

AA306 Shakespeare: text and performance
AA306/VCR 4 Shakespeare on Screen
Producer: Jenny Bardwell

Contributor(s) in clip:

Stephen Regan
Kiernan Ryan
Sue Wiseman

Clip transcript: AA306 Macbeth 1

Extract: Macbeth, 1948, directed by Orson Welles

Contributor(s):

Orson Wells

Macbeth:

How now, you secret, black and midnight
hags, I conjure you by that which you profess,
however you come to know it - answer me.
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
against the churches; though the yesty waves
confound and swallow navigation up;
Through bladed corn by lodg'd and trees
blown down, though castles topple on their
warders heads; though palaces and pyramids
do slope their heads to their foundations;
though the treasure of nature's germens
tumble all together, even till destruction
sicken - answer me

Stephen Regan:

What do you find particularly impressive about the Orson Welles' Macbeth?

Kiernan Ryan:

Well certainly the black and white manages to make you feel as though you're imprisoned in some almost hallucinatory internal universe. I mean there was a strange cavernous underground corridors or rooms, it's a kind of interior landscape appears 'visage enteriors' as the French call it, so as if you're almost moving around inside the sub conscious of a character himself when he sinks to the lowest depths of despair, in particular, so I think that there is something hallucinatory I think and dreamlike about Shakespeare anyway, and I think the use of black and white of monochrome really can evoke that in a way that technicolour often doesn't manage to because of its association with a more naturalistic reproduction, photographic, kind of realism.

Stephen Regan:

The use of shadow and silhouette is very effective in the Welles, particularly when those shadows coincide with moments in Macbeth's speeches, references to light and darkness.

Sue Wiseman:

But in a certain way they're extraordinarily powerful even though they're moralised in almost the same way as you find in the western, and they were working on a western set, in that very early the beginning of the light and shade is when he's sitting talking to Banquo when they're having their conference,

[Extract: Orson Welles' Macbeth, Banquo and Macbeth and witches]

he's at the front of the stage as it were or the camera and yet he's dark, whereas Banquo is light, and at the back, and the relationship between the black and white as it were all the way through, works in tension, but does work always so the lighter is the morally good quality and it seemed extraordinary to get a richness out of that while working with a very simple as it were black and white morality. It seems amazing.