view of the storyline.

Large intervals represent the basis of the melody in all four arias of Lady Macbeth, suggesting the iciness as well as ambition with which she strives toward her goal, determined not to let anything to interfere with her thoroughly planned scheme.

Verdi named the sleepwalking scene 'scena' and not "aria," for he wanted to emphasize the great importance of the dramaturgical facet alongside the carefully constructed melodic line. The actual melody of the sleepwalking scene is constituted by a number of recitativos escorted by the sombre accompaniment of the orchestra. This accompaniment also plays an important role in the scene; we are mainly referring to the introductory segment (ritornello), which can be heard in the prologue as well, by way of which the composer wants perhaps to reveal the other facet of Lady Macbeth. This lyrical, fantastic depiction would have aimed to underscore the fact that there can also be lyricism, emotion, as well as humanity within the character. Even if Verdi remains true to the original Shakespearean drama, this sensitive, lyrical approach to Lady Macbeth reveals the different idea that the composer had regarding this particular character.

Lady Macbeth's farewell song is exquisite. Verdi, by way of the unique atmosphere he creates, forgives his heroine, absolves her from her sins, forgives her evil deeds, wipes all the blood off her hands and makes her go through the catharsis of madness, that releases her from her worldly sins. Thus remains only one of the most beautiful melodies the composer has ever written, the music that accompanies Lady Macbeth on her last appearance on stage.

Personal Impressions

What could we add about the Shakespearean heroine that has never been said before? On the other hand, perhaps we should call her an *anti-heroine*...

This character commits the most heinous, cruel crimes in the history of drama and opera. Nevertheless, is an absolutely fascinating role – if we are in fact talking about the *role* of Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, the opera; a role which initiates one in the underbelly of the morbid, into the dark side of the human psyche, a role that truly depicts the extreme one could arrive to when motivated by the achievement of absolute power. We find the two distinct approaches regarding Lady Macbeth to be fascinating. While Shakespeare extrapolates upon the methods by which the human psyche is affected by personal ambitions, Verdi makes the character his own by awarding it a human side, giving her a 'loophole' in the face of moral judgment through the sleepwalking scene. Verdi's character, which nevertheless keeps all the traits of the original Shakespearean one, is therefore presented to us in a new light, as the composer depicts her evolution in a way that we cannot help but feel compassion toward her by the end of the opera.

I often wonder about the reasons for which Verdi decided only to 'absolve' Lady Macbeth from guilt. Did he perhaps consider that the audience would have more compassion toward her – since she is a woman? Or could it be that in his vision a woman's conscience cannot stay dormant forever?

I have asked myself many questions in the process of preparing this role, since this is that sort of role that is highly psychological and dramatic that would drain one physically, mentally, as well as emotionally during the three hours of performance. Even if one is aware of the fact that Lady Macbeth is nothing more than a character, one cannot help but feel the effects of wear and tear reliving the storyline every night.

From a vocal standpoint, Lady Macbeth is a very difficult role, a role that contains four arias – unheard of at any of Verdi's leading ladies. The interesting fact is that although it is highly engages one vocally and has a great range, with large musical phrases, the vocal emission itself does not have to be a perfect one. Verdi himself had asked to the first Lady Macbeth, Marianna Barbieri-Nini, to mask her voice in such a way that it would sound more grotesque than bright, clear. The role also entails some difficulties from the point of view of dramatic intention, consequently making Lady Macbeth to be one of the most complex roles imaginable, for a hidden motive lies behind every spoken, the anticipation of the next petty move toward absolute power resides underneath every thought. Initially it may seem overwhelming having to take into account every single indication – both the ones within the score, put there by the composer himself to emphasize certain musical and interpretational elements, as well as those given by the director – however, eventually one gets to the conclusion that one is able to achieve the main goal, that is to 'reside' in the penumbra of the human psyche throughout the performance. It is also incredible the amount of attention required by such a role, bearing in mind that Lady Macbeth is present in most of the scenes of the opera, being sort of the 'engine' of this couple 'from hell', the one who makes Macbeth continue the evil plan well after the execution of the first murder. Since Lady Macbeth initiates all the actions of this infernal duo, her role is also essential in their later downfall.

Verdi's music – vocally dramatic – is incredibly fascinating, rich as it already brings forth the gesture, mimicking required authentically depicting the dramatic situation, as well as coherently illustrating the text. We must also acknowledge the great contrast from a musical standpoint between the first three acts and the final act, with the sleepwalking scene. If so far the musical material was a dramatic one, the sleepwalking aria is reminiscent more of a declamation rather than actual singing. This aria, which I have sung in an original stage direction while I was coming down a flight of stairs, with my eyes looking straight in front, as I was to appear to be in a different world – represents to some extent the *memory flash* which recaps all the actions of the couple.

Another significant element within the profile of the main characters is the interesting ending, for after all the experiences they share, all the vile scheming they go through together, they still end up dying as well as repenting alone...

The national premiere of *Macbeth*, the opera, was held on the eve of May 8, 1994. My esteemed co-stars were, among others, Bancsov Károly - *Macbeth*; Hercz Péter – *Banquo*; Kiss Domokos - *Macduff*, in the direction of Kürthy András¹⁰, conducted by maestro Hary Béla.

Lady Macbeth is an especially beautiful role, as well as being *infernal*; a difficult role that gives equal satisfaction to the artist that lives for his/her craft.

(Translated by Köpeczi Juliánna Erika)

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¹⁰ Kürthy, András, world renowned opera director, was on the staff of La Scala of Milan, was one of Pavarotti's impresarios and organized many of the Three tenors concerts all over the world.