

Education Pack

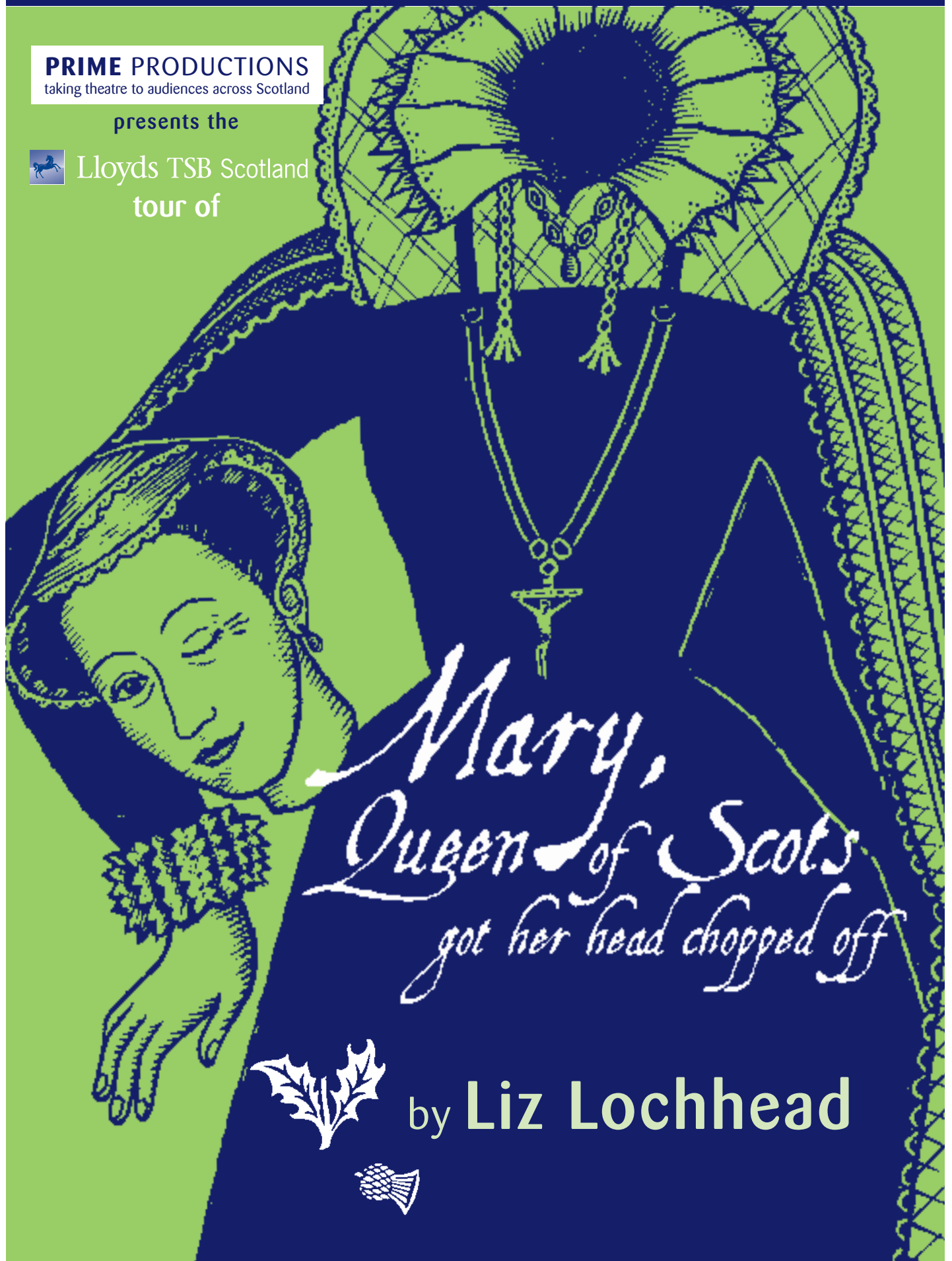
PRIME PRODUCTIONS

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presents the



Lloyds TSB Scotland
tour of



*Mary,
Queen of Scots
got her head chopped off*



by **Liz Lochhead**





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Introduction



“this powerful, poetic play... manages to convey the subtleties of feeling, the complex motivations, humour and pain that the history books leave out”

Robin Thornber, *The Guardian*

What do we really know about Mary Queen of Scots apart from the fact that she lost her head? Our image of her is so surrounded in stories and speculation, that the real woman is almost invisible. In this play Liz Lochhead presents us with her exploration of Mary but she makes it clear that this is only one version out of many possibilities.

The bare facts of Mary's life alone are intensely dramatic:

Queen of Scotland aged 9 months,

Queen of France aged 16,

Widowed aged 17,

Back ruling Scotland at 18,

Married again at 22,

Had a baby aged 23,

Widowed again aged 24,

Accused of murder aged 24,

Married again 3 months later,

Abdicated at 24,

Imprisoned in Loch Leven aged 24,

Escaped to England aged 25 where she spent the rest of her life under house arrest and was executed aged 44.

WHAT'S IN THIS PACK?

This pack has historical backgrounds on the characters who existed in real life. A timeline and family tree for Mary. It has interviews with the director and the author. Explorations of themes, language and style. It includes a new previously unpublished scene. It also reproduces texts by Mary, Lord Ruthven and Knox.

You are welcome to print out and photocopy any part of this pack for use in class.

Please let us have your comments on this pack or the production, using our feedback form on p 29 of this pack.



Outline Synopsis

*Mary,
Queen of Scots
got her head chopped off*

The play deals with a short but dramatic period in Mary's life from around the age of 18 when she returns to rule Scotland to the age of 25 when she abdicates. The action switches between Mary in Scotland and Elizabeth I in England.

The two Queens are looking for husbands. Elizabeth plots to marry Mary to Darnley, and against all opposition from her Scottish advisors, Mary does so.

In her absence Scotland has been turning Protestant, a practising Catholic Queen is an abomination to John Knox, a fiery church leader. Political plots on all sides threaten her rule.

Weak Darnley is encouraged to join a group who murder Riccio, Mary's beloved secretary. The deed is done in front of the Queen with the intention that she will miscarry the heir to the throne. The baby (James VI and I) is born safely.

Darnley is murdered and Mary briefly marries the Earl of Bothwell. She is forced to abdicate, leaves baby James behind to become King, and flees to England hoping for Elizabeth's protection. Elizabeth resists advice to execute Mary and keeps her prisoner for nearly twenty years but eventually Mary is killed.

Detailed Synopsis

SCENE BY SCENE



For more details of Mary's life before and after the action of the play please see *TIMELINE*.

ACT 1

Scene 1 SCOTLAND, WHIT LIKE? – La Corbie's scene-setting monologue about the state of Scotland. (Full text in this pack in section 20).

The play is commented on throughout by La Corbie, a crowlike character who exists both in the present day and the 16th century. Her observations are full of irony and malice.

Scene 2 THE SUITORS – It is soon after Mary's return to Scotland aged 18, after ten years at the French court where she was briefly Queen until her young husband died. In England, Elizabeth I has been Queen for 3 years and is just over ten years older than Mary.

Mary and Elizabeth consider their suitors. Mary, a catholic, seems keen to marry, Elizabeth is reluctant. Protestant Elizabeth wants to maintain her superiority over Mary and doesn't want her to marry well, especially not a catholic monarch. Mary declares that if only Elizabeth was man, then the perfect solution would be to marry each other.

Scene 3 QUEENS AND MAIDS – The two queens never meet and yet are mutually fascinated and constantly collect snippets of information about each other. They each consider their thoughts about marriage.

Scene 4 KNOX AND MARY – Mary meets John Knox, a leading radical Protestant who is determined to get rid of her and her religion. They argue, and Mary decides to remain a Catholic but not to interfere with the development of Protestantism. La Corbie warns her that he will always be a dangerous enemy.

Scene 5 REPRESSED LOVES – Elizabeth speaks to her maid about why she could never marry her true love, Dudley Earl of Leicester. It would be too scandalous because Dudley's wife died suspiciously. She would rather have power than a husband.

In a scene with rough mannered Bothwell, he and Mary are revealed to have a close teasing relationship, "Naeboddy talks to the Queen lik' that", marvels La Corbie,. Mary is both attracted and repulsed by him.

Elizabeth sends Darnley to Scotland, covertly suggesting that he should marry Mary, whilst apparently forbidding him to.

Scene 6 MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS'S PROGRESS AND JOHN KNOX'S SHAME – Mary captures the hearts of poor with her beauty and glamour. In a ranting speech Knox calls Mary the "hoor of Babylon" simultaneously revealing his lust for her.

Scene 7 DARNLEY AND A FEVER – Mary nurses a sick Darnley and they get to know each other better. Elizabeth is smugly delighted when she hears of their engagement.

Scene 8 A WEDDING – Mary and Darnley marry.

ACT 2

Scene 1 SIGNOR RICCIO, A FORTUNE, A BABY AND A BIG BABY – Three months after her wedding, Mary and her secretary David Riccio forge a document with Darnley's signature. Mary is pregnant and is starting to tire of her childish husband. She knows that if her baby is a boy then Darnley will never succeed her.

Scene 2 RUMPLEFYKE – Bessie, Mary's maid and Bothwell canoodle and gossip about Mary's relationships with Riccio and Darnley.

Scene 3 WHISPERS, RUMOURS, SOUCHS AND CHATTERS – Mary hears anti-Catholic rumours and mutterings against Riccio.

Scene 4 KNOX AND BOTHWELL – Bothwell speaks of a possible plot to overthrow Mary and her Catholicism and make Darnley King. He asks Knox to put a stop to it but Knox says he won't meddle with politics. Bothwell knows that Knox won't help because he wants to be rid of Mary. Bothwell not only wants to save Mary, he wants to stop Scotland being overrun by the English. Knox insinuates that he'd rather be ruled from England because at least their queen is Protestant.

Scene 5 MUMMERS AND MURDERERS – Mary is six months pregnant and in her private room with Bessie and Riccio. A drunken Darnley arrives with a group of mummers who perform the Masque of Salome which is full of veiled criticisms of Mary. The mummers stab Riccio to death.

Scene 6 SWEET BABY JAMES, AUNTIE ELIZABETH AND A SORER SICKBED FOR DARNLEY THIS TIME –

A jealous Elizabeth gets news of Mary's son and wonders whether he'll be her heir too. Mary and Darnley, appear to be reconciled, but Mary has fallen in love with Bothwell. Darnley is murdered and Mary and Bothwell are accused of it. Mary abdicates and escapes to England, Bothwell to Denmark. Baby James is now King of Scotland and the Earl of Moray rules as regent. Elizabeth is furious that Mary is now her responsibility, but refuses to sign her death warrant insisting that she'll have to be tricked into that final act. On the eve of her death Mary reminisces with Bessie. Corbie introduces Jock Thamson's Bairns.

Scene 7 JOCK THAMSON'S BAIRNS – the characters have become twentieth century children. Their games shadow the action of the play. Marie is teased about being a Catholic, Knoxxy is a loner terrified of girls, Hepburn (Bothwell) joins in but then rescues Marie. They then re-enact Mary's execution.

Timeline

Mary's age is in brackets.

8 December 1542 Mary is born at Linlithgow Palace.

13 December Father King James V dies.

9 September 1543 (Age 9 months) Mary is crowned Queen of Scotland. Her mother, Mary of Guise rules as regent.

January 1547 (Age 4) Henry VIII dies and the English crown passes to Edward VI

1548 (5) English troops are attacking Scotland. Henri II of France promises safety for Mary in return for her marriage to his son, Francois.

August 1548 (5) From Dumbarton Castle, Mary sails down the Clyde Estuary to France with her governess, the four Maries, three of her half-brothers and other children of the Scottish nobility. Six days later the fleet arrives at Roscoff in France.

March 1550 (8) Mary's mother travels to France to meet her for the last time.

July 1553 (10) Edward VI of England dies. Catholic Mary Tudor succeeds him.

24 April 1558 (15) Mary and Francois are married in Paris. A secret clause in their marriage contract means that Scotland will belong to France if Mary dies.

17 November 1558 (15) Mary Tudor dies. Elizabeth is crowned Queen of England.

September 1559 (16) The King of France, Henri II, dies in a jousting tournament and Francois is crowned King. Mary is Queen of France.

11 June 1560 (17) Mary's Mother, Marie of Guise dies in Edinburgh Castle.

5 December 1560 (17) Francois dies from an ear infection, Mary loses the French crown.

19 August 1561 (18) Mary returns to rule Scotland.

16 February 1565 (22) At Wemyss Castle Mary meets Darnley for the first time since her return to Scotland.

April 1565 (22) Mary nurses Darnley through a bout of measles. Noblemen Moray, Ruthven, Morton, Glencairn and Chatelherault sign a bond to prevent the Mary-Darnley marriage.

July 1565 (22) Mary agrees not to interfere in Scotland's religious matters. She asks the Pope for a special dispensation for her marriage to Darnley as they are blood relatives, but doesn't wait for an answer.

29 July 1565 (22) Mary and Darnley are married in the chapel of Holyrood Palace.

26 August 1565 (22) Mary sets out towards Stirling to confront Moray and the rebellious Lords. This is the start of the Chaseabout Raid.

8 October 1565 (22) Mary makes the Earl of Bothwell her lieutenant-general.

March 1566 (23) Darnley is estranged from Mary. For fear of reprisals, the Lords involved in the Chaseabout Raid and Darnley sign a bond with the object of upholding the Protestant faith and remove David Rizzio, Mary's Secretary. It will also recognise Darnley as King.

9 March 1566 (23) David Rizzio is savagely stabbed to death at Holyrood, in front of the heavily pregnant Mary by Patrick Ruthven, accompanied by Darnley and the Earl of Morton's men. Mary is detained at Holyrood while the Lords issue a proclamation in Darnley's name that the Chaseabout Raid rebels were pardoned.

12 March 1566 (23) With the help of Bothwell, Mary and Darnley escape to Dunbar Castle. She offers to pardon the perpetrators of the Chaseabout Raid but not those of the murder of Rizzio.

19 June 1566 (23) Mary's only child, James VI, is born in Edinburgh Castle.

August 1566 (23) Mary goes on a hunting trip to Traquair House with Darnley but sends the baby to Stirling for safety.

November 1566 (23) Mary's advisors suggest assassinating Darnley but she won't agree.

17 December 1566 (24) James VI is baptized at Stirling Chapel. Darnley does not attend the ceremony. The godparents are the King of France, the Duke of Savoy and Elizabeth I.

January 1567 (24) Darnley, probably suffering from syphilis, has moved to Glasgow. Mary visits him and persuades him to return to Edinburgh with her.

1 February 1567 (24) Mary and Darnley arrive in Edinburgh and Darnley stays at Kirk o'Field, for fear of contaminating the baby.

9 March 1567 (24) Mary attends one of her page's wedding at Holyrood but also spends some time with Darnley. At 10pm she remembers that she promised to attend the masque and leaves again. At about 2am an explosion destroys Kirk o'Field. Darnley and his servant are found naked and strangled in the orchard.

March 1567 (24) The Earl of Lennox, Darnley's father, accuses Bothwell of the murder.

12 April 1567 (24) Bothwell is tried for murder in Edinburgh. There are no witnesses and Bothwell is acquitted.

24 April 1567 (24) Mary visits her son at Stirling for the last time. On her way back to Edinburgh she is abducted by Bothwell and his men and taken to Dunbar Castle.

15 May 1567 (24) Mary and Bothwell are married in a Protestant ceremony and go to Borthwick Castle. Meanwhile, the Lords having once again turned against Bothwell organize an army to meet them on the way. Mary and Bothwell escape from Borthwick and move on to Dunbar.

15 June 1567 (24) Mary and Bothwell's troops confront the Lords at Carberry Hill. There is no battle but Mary agrees to follow the Lords on condition that they let Bothwell go. But the Lords break their promise and take her to the Lord Provost's House in Edinburgh and then to Lochleven Castle as their prisoner. Mary never sees Bothwell again.

24 June 1567 (24) Mary is forced to abdicate in favour of her son. Baby James VI is crowned and Moray, Mary's half-brother becomes regent.

16 May 1568 (25) Mary has escaped from prison in Lochleven. Disguised as an ordinary woman, she travels to England to plead with Elizabeth.

8 June 1568 (25) Elizabeth refuses to meet her.

October 1568 (25) Evidence (probably forged) is produced of Mary's guilt in Darnley's murder. She is remanded in custody and is moved around to various English castles.

June 1569 (26) Mary applies to the Pope for a divorce from Bothwell in order to marry the Duke of Norfolk.

July 1569 (26) Elizabeth discovers the marriage plot and sends Norfolk to the Tower in a rage.

August 1570 (27) Norfolk is released from the Tower.

January 1572 (29) Norfolk is tried for High Treason and executed in June.

1577 (34) There are plans to marry Mary to Philip of Spain's illegitimate brother, Don John of Austria but her marriage to Bothwell has still not been annulled. Mary makes a will in which she wishes her son James to marry a Spanish princess and convert to Catholicism.

April 1578 (35) Bothwell dies in his Danish prison. Don John of Austria dies six months later, and with him Mary's hopes of freedom.

Spring 1585 (42) The English Parliament enact the "Bond of Association", that states that Mary can be held responsible for any plot instigated in her name, whether she approves or even knows about it or not.

25 June 1586 (43) Mary is introduced via letter to Anthony Babington, young and zealous Catholic who plans to liberate her.

14 July 1586 (43) Babington sends Mary a letter in which he unwisely discloses the details of his plot, including "the dispatch of the usurping Competitor" (the assassination of Elizabeth).

17 July 1586 (43) Mary replies agreeing to all his plans. The letter is waylaid.

14 August 1586 (43) Babington is arrested and sent to the Tower. He confesses all on the 18th.

25 September 1586 (43) Mary is held at Fotheringhay Castle and tried for treason.

1st February 1587 (44) Elizabeth finally signs the Death Warrant.

8 February 1587 (44) Mary is executed in the Great Hall of Fotheringhay.

1603 Elizabeth dies.

1603 Mary's son becomes James I of England as well as James VI of Scotland He refers to it as the United Kingdom of Great Britain. But the parliaments and government remain separate.

1707 Act of Union, England and Scotland officially joined and ruled from London.



Mary's Family Trees



The = sign marks a marriage, with the | sign showing the children of that particular marriage underneath. Where one relative has been married more than once, the spouses are also numbered. The colour green shows the closest relation to Mary, Queen of Scots in each particular family tree.

Mary's French Relatives

Claud, Duke of Guise = Antoinette de Bourbon

Francis Duke of Guise. Louise. Charles Cardinal of Lorraine. Claud Duke of Aumale.
 Mary of Guise. Louis Bishop of Troyes. Antoinette Abbess of Faremoutiers. Francis Grand Prior General of the Galleys. Rene Marquis d'Elboeuf. Renee Abbess of St Peter.

1. Louis, Duke of Longueville = Mary of Guise = 2. James V of Scotland

Francis, Duke of Longueville. Louis (d.1537) James (d.1541). Robert (d.1541). **Mary, Queen of Scots**

Mary's Scottish Relatives

James IV of Scotland = Margaret Tudor

Janet Stewart, Lady Fleming (illegitimate) James V of Scotland

1. Princess Madeleine = James V of Scotland = 2. Mary of Guise

James (d.1541). Robert (d.1541) **Mary, Queen of Scots**

Illegitimate Children of James V:

John, Prior of Coldingham, Adam, Prior of Charter House, Robert, Prior of Whithorn
 Jean, Countess of Argyll, Margaret Stewart, James, Commendator of Melrose
 Lord James Stewart, Earl of Moray, James Stewart, Robert, Commendator of Holyrood

Mary's English Relatives

Henry VII of England = Elizabeth of York

1) Catherine of Aragon = Henry VIII of England Mary Margaret Tudor = James IV
 2) Anne Boleyn
 3) Jane Seymour*

Mary Tudor Elizabeth I Edward VI

Mary of Guise = James V of Scotland Lady Margaret Douglas
 =
 Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox

Mary, Queen of Scots = Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley
 James VI of Scotland and I of England

* Henry VIII had another 3 wives after Jane Seymour.



Characters

The nine characters in the play are played by 7 performers. Apart from Corbie, Bessie and Marian the main characters are all based on historical figures.

CORBIE

Corbie is an ambiguous creature. Part human, part bird, she seems to be immortal, living in the 16th Century and the present day, embodying the spirit of Scotland. She is the only character who speaks directly to the audience. She acts as a chorus and narrator commenting irreverently on the action. She is also used to make transitions between scenes.

MARY

Queen of Scots, aged between 18 and 25 during the main action of the play. Described by other characters as “only a silly spilte wee French Lassie” – Knox, “the Scotch bitch” – Elizabeth, “beautiful tall and fair and...Frenchified” – La Corbie, “Bit on the tall side... hair that reddish colour that makes the complexion sickly looking” – Elizabeth (who never met her). “It would be easy to portray Mary as not capable, silly and too emotional. But what’s much more interesting is Mary’s unsuccessful attempt to combine a warm, tolerant, emotional approach with political leadership. She doesn’t feel whole without a husband, which you could see as a weakness but it could be something that she’s right about. She makes all sorts of silly mistakes, but I would like to think that she fails because she is trying to do something very hard. Elizabeth fails in other ways but maintains rule of her country. How do you marry being a complete human being – which a lot of women want to do – with being successful? It’s much more interesting to show someone trying their hardest to do it than to show someone who just wasn’t very good at it. She’s very bright and not a bad politician most of the time but she isn’t tough enough or able to make difficult decisions that hurt other people. She was very young, but so were a lot of kings and queens at the time.” *Benjamin Twist, Director*

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth I Queen of England was 9 years older than Mary, and had been ruling for 3 years by the time the play begins. Elizabeth was the daughter of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII. She was clever and very well educated and England prospered under her rule. Everyone was desperate to get Elizabeth married advantageously, but she refused every suitor. Some say it is because she loved Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who was married. Even after his wife’s suicide she would not marry him for fear of scandal. Elizabeth felt threatened

by Mary because she had a legitimate claim to the English throne and Elizabeth did not want England to revert to Catholicism. Mary also had strong ties to France which was England’s fiercest enemy.”

“Elizabeth, aware that Mary has had a child and therefore an heir, senses that Mary has won. Mary keeps on putting Elizabeth in difficult situations and forcing Elizabeth to do things she doesn’t want to do. Elizabeth finesses it in the end by saying “trick me trick me,” and in the end she’s more trapped than Mary because she’s desperately holding on to power at all costs.” *Benjamin Twist, Director*

JAMES HEPBURN O’BOTHWELL

During the action of the play he is aged about 28–30. Bothwell was a Protestant Lord but he had been a great supporter of Mary’s Catholic mother, Mary of Guise. He was very ambitious and many of the Scottish noblemen distrusted him. Although he was aristocratic he was described as rough, rowdy and arrogant. He was certainly involved in Darnley’s murder, although his trial for it fell apart.

“He frichtens me.” – Mary

DARNLEY

Aged between 19 and 22 during the play. Darnley was Mary’s Catholic cousin, a grandchild of Henry VIII, they had to apply for a Papal dispensation to get married. He was tall, handsome, vain, arrogant, self-centered, egotistical, and generally disliked.

“A handsome long lad” – Bothwell

KNOX

Theologian and outspoken leader of the reformation who had an enormous effect on Scotland. Fervently anti-Catholic and with a deep seated objection to female monarchs.

“Lukks like he’s juist back fae a funeral.” – Leezie

RICCIO

An Italian musician who Mary employed as her secretary, aged about 30 during the play.

“A humphit back’t wee puggy monkey o’ a man.” – Bessie

MARIAN

Elizabeth’s maid, played by the actress playing Mary.

BESSIE

Mary’s maid, played by the actress playing Elizabeth.

Historical Background

“a rich, fascinating play made out of history and imagination”

Jeffrey Wainwright, *The Independent*

Scotland had been at war with England on and off for decades. A great deal of this animosity was because Scotland had strong links with France (Mary's mother was French, Mary married the French Dauphin etc). France was England's bitterest enemy so it was vital to stop them getting a foothold in the north of Britain.

The animosity between England and Catholic France was increased by Henry VIII's rejection of the Catholic church. His daughter Mary Tudor forced England back into Catholicism, and was known as Bloody Mary because of the number of people she executed. The next Queen was Elizabeth who was crowned in 1558 and brought back Protestantism.

Meanwhile the whole of Europe was undergoing a religious revolution and alliances between nations and monarchs often rested on their religions.

Europeans had reached America in the 1400s and exploitation of the New World was making England very prosperous.

a brief selection of events in the 1500s

- 1501 First African slaves taken to the Caribbean
- 1508 Michelangelo starts to paint the Sistine Chapel
- 1520 Chocolate was introduced to Europe
- 1520 Sikhism established in India
- 1533 The Inca empire was conquered by Portugal
- 1536 Act of Union joins England and Wales
- 1539 Earliest use of flintlock guns
- 1541 First European “discovers” the Mississippi
- 1544 Georg Hartmann observes magnetism
- 1549 Catholicism briefly introduced to Japan
Violins invented
- 1558 Elizabeth I crowned
- 1560 First novel written in China
Pencils invented
- 1561 Mary returns to rule Scotland
- 1564 Birth of Shakespeare
- 1565 Spain takes over the Philippines
- 1570 Potatoes are introduced in Europe
- 1584 Walter Raleigh starts to colonise North America
- 1590 Janssen invents a microscope
- 1593 Galileo invents a thermometer

Themes

“The genius of it [the play] was that it made characteristically shrewd anatomisations of bigotry and rivalry. Sexism and power hunger, court intrigue and human psychology, all come to serve our contemporary understanding of history within ourselves.” Owen Dudley Edwards, *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies*

POWER AND GENDER

Can you be a woman and have it all? This question still hasn't been resolved today. Issues of gender and the shifting relations of power between men and women dominate the play.

The two queens in the play have to make impossible decisions. Elizabeth decides against marriage and is a successful monarch. Mary makes some unwise decisions about marriage and is forced to abdicate.

“They wanted to be women and they wanted to rule, they couldn't do both at the same time. Elizabeth renounced the feminine and Mary refused to renounce the feminine. I had no idea when I was writing the play, that it was such a powerful myth with such a stranglehold on us.” Liz Lochhead

Mary was the first female monarch in Scotland. Traditionally European countries had been ruled by a King whose wife then became Queen. To be a Queen a woman had to be a wife first. Teamwork was important, the king could remain aloof and unique, whilst his wife, being more accessible, could intercede with him on behalf of the people.

Women in the 16th century were legally owned by their husbands. Although Mary and Elizabeth were the anointed monarchs, they could have lost status by marrying and having to defer to their husbands. Although Mary allowed Darnley to be called king she refused to confer the Crown Matrimonial on him, because he would then have remained king after her death instead of the crown passing to her children. During the play she is infuriated because a coin is made with Darnley's name printed before hers.

POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP

The story of Mary's unsuccessful reign is contrasted with Elizabeth's successful reign. Mary's failure to lead and her acceptance of unreliable advice are the main factors in her downfall.

Political manipulation guides almost every character in the play, everyone is trying to gain or hold on to power and everyone is in danger of assassins or imprisonment. Even powerful Elizabeth cannot marry her lover because it might damage her politically.

Even after her imprisonment Mary was a magnet for conspiracy, the perfect focus for discontented Catholics who refused to conform to Elizabeth's Protestant rule.

As England became more powerful it was still in danger from its old enemy France. France had strong

connections with Scotland. France wanted Scotland because it made a perfect base for attacking England.

“the French King can straddle England with one foot in Calais, the other in Edinburgh, and piss down on us all Fire, Brimstone and poison...” *Elizabeth, Act 1 Sc 5*

RELIGION AND BIGOTRY

Religious issues are woven throughout the play. They were vitally important because religion was inextricably bound up with government and power.

Knox was a Scottish leader of the Reformation which revolutionised religion across Europe in the sixteenth century. The dominant religion had been Catholicism but reformers such as Luther (1483 – 1546) and Calvin (1509 – 64) asserted that religion was a personal matter between an individual and God, therefore the existence of the Pope as an intermediary between man and God was morally wrong. In particular the reformers did not believe that the Pope and priests could forgive sins. A simultaneous revolution in printing and literacy meant that people could read their own bibles without a priest. This helped to speed the reformation.

Protestantism imposed severe moral behaviour on its followers, Catholics were perceived to be immoral and licentious. In the play Knox represents the extremes of dour Protestantism and Mary the emotionality of Catholicism. Knox was adamant that God had decided women were unfit to rule.

Mary was raised a Catholic, but by the time she returned to Scotland to rule, the country was quickly changing to Protestantism. Mary was tolerant of Protestantism and promised not to interfere in Scotland's religion. Mary was attracted to Darnley because he was Catholic, but their son James was raised as a Protestant. Mary's third husband, Bothwell was Protestant and they were married in a Protestant ceremony.

Elizabeth was raised a Protestant. Her father Henry VIII embraced Protestantism because it allowed him to divorce inconvenient wives.

THE NATURE OF SCOTLAND

The play questions the nature of Scotland and what it has grown from. Corbie sets up this theme in her opening monologue. She describes a whole range of different Scotlands for the audience to identify with as it chooses. She suggests that the nature of Scotland is not fixed and is worth investigating. Just as the myths surrounding Mary are worth investigating.

Scotland is often compared unfavourably to England as a poor and backward country: **“the fat salmon of England compared to the skinny brown trout of Scotland”**, Elizabeth comparing herself to Mary as the more attractive bride.

“My kingdom. Alternately brutal and boring. And I canny mak sense o' it at a” Mary

“I hear it's a cold dire, rough place. Worse than Yorkshire” Elizabeth

“You can only write a contemporary play. It’s not in 16th century Scots, it’s in 20th century poetry.” Liz Lochhead

Lochhead’s play is not a straightforward historical drama. She shows us a range of events based in fact but not always true. She uses all sorts of language both anachronistic and modern, poetic and blunt. From scene to scene the performance style shifts from naturalistic to mime, dance, song and pageantry.

This rich mixture asks the audience to draw their own conclusions about the characters, about Scotland, about bigotry, and about the place of powerful women in history.

This play requires the most non-naturalistic performance style of Lochhead’s work. It was commissioned by Communicado theatre company to mark the 400th anniversary of Mary’s death. She says she tried to write the “perfect Communicado play” by including lots of songs, dance pieces and character swapping, which were very much in Communicado’s energetic style of heightened theatricality.

“The Lochhead achievement requires a nerve to raise belly laughs in the midst of tragedy and deepen audience identification with tragedy in the process.”

Owen Dudley Edward, *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies*

IS IT BRECHTIAN?

“People say it’s Brechtian but it’s much more romantic. I probably took things from Brecht, but I was more influenced by other Scottish theatre companies, Wildcat and 7:84, who I suppose are Brechtian. I just used a style that was a good way of linking a show that’s epic and belts through time and space. Even Shakespeare was quite Brechtian at times, Greek drama was Brechtian. When you’re doing certain types of storytelling there are things that people always associate with Brecht, but he wasn’t the first and he won’t be the last.” Liz Lochhead

“Communicado, who first performed it, were greatly influenced by European theatre and they created a very particular style which influenced a lot of theatre at that time in Scotland. 80’s plays were accessible, using a whole mish mash of styles, songs, and poems. This play, with Corbie acting like a Shakespearean fool or a Brechtian narrator, is very anti-naturalistic and uses that mixture of styles very well.” Benjamin Twist, Director

“It’s more of a long poem than a play, I had to look at a way to structure a play poetically. I can see that it is Brechtian in some ways, it is also quite Shakespearean with lots of short scenes moving it along.” Liz Lochhead

LANGUAGE

“It’s in various different Scots but it has a west of Scotland noise.” Liz Lochhead

Lochhead draws on all her experience of language used across Scotland past and present and uses dozens of different styles and accents to terrific effect. She herself describes the language of the play as “a totally invented... theatrical Scots, full of anachronisms, demotic speech from various eras and areas... proverbial, slangy, couthy, cliched, catch-phrased and vulgar... deliberately varied in register.”

“There are twa queens in one island, both o’ the wan language – mair or less,” says Corbie. Mary and Elizabeth are the opposite of one another in language, religion and sensuality. Their different language accentuates the gulf between them. Elizabeth sees herself as the top of a dominant culture with a dominant language. Mary starts off with a French accent but it diminishes during the play as she uses more Scots, indicating that she has become more rooted in Scotland.

As the poet Edwin Morgan says, the urban Glaswegian sometimes used in the play is “by no means incapable of the lyrical and poetic”.

Liz Lochhead’s use of colloquial contemporary Scots follows the tradition of social realist plays from the 70’s and 80’s which gave voice to the working class, left wing, industrial Scotsman. But she takes it much further allowing characters to use a gallus Scots and use it to convey poetry and lyricism as well as wit and comedy.

“Liz Lochhead in Mary Queen of Scots, created a poetic vitality and force which grasped the myths of Mary and Elizabeth and developed them in a wildly theatrical exploration of the nature of Scottishness...which in its very variety embodies the complexity of the historical representations of Mary and Elizabeth” Ian Brown, *Scottish Theatre Since The Seventies*

SONG

Songs are used in the play to move the action forward and to fill in bits of historical detail.

Some songs are new, some are traditional such as Twa Corbies (Act 2 Sc 6) which is taken from the 16th century Gude and Godli Ballatis a collection of Protestant Ballads. It is a reminder of the years of bloodshed in the conflicts between Scotland and England.

language and performance style (continued)

SONG (continued)

Scene 8 of Act one, *A Wedding*, is conveyed entirely through song and mimed rituals. La Corbie sings, for once without irony or slyness, and the stage directions describe it as “solemn, erotic”. Mary takes up the song with genuine emotion to sing about her own feelings in verses that are rhythmic and beautiful.

The final scene is full of children’s street songs and skipping rhymes, suddenly bringing us bang up to date.

“Theatre without music is very dry. I’m quite a big fan of repetition of music on stage. Tunes sort of grow in power the more you use them. In Showboat for instance Old Man river is repeated. The first rendition goes down well but by the end of the show the singer’s only got as far as “Old...” and the audience is in raptures. A repeated tune enters into the consciousness, if we get the right pieces we can give them power and meaning by using them regularly.” Benjamin Twist, Director

SWITCHING ROLES

The actors playing Mary and Elizabeth each switch roles and change their accent and language to become the other Queen’s maids, Bessie and Marian. This technique allows the women to have a private bond whilst maintaining public animosity. Corbie underlines this doubling by saying “There are twa queens in one island, both o’ the wan language – mair or less.” And “when’s a queen a queen and when the queens juist a wummin”.

The play deals with the problems of women in power – how to escape from traditional roles as submissive women owned and ruled by men – by having queens and maids played by the same actors.

“I thought it would be good for the queens to have a confidante; it wasn’t just because of the small cast; it wasn’t something I thought of as a restriction.”

Liz Lochhead

“You could argue that the maids are the women that the queens would be if they were free to be them.”

Benjamin Twist, Director

THE TITLE

The play’s title tells us the most well known fact about Mary. It indicates that the basic story is not new, but that we may find out more about it. It is incredibly blunt, and tells us that this play is going to be irreverent, and somewhat comic. The historic facts are real but Lochhead re-examines them.

“What you’re dealing with is a myth as well as a piece of history. It’s not whether the story is true or not, it’s whether the audience already knows it, which is what I

would call a myth. Mary is a sort of mythic character as well as an historic character. That was my approach, an attempt to see what this myth might mean to Scotland. The myth of a woman and a Catholic on the throne. The myth of Mary is taught in schools, to Catholic children she is a hero and to Protestant children she is a scarlet woman, a devil”. Liz Lochhead

ANACHRONISTIC DETAIL

The play is based in the 16th century but there are anachronisms scattered throughout and we come virtually to the present day in the final scene.

This combination of the present day and the past is introduced

from the very beginning in Corbie’s Scotland Whit Like speech and reinforced with costumes and objects such as Riccio’s typewriter, Knox’s bowler hat, and the baby photo.

The fact that we are watching historical events alongside contemporary language and items, encourages the audience to realise that these events also have a relevance to our modern world. Nothing is fixed, everything is open to another meaning. These layers and twists make the play lively and constantly engaging

“The anachronisms are useful because they presage the final scene. Liz is a bit of a corbie, a magpie. It’s quite Brechtian to use what ever you need to get the point across and it makes it very accessible. The play is a bit like her poetry – a series of images. Her poems are very visual and quite ironic.” Benjamin Twist, Director



The writer's view



Playwright Liz Lochhead talks about the play that she wrote 16 years ago to celebrate the death of Mary Queen of Scots.

HISTORY AND MYTH

All you have to do to write a play is to know what your protagonists want. If what they want is something with a paradox and an impossibility at the core then you're laughing. I just had to think what these women both wanted. They wanted to be women and they wanted to rule, they couldn't do both at the same time. Elizabeth renounced the feminine and Mary refused to renounce the feminine. I had no idea when I was writing the play, that it was such a powerful myth with such a stranglehold on us.

It's about two specific women who went about trying to be queen in a very different way from each other. The fact of their femaleness was very interesting at the time when England was so powerful and there hadn't been a female king in Scotland before. They had very different ways. Mary tried to reconcile it, Elizabeth tried to do it in a masculine way that was totally successful but only within her lifetime because ironically Mary's son succeeded her. I was fascinated by the way two women who never met could have such a strong relationship. Elizabeth avoided meeting her in the same way that she avoided having to make the decision to kill her.

What you're dealing with is a myth as well as a piece of history it's not whether the story is true or not, it's whether the audience already know it, which is what I would call a myth. Mary is a sort of mythic character as well as an historic character. That was my approach – seeing what this myth might mean to Scotland. The myth of a woman and a Catholic on the throne. The myth of Mary is taught to Catholic children as a hero and taught as a scarlet-woman, devil to the Protestant children.

I'm not on Mary's side, it's tragic for Mary but it's a great story for a writer. When I write about contemporary people I try to find the mythic in them, when you write about a historical character you have to find the human story in them.

THE PROCESS OF WRITING

There were so many possible stories about Mary. I did loads of research (which was a delaying tactic), I didn't know where to start and made false starts. At one point the Corbie's Whit Scotland speech was half way through, but then I moved it to the beginning and out of that grew the structure of the play, a narrator gives you a framework. The bit with the street children that became the end, began as a prologue.

You can only write a contemporary play, it's not in 16th century Scots, it's in 20th century poetry. It began to emerge and I wanted to make a gorgeous but ragged patchwork quilt, in which the materials are very

diverse, unharmonious but the structure makes them part of the one thing, in harmony. That was the job, to make it all part of the one piece in the play. A textured thing to be pulled together by the talents in *Communicado*.

It's a well made play by its own light, it's a well made patchwork quilt, and you wouldn't give a patchwork quilt a row for being made of very different fabrics. But I didn't have the design of the quilt in mind first, so the first production was a different experience to subsequent productions.

People say it's Brechtian but it's much more romantic. I probably took things from Brecht, but I was more influenced by other Scottish theatre companies, *Wildcat* and *7:84*, who I suppose are Brechtian. I just used a style that was a good way of linking a show that's epic and belts through time and space. Even Shakespeare was quite Brechtian at times, Greek drama was Brechtian. When you're doing certain types of storytelling there are things that people always associate with Brecht, but he wasn't the first and he won't be the last.

It was not so much about writing a play but more about examining a myth, more of a long poem than a play. I had to look at a way to structure a play poetically. I can see that it is Brechtian in some ways. It is quite Shakespearean with lots of short scenes moving it along.

INFLUENCES ON THE FIRST PRODUCTION

Gerry Mulgrew, the Director of *Communicado*, was from an Irish Catholic Scots culture and had grown up with the idea of Mary as almost a secular saint. He rejected his own background and became very interested in Knox as a democrat, because Protestantism led into republicanism.

Although I was brought up a Protestant and had been taught that Mary was a devil, I was less keen on Knox on feminist grounds and Mulgrew was all for him.

I only chose bits of Mary and Elizabeth's lives, and I suppose the bits I picked were determined because I was an ex-Protestant female writer reacting against Protestantism, with a male Catholic director reacting against Catholicism. I was a republican woman living in a time when there was a female leader whose politics were repugnant to me. These things are all given, but I just wrote the story of Mary and Elizabeth.

I never thought Elizabeth was particularly like Thatcher as some critics said. We were perfectly well aware that we were creating a play at a time when there was yet another woman who wasn't willing to be womanly and powerful at the same time, but it wasn't a way of writing about Thatcher via Mary Queen of Scots. If I wanted to write about Thatcher I would. She was a neo-Elizabethan in some respects and probably as mad.



The director's view

Director of the play *Benjamin Twist* talks about his intentions before rehearsals begin:

POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP

One of the main themes of the play is leadership.

When the play was first performed in 1987 many critics compared Elizabeth to Mrs Thatcher although that was never Liz Lochhead's intention. Of course at the time, Mrs Thatcher was a big deal, and a cold hard woman who was seemingly against Scotland was an obvious parallel with Elizabeth. Now it doesn't have any resonance of that at all.

In a way I think Mary is like Tony Blair, she is trying to combine politics and emotion and religion, and to a degree morality, and is finding it really hard. Without stretching it too much you could argue that that is what Blair is trying to do and he finds it very hard. Elizabeth was much better at politics, and like Mrs Thatcher was able to put aside her emotions and to concentrate on what she believed was necessary.

In 50 years time characters in the play might be compared to some other politician because the difficulty of leadership is a universal theme. Leadership is a constant battle between one's own desires and the best thing for the country and there is always going to be tension. What we see in the play is two people exploring and finding that tension and both suffering from it, and there's no question that Elizabeth suffers it too, possibly even more than Mary.

Prominent politicians have charisma and Mary clearly had loads of it. In casting Mary I had to look for queenly charisma. She has to charm people and turn them on even if they don't like her politics or religion.

It would be easy to portray Mary as not capable, silly and too emotional. But what's much more interesting is Mary's unsuccessful attempt to combine a warm, tolerant, emotional approach with political leadership. She doesn't feel whole without a husband, which you could see as a weakness but it could be something that she's right about. She makes all sorts of silly mistakes, but what I would like to think is that she fails because she is trying to do something very hard. Elizabeth fails in other ways but maintains rule of her country. It's much more interesting to show someone trying their hardest than to show someone who just wasn't very clever. She's very bright and not a bad politician most of the time, though she isn't tough enough or able to make difficult decisions that hurt other people. She was very young but so were a lot of kings and queens at the time.

RECENT CHANGES IN THEATRICAL STYLE

There's been quite a shift in theatrical style since the play was written in 1987. *Communicado*, who first performed it, were greatly influenced by European theatre and they created a

very particular style which influenced a lot of Scottish companies. Typical 80's plays were accessible, using a whole mish mash of styles, songs, and poems. This play, with Corbie acting like a Shakespearean fool or a Brechtian narrator, is very anti-naturalistic and uses that mixture of styles very well.

Plays now tend to be naturalistic, about personal politics, or a personal response to big issues. Theatre is no longer the exciting art form because it's become too televisual. Some recent plays may be excellent but they don't seem to me to deal with the big issues that theatre is so good at dealing with. One of the things I want to do with theatre is make the world a better place. Domesticity on stage is not exciting to me.

To understand the meaning of what is happening on stage is a difficult intellectual task. It is difficult for the writer, the actor and the director and it should be potentially difficult in a way for the audience, but it is our job as a company to lead them through it so they can grasp the meaning of each line and point in the argument. We ease their difficulty by making the path really clear. Liz Lochhead had to sit down and think hard about what every line means. Take that scene with Mary and Knox where they're fighting a big verbal battle about religion and who runs the country. As a director you have work out how Mary can win on her line, and then how Knox can win. It's not interesting if you know before the scene who wins.

CHANGES WE'VE MADE IN THIS PRODUCTION

Elizabeth's dream (Act 1 Sc 5) was something that the first director Gerry Mulgrew was keen to do, it suited his style of theatre. Now it doesn't seem to quite fit with the rest of the play. Liz has already re-written that scene for a recent production and is quite happy for me to explore another way of expressing what is going on. I intend to put more emphasis on the words than in the original scene.

The penultimate scene (Act 2 Sc 6) has also been revised since the play was published. Liz felt that the play ended too suddenly and has added more of an explanation. I think it shows that Mary has more or less come to terms with imprisonment and death, she seems very at peace in away that Elizabeth isn't. Elizabeth, aware that Mary has had a child and therefore an heir, senses that Mary has won. Mary keeps on putting Elizabeth in difficult situations and forcing Elizabeth to do things she doesn't want to do.

THE FUNCTION OF MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE PLAY

In my opinion everything that happens on stage has to have a meaning, you can't have an irrelevant object or action because the audience will get distracted, even subconsciously, by looking for a reason.

I puzzled over the "mad tango" in Act 1 Sc 2. It fitted into the *Communicado* world which had quite a Hispanic feel.

The director's view

Tango in 1987 was simply exotic music, now it's been overused and means something different. My intention with that scene (and remember I'm speaking well before the rehearsals start) is to create a virtuoso scene run by the Corbie. She will be playing two types of music, one instantly recognisable as English and one Scottish. This will dictate which court we are in and the actors will all move in a very Scottish way choreographically, but it will switch instantly. The switches get quicker and quicker, and if we get it right there will be a terrific scene in which Corbie is shifting musically at exactly the same time as the actors and it will be perfectly clear which court we're in even if it's only for a line or half a line. What we're looking for is two very archetypal pieces of music, I don't know what they'll be yet. Possibly Greensleeves, which was apparently written by Henry VIII which ties in nicely.

However the stag dance (Act 1 Sc 5) seems really crucial, this macho, Scottish fighting male bit of choreography which absolutely sums up Bothwell and the reason Mary shies away from him but also finds him extraordinarily attractive. Our dancer Norman Douglas is classically trained in ballet as well as contemporary dance. He's quite a masculine shape, but I wanted that combination of the beauty and fineness of ballet performed by someone big and heavy and strong, like a deer.

Theatre without music is very dry. I'm quite a big fan of repeating tunes, they sort of grow in power the more you use them. In Showboat for instance Old Man River is repeated. The first rendition goes down well but by the end of the show the singer's only got as far as "Old..." and the audience is in raptures. A repeated tune enters into the consciousness, if we get the right pieces we can give them power and meaning by using them regularly.

CORBIE

Corbie is the best role, it's her show, she runs it. She's the audience's friend rather than Mary's friend because although she seems to be on Mary's side she is also critical. It's a Brechtian quality. Corbie points things out, but asks us to do the thinking. The part requires a brightness of energy. She is a spry, puckish, ambiguous character, nosing into other people's business.

ROLE SWITCHING

The actresses who play the queens also play each other's maids. You could argue that the maids are the women that the queens would be if they were free to be them. Bessie is sensual and kind and cheerful, and warm and fun, all the things that Elizabeth doesn't allow herself to be. Marian is harder to define: whilst Mary avoids responsibility, Marian is free to speak without having to make onerous decisions.

The two women are opposed and it is very appealing for an audience to see the two actresses together even though the queens never meet. As a director you have to find the

deliberate reasons for the doubling. The audience will notice that Elizabeth has turned into Bessie and subconsciously wonder why. And if you can load that change with meaning then the event becomes much richer. They will change their voices, Mary will come out of her Scotto-French into RP English, Elizabeth will have to become a Scot to be Bessie. There's no time for a costume change, there'll be a stance change and a lighting change, and an important task of the music will be to quickly show the audience where we are. It happens very fast, but at each point where there might be confusion Liz Lochhead clarifies it neatly by in the script by using their names or addressing them as madam.

Mary Queen of Scots Biography

Mary Stuart was the last Catholic ruler of Scotland. Born in Linlithgow in 1542, the only child of James V of Scotland and Mary of Guise, her grandmother was Margaret Tudor, which made her next heir to the throne of England after Henry VIII's children. Her father died when she was 6 days old so baby Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland.

At the age of six she was sent to France for safety. Her mother visited once when she was eight but they never met again. She was educated in the extravagant splendour of the French Royal Court. At fifteen she married a French prince who became King Francis II of France soon after, but he died a year later.

Meanwhile Mary's mother ruled Scotland as Regent. When she died in 1561 Mary returned and took up her rule at the age of 18. Mary's Catholicism was a problem at a time when religious changes were sweeping Europe and many countries including Scotland and England were becoming Protestant. In the face of great opposition from the Scottish Lords she held on to her religion and promised to not to interfere with Protestantism.

The myths and legends that surround Mary make it difficult to see what kind of a person she really was. Was she silly and spoilt, was she completely alone and desperate for good advice, was she selfish, devious and promiscuous, was she brilliantly clever, did she really want to overthrow Elizabeth, was she in constant danger, was she just a terrible judge of character who let herself be advised by bad people? She was regarded as reluctant ruler who would rather spend time hunting or dancing. She also surrounded herself with foreigners and Catholics which was not popular. One of her closest advisers was her half brother Earl of Moray (one of James V's ten illegitimate children). Moray was unable to become King because of his illegitimacy but he was hungry for power and jealous of Mary.

In 1565, against strong opposition from Moray and the Protestant lords, she married her cousin Henry Stuart known as Lord Darnley. They were so closely related that they had to apply to the Pope for permission, but Mary didn't wait for an answer and they got married anyway. He was arrogant, handsome, tall and immature. But Mary was soon pregnant. Mary's private secretary was an Italian Catholic diplomat named David Rizzio (Riccio in the play), and the Protestant Lords disapproved of their relationship and thought he was a papal spy. In March 1566 a band, led by two Scottish Earls, burst into Mary's supper room and stabbed Rizzio to death. Her husband Darnley was one of the leaders of the murder and it is suspected that he wanted Rizzio killed in front of her to cause her to miscarry. If Mary's child survived Darnley had no chance of becoming king and Mary had refused him

the "Crown Matrimonial" which meant he would not inherit the crown if she died.

Mary's son was born safely two months later in Edinburgh Castle. He was to become King James VI. Darnley and Mary separated and Darnley didn't attend the baby's christening. Elizabeth I was named as his godmother, but she didn't attend either. Mary was encouraged to have Darnley assassinated but she would not agree to it.

Early in 1567 Darnley fell ill in Glasgow and Mary took him to Edinburgh. They seemed to be reconciled. She left him one night to go to a wedding. The house was blown up in a massive explosion. Strangely Darnley and his servant were found dead in the garden, uninjured by the explosion but strangled. Mary was suspected of murder along with the Earl of Bothwell with whom it was rumoured she was having an affair. Bothwell was tried for the crime but there were no witnesses and he was acquitted. Three months later Bothwell kidnapped Mary and, just as suddenly, they got married in a Protestant ceremony. Their marriage lasted 2 months.

After Mary's marriage to Bothwell, who divorced his first wife to marry her, the Protestant lords of Scotland rose against her led by her half brother Earl of Moray. Mary and Bothwell, with a strong force, met the insurgents, but her army refused to fight. Mary agreed to go with the lords as long as Bothwell was unharmed. Bothwell fled to Denmark, where he later was imprisoned and died insane.

Mary was not treated well by the lords. She was imprisoned on the isle of Lochleven for nearly a year and forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son whom she had not seen since he was 11 months old. She was very ill and miscarried Bothwell's twins. In May of 1568 she escaped and raised a small army but she was quickly defeated and fled to England to appeal to her cousin Queen Elizabeth I, who refused to meet her. Elizabeth was afraid of Mary's claim on her throne and her Catholicism and imprisoned her. The charming Earl of Moray, who was standing in for baby James as Regent, produced the Casket Letters, damning evidence of Mary's part in Darnley's murder. Though these letters were probably forged they ensured that Mary was never freed again. After 19 years Mary was accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth I. She maintained her innocence but was declared guilty and beheaded on February 8, 1567.

Mary's son James was raised a Protestant and taught to believe his mother was an adulteress and a murderer. He never met her again. He became King of Scotland and ironically, 36 years later when Elizabeth died, he became King of England too.

Mary's Close Relatives



Royals marry other royals so Mary was related to many of the people she deals with in the play.

ELIZABETH AND MARY

Mary and Elizabeth were both related via Henry VII. Elizabeth was his granddaughter and Mary his great granddaughter. Elizabeth was Henry VIII's daughter by Anne Boleyn, but was declared illegitimate after Anne's execution. Mary's father was the son of Henry VIII's sister.

Because Elizabeth was technically illegitimate, Mary could claim to have a stronger right to the English throne.

MARY OF GUISE

Mary's mother was Mary of Guise, a French Catholic from the immensely powerful Guise family.

EARL OF MORAY

Mary was the only surviving child of Mary of Guise and James V but he had ten illegitimate children. One of them, the Earl of Moray was a leader of the Protestant Lords who deposed Mary of Guise in 1559, but because he was illegitimate he could never become king himself though he did his best. When Mary first returned to Scotland, she let Moray guide her until he tried to organise an uprising against her. He was probably involved in the deaths of Rizzio and Darnley. After Mary's abdication he ruled Scotland as Regent for baby James VI. He produced the damning Casket Letters, which were probably forged, and blamed Mary for Darnley's murder. When he was assassinated Mary rewarded his killer.

DARNLEY

Darnley was so closely related to Mary they had to get the Pope's permission to get married. He was her first cousin, son of her father's sister.

JAMES

In 1567 Mary's son became King James VI of Scotland as a baby. But he never saw his mother again and rejected all her attempts to contact him. He was brought up a Protestant and encouraged to believe she

was an adulteress who had murdered his father. At Elizabeth's death in 1603, he became King James I of England and so joined the two countries together at last. He was the target of the failed gunpowder plot. Elizabeth II our current Queen is descended directly from James VI.

ELIZABETH I

Elizabeth was the daughter of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII. Henry had destroyed the Catholic Church in England in order to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn, because he was so desperate for son and heir. By the time Elizabeth was two and a half, Henry had grown tired of waiting for Anne to give him a son so she was executed.

When her mother died Elizabeth was declared illegitimate. Even though she was third in line to the throne, she was sometimes perceived as a threat and was once imprisoned in the Tower suspected of treason.

Elizabeth's brother Edward VI and sister Mary Tudor both became rulers of England but died childless and the throne passed to Elizabeth in 1558. She was clever and very well educated and England prospered under her rule.

Everyone was desperate to get Elizabeth married advantageously, but she refused every suitor. Some say it is because she loved Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who was married. Even after his wife's suicide she would not marry him for fear of scandal.

Elizabeth's reign was one of the more constructive periods in English history. Literature bloomed through the works of Spenser, Marlowe and Shakespeare. Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh were discovering and colonising the New World.

Elizabeth felt threatened by Mary because she had a legitimate claim to the English throne and Elizabeth did not want England to revert to Catholicism. Mary also had strong ties to France which was England's fiercest enemies.

Elizabeth died in 1603.

John Knox and the Reformation

John Knox (1514–1572), perhaps after Luther and Calvin the best known Protestant theologian during the time of the Reformation, was a foremost Protestant leader in Scotland and ‘father’ of the Church of Scotland and founder of Presbyterianism. Known as the “thundering Scot”, John Knox is both widely admired and much derided. His influence was enormous, not only in religion but in the daily life of Scotland. He also preached and wrote about women and Catholics in the most inflammatory terms.

He was one of the leaders of the Reformation of the church in Scotland. The Reformation revolutionised religion across Europe in the sixteenth century. The dominant religion had been Catholicism but reformers such as Luther (1483–1546) and Calvin asserted that religion was a personal matter between an individual and God, therefore the existence of the Pope as an intermediary between man and God was morally wrong. In particular the reformers did not believe that the Pope and priests could forgive sins. A revolution in printing and literacy meant that people could read their own bibles without a priest, this helped to speed the reformation.

Knox trained as a Catholic priest but after witnessing the death by burning of his tutor George Wiseheart he joined the movement to reform the church and oust Catholicism from Scotland.

Scotland was attacked by France and Knox was captured and kept as a galley slave in the French fleet for 19 months. He then preached Protestantism in England for five years but had to flee to Europe when Catholic Mary Tudor became queen. He studied under Calvin and preached in Germany and Switzerland.

He was horrified when Mary returned to Scotland to rule because she was Catholic and he thought that she would try to re-impose Catholicism on Scotland. He also objected to her because he believed that God forbade women from holding power. (See below).

Mary and Knox were in conflict from the start. A compromise was reached allowing her to attend private Catholic Mass in return for not interfering with the reform of the church in Scotland. Mary and Knox were known to have had many heated debates.

It is not known whether he was informed of or involved with the plot to kill David Rizzio. He was out of the country when Darnley was murdered. However he may well have been involved in forcing Mary to abdicate in favour of her son James who was brought up as a Protestant.

Knox married twice. His first marriage was to Marjory Bowes in 1553, they had two sons both born in Geneva. His second marriage – at the age of 50 – was to the seventeen year old Margaret Stewart, daughter of the Lord of Ochiltree, ironically a relative of Mary. They had three daughters.

“MONSTIFEROUS EMPIRE”

One of Knox’s best known works which is referred to in the play is *The First Blast Of The Trumpet Against The Monstrous Regiment Of Women*. The meaning of the word “regiment” has changed. Nowadays it means an army unit, but to Knox it referred to a

monarch’s period of rule. (For the full text see www.swrb.com/newslett/actualInIs/FirBlast.htm)

In *First Blast* he argues, repeatedly, that the exercise of authority by women is contrary to both natural law and religion. It was directed against Mary Tudor’s Catholic reign but published as Elizabeth I succeeded her. It also criticised the monarchy in Scotland which was held by Catholic Mary of Guise, who was due to be succeeded by her daughter Mary Queen of Scots. One almost feels sorry for Knox and his rigidly anti-woman views because the royal future was destined to be female for a long time to come.

The *First Blast* is shocking to a modern reader in its assumptions about women, yet Knox was able to back up his argument that women should never have power over men, with quotes from the bible and great philosophers. In the 16th century his attitudes were not surprising as the majority of women were subject to their husbands, owned nothing of their own and assumed to be far less important than men.

He describes women as: “foolish, mad, and frenetic”, “the weak, the sick, and impotent”, “a corrupt and venomous fountain”, with “natural weakness and inordinate appetites”.

He calls women in power: “This monstiferous empire of women”, “enemies to God”, “this odious empire of women”, “traitress and rebel against God”.

Here’s his opinion of a few queens he could think of: *“To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contumely [an insult] to God, a thing most contrary to His revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.”*

“...a woman promoted to sit in the seat of God [that is, to teach, to judge, or to reign above man] is a monster in nature, contumely to God, and a thing most repugnant to His will and ordinance. For He has deprived them, as before is proved, of speaking in the congregation, and has expressly forbidden them to usurp any kind of authority above man. How then will He suffer them to reign and have empire above realms and nations?”

“...the authority of a woman is a corrupted fountain, and therefore from her can never spring any lawful officer. She is not born to rule over men and therefore from her can never spring any lawe, can appoint none by her gift, nor by her power (which she has not), to the place of a lawful magistrate; and therefore, [those] who receive of a woman office or authority are adulterous and bastard officers before God.”

Compare this with an extract from letter objecting to a female moderator for the Church of Scotland: *“As a female, ministry is incompatible with biblical norm of church life and practice. Nor should a woman hold any position in the church or even attend public worship in church with their head uncovered.”* *Edinburgh Evening News, January 2003*

Some things don’t change.

What happened to...?

WHAT HAPPENED TO BOTHWELL?

Bothwell's later life curiously mirrors Mary's – escape to another country, gentle house arrest, harsher imprisonment and death.

Mary and Bothwell were married for just two months in 1567. In June of that year Mary and Bothwell's troops confronted an army led by the Protestant Lords (including her half brother Earl of Moray). There was no battle and Mary agreed to the Lords' demands on condition that Bothwell was not taken prisoner. The Lords' broke their promises and imprisoned Mary in Lochleven Castle. Bothwell fled north by ship, and they never saw each other again.

Mary was forced to abdicate, making her son James king, but because he was only a baby, the Earl of Moray took over as Regent. While in Lochleven Castle Mary probably miscarried Bothwell's twins, though some sources dispute this.

Bothwell, sailed to Orkney and Shetland, stealing ships from other people and pursued by the Earl of Moray's men. He only escaped because his ship was smaller and lighter and managed to scrape over a reef that stranded the Earl's heavily armed vessel.

He went to Denmark, hoping to raise troops to liberate Mary. But he arrived bedraggled in a damaged ship claiming to be the Queen of Scotland's husband and the Danes didn't believe him. Once he had established his identity the Danes didn't know what to do with him. Denmark was busy engaged in a war with Sweden, and though the Danish King was a very distant relation of Mary he didn't really want to get involved in another conflict. Moray, supported by Elizabeth I, demanded his extradition. The King of France urged Denmark not to give him up so the Danes kept Bothwell but extradited his men to Edinburgh where Moray had them all executed. For about 6 years Bothwell was treated quite well. Although he had no money, he was not entirely free but not imprisoned, but in 1573 he was put in close confinement in a bleak fortress, went mad and died in 1578.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BABY JAMES?

Mary's son James was born in Edinburgh Castle in June 1566. The next year Mary abdicated making James king at the age of 13 months. Mary never saw him again after 1567.

He was too young to rule so Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray, ruled as Regent and guided the young king's upbringing. The Earl of Moray had been involved in numerous plots against Mary but as he was illegitimate he could never be king, so standing in for James was as close as he could get.

James had a rigorous education and became a very intellectual monarch. He was christened a Catholic but brought up as devout Protestant. He apparently never asked about his mother and his guardians portrayed her as a murderer and adulteress. Mary wrote to him

and suggested that they rule Scotland jointly, but he rejected her.

He began his rule at the age of 19, but he was often ill and narrowly escaped several assassination attempts. No-one expected him to last long, but he had several children, and ruled for 40 years giving Scotland a long period of peace and stability. After he'd been ruling for 36 years, Elizabeth I died childless. James was her nearest relative so he was crowned King of England too. This Union of the Crowns in 1603 was not popular with the people so Scotland and England kept their separate parliaments, laws and churches. James also coined the term United Kingdom of Great Britain. The two countries were not officially joined until 1707.

In many ways he was a very successful king but he also had a reputation for ruthlessness. He was the intended victim of the foiled Gunpowder Plot of 1605. During his rule colonies were firmly established in America. He founded Edinburgh University, and was said to be friends with Shakespeare. He gave us our modern Roman calendar, and had the bible translated into English (commonly known as the King James bible).

But he was also obsessed with witchcraft and wrote a book about it called *Daemonology*. He was responsible for around one thousand people in Scotland being tortured and executed for witchcraft

He died in 1625 aged 59. Elizabeth II our current Queen is descended directly from James VI.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MORAY?

The Earl of Moray, 1531 – 1570, was Mary's half brother and eleven years older than her; he was one of James V's ten illegitimate children. He could not inherit the crown because he was illegitimate but he was extremely powerful.

Moray was one of the first Lords to become a Protestant. He led a rebellion against Mary's mother, Mary of Guise, and briefly ruled as Regent. After the death of James V Mary of Guise had been ruling as Regent until her daughter was old enough to take over.

When Mary returned to Scotland he became her main adviser, encouraging her to be pro-English and pro-Protestant. He bitterly objected to her marriage to Catholic Darnley and tried to raise a revolt but it was suppressed. He fled to England and didn't return until after the death of Riccio although he had certainly been involved in that plot.

After Mary's forced abdication he became Regent. To ensure that Mary would never return he produced the Casket Letters which pointed to her guilt in Darnley's murder. The letters were almost certainly forged. He made sure that Mary's son James was raised as a Protestant and taught to hate his mother. But he did not enjoy his power for long. He was assassinated after 3 years as Regent. Mary paid a large reward to his killer.



Scotland whit like?

Arguably the most important speech in the play. It gives us the historical and geographical setting, introduces the characters, and establishes Corbie as an ironic universal commentator on the proceedings who exists both now and in the 16th century.

La Corbie: (An interesting ragged, ambiguous figure in her cold spotlight.)

Country: Scotland. Whit like is it?

It's a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.

It's a cauldron o' lye, a saltpan or a coalmine.

If your'e gey lucky it's a bricht bere meadow or a park o' kye.

Or mibbe... it's a field o' stanes.

It's a tenement or a merchant's ha'.

It's a hure hoose or a humble cot. Princes Street or Paddy's Merkit.

It's a fistfu' o' fish or a pickle o' oatmeal.

It's a queen's banquet o' roast meats and junketts.

It depends. It depends... Ah dinnae ken whit like your Scotland is. Here's mines.

National flower: the thistle.

National weather: smirr, haar, drizzle snow.

National bird: the crow, the corbie, la corbeau, moi!

How me? Eh? Eh? Eh? Voice like a choked laugh. Ragbag o' a burd in ma black duds, a' angles and elbows and broken oxtar feathers, black beady een in ma executioner's hood. No braw, but Ah think Ah ha'e a sort of black glamour.

Do I no put ye in mind of a skating minister, or, on the other fit, the parish priest, the dirty beast?

My nest's a rickle o' sticks.

I live on lamb's eyes and road accidents.

Oh, see after the battle, after the battleman, it's a pure feast – ma eyes are ower big even for ma belly, in lean years o' peace ma belly thinks ma throat's been cut.

(With both Queens by the hand, parading them) Once upon a time there were twa queens on the wan green island, and the one green island was split inty twa kingdoms. But no equal kingdoms, naebody in their richt mind would insist on that. For the northern kingdom was cauld and sma'. And the people were low-statured and ignorant and feart o' their lords and poor! They were starvin'. And their queen was beautiful tall and fair and... Frenchified. The other kingdom in the island was large and prosperous, with wheat and barley and fat kye in the fields o' her yeoman farmers, and wool in her looms and beer in her barrels, and at the mouth of her greatest river, her greatest port, a glistening city that sucked all wealth to its centre which was a palace and a court of a queen. She was a cousin a clever cousin, a wee bit alder, and mibbe no sae braw as the other queen, but a queen nevertheless. Queen o' a country wi' an army, an' a navy and dominion over many lands.

Twa queens. Wan green island. And ambassadors and courtiers came from many lands to seek their hauns...



additional scene

After the first production Liz Lochhead felt that the play had ended too abruptly and that Mary's death needed more explanation. This extra section also introduces Jock Thamson's Bairns.

Liz suggests that in this scene Bessie could perhaps be a ghost.

It should be inserted after Elizabeth has said , 'Trick me, trick me. Trick Me!' in Act 2 Sc 6 (page 63 in the Penguin edition).

MARY Whit's that noise, Bessie?

BESSIE It's nobbut the men, Madam. It's just thae bliddy men an their tools!

MARY Is it ma scaffolding they are building? I ken it. Nineteen years...

Bessie, I am to die tomorrow.

Last nicht I dreamt o pair deid Darnley.

Violet velvet, Henry Darnley. Furs and pelts, baith civet and the genet.

A press for you to keep your perfumes. A jewelled pomander.

A bolt of cloth of gold, so much did I love you. Blue bonnets for your fools.

Myself.

That's what I gave you on oor wedding day.

And what did you ever give me Henry Darnley?

A son. Wha will not lift a hand to save his mother. King of Scotland. Thus far.

And even Auntie Elizabeth canna last for ever...

Poor Elizabeth. Tonight you dance in my dream.

Tomorrow and ever after I will dance in yours.

(BEAT)

Bessie, bind my een in silk!

Ne criez point pour moi! J'ai promis pour vous!

THE NOISE OF THE AXEMAN'S SINGLE HEAVY BLOW

CORBIE Mair nor fower hunder years o Scotland's historie –

Mair nor tongue can tell

Sin that blow fell –

Bricht days, dull days

Toom days, full days

Hae birlled by like the wind in the dark –

An still I see Jock Thamson's bairns

Nobbut a set of loast weans in the park.

A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF RICCIO'S MURDER

This is part of a very detailed report about Riccio's murder written by Lord Ruthven. It is not an impartial report however. Ruthven blames Darnley for inventing the plot. Other witnesses report that Ruthven did most of the stabbing.

Darnley's main motive is shown to be jealousy of Riccio, nothing is mentioned of his intention to make Mary miscarry her baby. Darnley did not want Mary to have an heir because that would prevent him from ruling Scotland. At the time of the murder Darnley was King in name only and did not have the powers of a monarch.

The final paragraph reports the row between Mary and Darnley after the murder.

(Note that Riccio is often spelt Rizzio or referred to as Davie.)

This extract begins with the plotters discussing their plans:

...he [Darnley] would have him [Rizzio] taken at the time of the supping, sitting with her Majesty at the table, that he might be taken in her own presence; because she had not entertained him, her husband, according to her accustomed manner, nor as she ought of duty. To the which the said Earl and Lords were very loth to grant, and gave many reasons to the contrary, that it was better to have been done out of her presence, not in the same.

Notwithstanding no reason might avail, but the King [Darnley] would have him taken in her Majesty's presence, and devised the manner himself, as after followeth: That upon the Saturday, at supper time, the Earl of Morton, Lord Ruthven, and Lord Lindsey should have ready so many as would be assistants and partakers with the King, in their houses, against he should send them word: and so soon as he sent them word, that the Earl of Morton should come in, and come up to the Queen's outer chamber, and a company with him; and the Lord Ruthven was to come through the King's secret chamber; and that the King would pass up before by a privy passage to the Queen's chamber, and open the door, through which the Lord Ruthven and his company might enter; and that the King himself should be speaking with the Queen's Majesty sitting at supper; the remanent barons and gentlemen to be in the court of the palace for keeping of the gates, and defending of the close in case any of the Lords or officers would endeavour to gainstand the King's enterprise.

The Earl of Morton and Lord Ruthven having consideration of the King's desire towards the taking of Davie [Rizzio] in the Queen's Majesty's chamber were loth to grant thereto; yet the King would not otherwise, but have it done as he had devised. The Earl and Lords

considering he was a young Prince, and having a lusty Princess to lie in his arms afterwards, who might persuade him to deny all that was done for his cause, and to allege that others persuaded him to the same, thought it necessary to have security thereupon: and a bond was made in the King's name to the Earls, Lords, Barons, freeholders, merchants, and craftsmen, declaring all that was to be done was his own devise, invention, and fact; and bound and obliged himself, his heirs and successors, to them their heirs and successors, to keep them skathless, and unmolested or troubled for the taking and executing of Davie in the Queen's presence...

...The Lord Ruthven passed in through the King's chamber, and up through the privy way to the Queen's chamber, as the King had learned him, and through the chamber to the cabinet, where he found the Queen's Majesty sitting at her supper, at the midst of a little table, the Lady Argile sitting at one end, and Davie at the head of the table with his cap on his head, the King speaking with the Queen's Majesty, and his hand about her waist. The Lord Ruthven at his coming in said to the Queen's Majesty, "It would please your Majesty to let yonder man Davie come forth of your presence, for he hath been over-long here." Her Majesty answered, "What offence hath he made?"

Then the Lord Ruthven said to the King, "Sir, take the Queen's Majesty your sovereign and wife to you," who stood all amazed, and wyst not what to do. Then her Majesty rose on her feet and stood before Davie he holding her Majesty by the plates of the gown, leaning back over in the window, his whiniard drawn in his hand. Arthur Erskine and the Abbot of Holyrood-house, the Laird of Creech, master of the household with the French apothecary, and one of the Grooms of the Chamber, began to lay hands upon the Lord Ruthven, none of the King's party being present. Then the said Lord pulled out his whiniard, and freed himself while more came in, and said to them, "Lay not hands on me, for I will not be handled," and at the incoming of others into the cabinet, the Lord Ruthven put us his whiniard. And with the rushing in of men the board fell to the wallwards, with meat and candles being thereon; and the Lady of Argile took up one of the candles in her hand: and in the same instant Lord Ruthven took the Queen in his arms, and put her into the King's arms, beseeching her Majesty not to be afraid; for there was no man there that would do her Majesty's body more harm than their own hearts; and assured her Majesty, all that was done was the King's own deed and action.

Then the remanent gentlemen being in the cabinet, took Davie out of the window; and after that they had him out in the Queen's chamber, the Lord Ruthven followed, and bad take him down the privy way to the King's chamber; and the said Lord returned to the

A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF RICCIO'S MURDER

cabinet again, believing that Davie had been had down to the King's chamber, but the press of the people hurled him forth to the outer chamber, where there was a great number standing, who were so vehemently moved against the said Davie, that they would not abide any longer, but slew him at the Queen's far door in the outer chamber. Immediately the Earl of Morton passed forth of the Queen's Majesty's outer chamber to the inner court for keeping of the same and the gates, and deputed certain barons to keep Davie's chamber till he knew the Queen's Majesty's pleasure and the King's. Shortly after their Majesties sent the Lord Lindsey and Arthur Erskine to the said Earl of Morton, to pass to David's chamber to fetch a black coffer with writings and ciphers, which the said Earl of Morton delivered to them, and gave the chamber in keeping to John Semple, son to the Lord Semple, with the whole goods there; gold, silver, and apparel being therein.

In this meantime the Queen's Majesty and the King came forth of the cabinet to the Queen's chamber, where her Majesty began to reason with the King, saying, "My Lord, why have you caused to do this wicked deed to me, considering I took you from a base estate, and made you my husband? What offence have I made you, that ye should have done me such shame?" The King answered and said, "I have good reason for me; for since yon fellow Davie fell in credit and familiarity with your Majesty ye regarded me not, neither treated me nor entertained me after your wonted fashion: for every day before dinner, and after dinner, ye would come to my chamber and pass time with me, and this long time ye have not done so; and when I come to your Majesty's chamber ye bear me little company, except Davie had been the third marrow; and after supper your Majesty hath a use to set at the cards with the said Davie, till one or two of the clock after midnight; and this is the entertainment I have had of you this long time." Her Majesty's answer was, it was not gentlewomen's duty to come to their husband's chamber, but rather the husband to come to the wife's chamber, if he had anything to do with her. The King answered, "How came ye to my chamber at the beginning, and ever, till within these few months that Davie fell in with familiarity with you? Or am I failed in any sort? Or what disdain have you at me? Or what offence have I made you that you should not use me at all times alike? Seeing that I am willing to do all things that becometh a good husband to do to his wife, for since you have chose me to be your husband, suppose I be of the baser degree, yet I am your head, and ye promised obedience at the day of our marriage, and that I should be equal with you, and participant in all things. I suppose you have used me otherwise by the persuasions of Davie." Her Majesty answered, and said, that all the shame that was done to her, "That my Lord, ye have

the weight thereof; for the which I shall never be your wife, nor lie with you; nor shall never like well, till I gar you have as sore a heart as I have presently."



Mary's Letters



Mary's last letter ever, written in the early morning of the day of her execution.

To Henri III, the Most Christian King of France.

8 February 1587

Royal brother, having by God's will, for my sins I think, thrown myself into the power of the Queen my cousin, at whose hands I have suffered much for almost twenty years, I have finally been condemned to death by her and her Estates. I have asked for my papers, which they have taken away, in order that I might make my will, but I have been unable to recover anything of use to me, or even get leave either to make my will freely or to have my body conveyed after my death, as I would wish, to your kingdom where I had honour to be queen, your sister and old ally.

Tonight, after dinner, I have been advised of my sentence: I am to be executed like a criminal at eight in the morning. I have not had time to give you a full account of everything that has happened, but if you will listen to my doctor and my other unfortunate servants, you will learn the truth, and how, thanks be to God, I scorn death and vow that I meet it innocent of any crime, even if I were their subject. The Catholic faith and the assertion of my God-given right to the English throne are the two issues on which I am condemned, and yet I am not allowed to say that it is for the Catholic religion that I die, but for fear of interference with theirs. The proof of this is that they have taken away my chaplain, and, although he is in the building, I have not been able to get permission for him to come and hear my confession and give me the Last Sacrament, while they have been most insistent that I receive the consolation and instruction of their minister brought here for that purpose.

The bearer of this letter and his companions, most of them your subjects, will testify to my conduct at my last hour. It remains for me to beg Your Most Christian Majesty, my brother-in-law and old ally, who have always protested your love for me, to give proof now of your goodness on all these points: firstly by charity, in paying my unfortunate servants the wages due to them-this is a burden on my conscience that only you can relieve: further, by having prayers offered to God for a queen who has borne the title Most Christian, and who dies a Catholic, stripped of all her possessions. As for my son, I commend him to you in so far as he deserves, for I cannot answer for him.

I have taken the liberty of sending you two precious stones, talismans against illness, trusting you will enjoy good health and a long and happy life. Accept them from your loving sister-in-law, who, as she dies, bears witness of her warm feelings for you. Again I commend my servants to you. Give instruction, if it please you, that for my soul's sake part of what you owe me should be paid, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom I shall pray for you tomorrow as I die, I be left enough to found a memorial mass and give the customary alms.

Wednesday at two in the morning.

Your most loving and most true sister

Queen of Scotland

Mary's Letters



This letter was written to Elizabeth after Mary was forced to abdicate and was in prison in Scotland on Loch Leven

Madame, my Good Sister

The length of my weary imprisonment, and the wrongs I have received from those on whom I have conferred so many benefits, are less annoying to me than not having it in my power to acquaint you with the realities of my calamities, and the injuries that have been done to me in various ways.

It may please you to remember that you have told me several times “that on receiving that ring you gave me, you would assist me in any time of trouble”. You know that Lord James has seized all I have. Melville, to whom I have often sent secretly for this ring, as my most precious jewel, says that he dare not let me have it. Therefore I implore you to have compassion on your good sister and cousin, and believe that you have not a more affectionate relative in the world. You should also consider the importance of the example practised against me.

I entreat you to be careful that no one knows that I have written to you, for it would cause me to be treated worse than I am now. They boast that their friends at your court inform them of all you say and do. God keep you from misfortunes, and grant me patience and His grace that I may one day recount my calumnies to yourself, when I will tell you more than I dare to write, which may prove of no small service to yourself.

**Your obliged and affectionate good sister and cousin,
at my prison at Lochleven.**

Mary's Letters



After escaping from Lochleven Mary wrote this letter to Elizabeth expecting her aid, but Mary fled to England without waiting for a reply

Dundrennan, May 15, 1568

To the high and mighty Prince, Elizabeth

You are not ignorant, my dearest sister, of great part of my misfortunes, but these which induce me to write at present, have happened too recently yet to have reached your ears. I must therefore acquaint you as briefly as I can, that some of my subjects whom I most confided in, and had raised to the highest pitch of honour, have taken up arms against me, and treated me with the utmost indignity. By unexpected means, the Almighty Disposer of all things delivered me from the cruel imprisonment I underwent.

But I have since lost a battle, in which most of those who preserved their loyal integrity fell before my eyes. I am now forced out of my kingdom, and driven to such straits that, next to God, I have no hope but in your goodness. I beseech you therefore, my dearest sister, that I may be conducted to your presence, that I may acquaint you with all my affairs.

In the meantime, I beseech God to grant you all heavenly blessings, and to me patience and consolation, which last I hope and pray to obtain by your means.

To remind you of the reasons I have to depend on England, I send back to its Queen this token, the jewel of her promised friendship and assistance.

Your affectionate sister

Mary's Letters



This is Mary's last letter to Elizabeth in which she expressed her final requests which, like all others, would never be granted.

Now having been informed, on your part, of the sentence passed in the last session of your Parliament, and admonished by Lord Beale to prepare myself for the end of my long and weary pilgrimage, I prayed them to return my thanks to you for such agreeable intelligence, and to ask you to grant some things for the relief of my conscience.

I will not accuse any person, but sincerely pardon every one, as I desire others, and, above all, God, to pardon me. And since I know that your heart, more than that of any other, ought to be touched by the honour or dishonour of your own blood, and of a Queen, the daughter of a king, I require you, Madam, for the sake of Jesus, that after my enemies have satisfied their black thirst for my innocent blood, you will permit my poor disconsolate servants to remove my corpse, that it may be buried in holy ground, with my ancestors in France, especially the late Queen my mother, since in Scotland the remains of the Kings my predecessors have been outraged, and the churches torn down and profaned.

As I shall suffer in this country, I shall not be allowed a place near your ancestors, who are also mine, and persons of my religion think much of being interred in consecrated earth. I trust you will not refuse this last request I have preferred to you, and allow, at least, free sepulture to this body when the soul shall be separated from it, which never could obtain, while united, liberty to dwell in peace.

Dreading the secret tyranny of some of those to whom you have abandoned me, I entreat you to prevent me from being dispatched secretly, without your knowledge, not from fear of the pain, which I am ready to suffer, but on account of the reports they would circulate after my death. It is therefore that I desire my servants to remain witnesses and attestators of my end, my faith in my Saviour, and obedience to His church. This I require of you in the name of Jesus Christ in respect to our consanguinity, for the sake of King Henry VII, your great-grandfather and mine, for the dignity we have both held, and for the sex to which we both belong.

I beseech the God of mercy and justice to enlighten you with His holy Spirit, and to give me the grace to die in perfect charity, as I endeavour to do, pardoning my death to all those who have either caused or cooperated in it; and this will be my prayer to the end.

Accuse me not of presumption if, leaving this world and preparing myself for a better, I remind you will have one day to give account of your charge, in like manner as those who preceded you in it, and that my blood and the misery of my country will be remembered, wherefor from the earliest dawn of your comprehension we ought to dispose our minds to make things temporal yield to those of eternity.

Your sister and cousin wrongfully a prisoner

Places to Visit

Mary travelled all over Scotland, some of the places associated with her may be near enough for you to visit and find out more about her:

Linlithgow Palace

Open all year 01506 842 896

Stirling Castle

Open all year 01786 450 000

Inchmahome Priory, Lake of Mentieth, Perthshire

Open April to September. Requires ferry trip.
01877 385 294

Dumbarton Castle

Open all year 01389 732 167

Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh

Open all year 0131 556 1096

Edinburgh Castle

Open all year 0131 225 9846

Traquair House, Innerleithen, Peebleshire

Easter to September 01896 830 323

Mary Queen of Scots House, Jedburgh

Open all year 01835 863 925

Hermitage Castle, near Newcastleton, Roxburghshire

April to September 01387 376 222

Craigmillar Castle, Edinburgh

Open all year 0131 661 4445

Lochleven Castle near Kinross

Open April to September. Requires ferry trip
01786 450 000

Dundrennan Abbey, Dumfries and Galloway

Open April to September. 01557 500 262



PRIME PRODUCTIONS

taking theatre to audiences across Scotland

Prime Productions is a theatre company based in Currie, Midlothian, whose slogan is “Taking theatre to audiences across Scotland”. The company is chaired by Edward Argent, former Director of the School of Drama at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. The Artistic Director is Martin Heller, an actor and director based in Scotland since 1952.

COMPANY HISTORY

1985 The company was founded by Rose McBain, Thelma Rogers and Martin Heller specifically to mount a production of Ena Lamont Stewart’s trilogy *Will You Still Need Me*. These three one act plays had not been performed professionally before and proved to be a great success with both critics and the public.

1986 *Uncorking Old Sherry* by John Cargill Thompson, directed by Sandy Neilson with Martin Heller as Sheridan. Presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

1990 *Uncorking Old Sherry* revived in a new production directed by Edward Argent. The production remains in the company’s repertoire for several years and tours include Belfast and Holland.

1991 *Herr Bach and Mr Handel* by John Ringham, directed by John Carnegie, designed by Colin McNeil, with Martin Heller and John Shedden as Bach & Handel. Opened at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, toured throughout Scotland and England including.

1992 *The Wilderness of Monkeys* and *Every Inch a King* by John Cargill Thompson presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe where the double bill won a Fringe First.

1993 *Whisky Galore* – the Radio Version adapted by Paul Godfrey and directed by Martin Heller presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and toured throughout Scotland.

1994 *Shaw? Positive!*, two one act plays by Bernard Shaw and additional material by Edward Argent, directed by Jeffrey Daunton, designed by Paul Ambrose Wright. Presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and toured throughout Scotland with Scottish Arts Council support.

1995/6 *Splinters* adapted by John Shedden from stories by Chekhov, directed by Martin Heller, opened at the Café Royal, Edinburgh and toured in Scotland and England before appearing on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1996.

1997 *The Merchant of Venice* using the First Folio text, directed by Edward Argent presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe before a short Scottish tour.

1998 *From Where I’m Standing* by John Ringham, directed by Hamish Wilson with Eliza Langland and Finlay McLean. Presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe before a Scottish and English tour in 1999.

1999 *Search Through the Ashes* by Djordje Lebovic, directed by Hamish Wilson with Edward Argent, James McLean, Alastair Ritchie and Gareth Gwilym Williams. Presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and toured to London, Holland and Leicester.

2001 *Sunset Song* by Lewis Grassie Gibbon, adapted by Alastair Cording directed by Benjamin Twist. Toured Scotland.

Hamlet, directed by Edward Argent, presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

2002 *Sunset Song* Revived for Scottish tour.

2003 *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* by Liz Lochhead, directed by Benjamin Twist. Scottish tour March – May.

FUTURE PRODUCTIONS

2004 *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Benjamin Twist, touring February – April 2004.

Feedback



It would be very helpful to Prime Productions if you could take the time to answer the following questions.

Are the contents of this pack helpful to teachers?

Yes

No

Your reasons

Are the contents of this pack helpful to students?

Yes

No

Your reasons

Is there any other information that would have been beneficial

How would you prefer to receive the Education Pack?

E-mail

CD rom

Hard copy

Would you like to join the Prime Productions Mailing List? Yes

No