

Spin, Spit and Swear. The Curse of Macbeth.

Some sixty years ago television began its decimation of theatre and theatre going in this country.... Yet it did not kill it. Theatre, in London at least, still provides for the exigencies of the culture vulture. True, the West End does often seem to be over run by musicals derivative of 1980's Films, yet there are treasures still from



the National to the Fringe. Indeed the best place in the world to see Shakespeare is surely Southbank's Globe (Or Rome's identical Globe?). So Theatre's heart still beats for those that want it, thank God. Theatre can never really die. Television, Film, Computer Games don't happen *in the room* with you. Even if it's a bad play where an Actor fell off the stage... you were there when *it* happened. Long may Theatre reign, even if, sadly, it must be temporarily second fiddle to 1980's nostalgia guff. Theatre can't die but genres can.

Long after the apocalypse comes and the current world order dissolves, whether it be via climate change and, or war, there will be directors having breakdowns and actors sweating while an audience quietly fill a space in a nuclear dug out to be shown willingly nature's mirror.

One theatrical tradition however, that is regnant still, and that really should be asked politely to go forth and multiply, sooner rather than later, in this modern era of logic and reason.... Is that of theatrical curses.

Many theatricals still swear by them. And not just the "*Mad Actress with the horoscopes page*" types either. Oh, these absurdities range from whistling to ghosts via never wearing blue or green or why not any colour for that matter? They, (the eponymous and ludicrous "*they*"), say that if you whistle in a theatre a lighting rig will fall and kill you. Why? Because in the old days there were naval forms of communication in theatres via whistling from stage managers to techies up in the rafters. If you whistled and it happened to be the wrong type of whistle the techie might drop a heavy light directly onto your head at great speed. Why they would do this anyway is a mystery.

"But whistling has not been used for at least several decades?"

"But it's bad luck."

"Oh okay, excuse me while I try and scoop your brain back into *your* head."

Also of course every Theatre is supposed to be haunted. There was one such tale of a young actress working in a victorian melodrama at The Ida Mosley Theatre in Derbyshire.

"Don't leave me alone in my dressing room, I saw the ghost of Ida Mosley last night." Pleaded the actress.

"Ida Mosley's still alive, she's in on Tuesday." Came the reply.

"Oh well, it's someone who looks like her! I think she's jealous of my performance!"

Also of course it's bad luck to say good luck on opening nights. Why? Just is.

Or make up a theatre tale at your leisure of Johnny Actor, say, saying good luck to another Johnny Actor, only to see them drop dead, of paranoia probably, in the first act of Macbeth.

Ah, Macbeth. The King of Theatrical Superstition. Macbeth, when in a theatre MUST be referred to only as “The Scottish play”. And if ANYONE dares even whisper the name.... Macbeth, why they must leave the theatre, spin around three times (to the amusement of any witnesses one assumes), spit on the floor (to the disgust of said witnesses), swear (ditto), and then knock on the door and ask to be let back into the theatre.

This tradition probably derives from the fact that it was first produced in more naive times when many, indeed most people believed in, or at least the possibility of, a supernatural world. Therefore the witches spells could be real spells recreated right here and now on the stage! Well, it's 2013 now. Enough said.

Some theories say that it is more reasonable than that. People feared the play because of all the sword fighting and worried that actors might get hurt. Fear equals not even wanting to say the title! Stupid but... human? Hang on though, there's a lot more sword fighting in the history plays!

Many believe that it was during a production of Macbeth that the Globe Theatre (original) burnt down in 1613. No, that was Henry VIII.

And then we have the endless stories and interpretations of bad things happening in, oh, about a thousand past productions of Macbeth. They usually run something like, “In 1769, there was a production starring Sir Humphrey Sidebottom. Everything went wrong on the first night. Scenery fell over, wigs fell off. Banquo actually got a bit of a stab wound... off stage in the green room while making tea! Then one of the Witches vomited in Macbeth's helmet! Then the next day the whole cast died! Except Ernie who played the Porter. He moved to Crete and lived to be Ninety Seven.”

In the end it's harmless nonsense but let's at least have a *new* superstition once in a while. Perhaps that you may only refer to any Pinter play as “The play (pause) of pauses” Or that we must only call War Horse “The Equestrian Play” because the great God Epona, protector of horses, might get a bit upset.

