

## The title card features the word 'macbeth' in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, 'a post-colonial opera' is written in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font. Underneath that, 'with music more or less by verdi' is written in an even smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font. At the bottom, 'conceptualised &amp; directed by brett bailey' is written in the smallest, lowercase, sans-serif font. All text is white on a black background.

**Background:** The detritus of the world washes up on Africa's shores where it is reinterpreted, redefined, hybridised and put to new uses. The continent is studded with the huge buildings of bygone colonial empires, now crumbling, stripped, and overrun with graffiti and vines. Cheap Chinese products abound.

**Concept:** Verdi's Macbeth like a great, cavernous 19<sup>th</sup> century cathedral, stumbled upon in an African forest, or abandoned on the grass plains, appropriated by Africans, hollowed out, reinterpreted, put to a different purpose, with an appreciation for the shell, the story and the music, but little reverence for the historical weight it carries elsewhere...

A container of Macbeth paraphernalia washes up on an African shore, full of sheet music, old 78rpm recordings, costumes etc. A multi-skilled troupe of African performer-singer-musicians uses the jumble of material with abandon to tell the story of their country's travails – and takes this appropriated, 'colonised' opera back to Europe...

**Themes:** The exploitation of Africa by multi-nationals (pharmaceuticals, oil, mining, arms), by the IMF, the World Bank et al. Dictators and military tyrants in Africa – corruption, greed, purging, genocides and dynasties. Witchcraft, voodoo and superstition.

**Story:** This stripped-down opera focuses on the Macbeth couple, their atrocities and emotional breakdown, and their interactions with the predatory witches.

The witches are a sly cabal of western and eastern businessmen employing the age-old colonial device of divide and conquer (Macbeth against Duncan, and then Banquo, Macduff and everyone else) to smash the locals and open up their land for annexation and exploitation.

References to the Congo circa the early 60s, when the CIA and collaborators orchestrated Mobutu Sese Seko's murder of the young president Patrice Lumumba and ushered in an age of brutal excess.

A story without coronations or closure: the 'witches' drag the bodies of the Macbeths offstage, and move their desks and mining equipment on.

**Music:** A mixture of old recordings of the opera, orchestral backing tracks, and re-arrangements for a small on-stage African band. The director to work with arranger, opera dramaturg, 'DJ' etc.

**Cast:** About 25 African performer-singer-musicians, including opera leads and a chorus.

**Dramatics:** Highly visual, African pantomime (ensemble work, masks etc.), juxtaposed with stripped down, delicate, nuanced performances (see images on next page).

**Duration:** Around 90 minutes without interval.

**History:** Brett has directed African interpretations of this opera three times before in South Africa, between 2001 and 2007. This will be his most radical take on the work.

**macbEth: some designs by Brett Bailey** (photos of previous productions can be found on the macbEth page of [www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za](http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za))



macbEth: the opera



the band



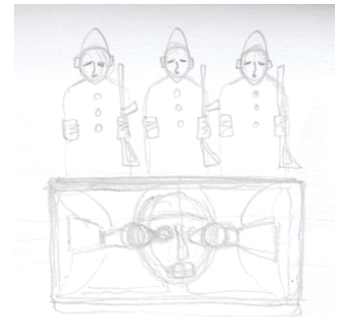
Lady Macbeth



Macbeth, crowned



Macbeth & apparitions



Soldiers



Lady M plots murder



Soldiers



Macbeth drowns his sorrows