School Matinée
Study Guide

Manual Cinema

The 4th Witch

Fri, Jan 15, 11 am
The Moore Theater

THE HOP

Welcome to the Hop

A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

Photo by Robert C. Strong II

Theater Etiquette

When entering the hall, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation! Backpacks, food, drink and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking photos is strictly prohibited.

Information for Teachers

Review this study guide for context and activities that will help your students engage with the performance. Please read the email that accompanies this guide—Hop staff often request details about your visit, including how many buses you'll be bringing and what accommodations you need.

This study guide's content was created by Aaron Rivkin, the Hopkins Center's Manager of Impact and Community Alliance. If you have questions about this guide, please direct them to Aaron Rivkin at **aaron.s.rivkin@dartmouth.edu**. To download copies of this and other guides, visit **hop.dartmouth.edu/study-guides**.

Enjoy the Show!

The Hopkins Center's mission is to cultivate art as central to life. As a catalyst for creative experiences, we aim to deepen understanding of the world and connect students and communities to one another.

Did You Know?

- The Hopkins Center is located on the ancestral homelands of the Abenaki people.
- The Hop presents over 100 live performance events each season.
- In 1988, the Hop was named by the National Endowment for the Arts as one of the nation's exemplary performing arts centers.
- The new Hop reopened in October 2025!

About the Show

The 4th Witch is a gripping new story inspired by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, told entirely through shadow puppetry, actors in silhouette, and live music. The story begins on the eve of an invasion of a small town by the warlord Macbeth. A young girl flees the invading army and escapes into a dark forest. Orphaned and exiled, she is rescued by a witch, who takes her on as an apprentice. As she masters witchcraft, her grief and rage draw her into a quest for vengeance against Macbeth—the man who murdered her parents.

Where Shakespeare's *Macbeth* centers on the rise and fall of a power-hungry warlord, *The 4th Witch* is an inversion—shared from the perspective of the collateral damage of war, exploring themes of grief, exile, generational conflict and cycles of violence. What happens to the people left behind on the battleground?

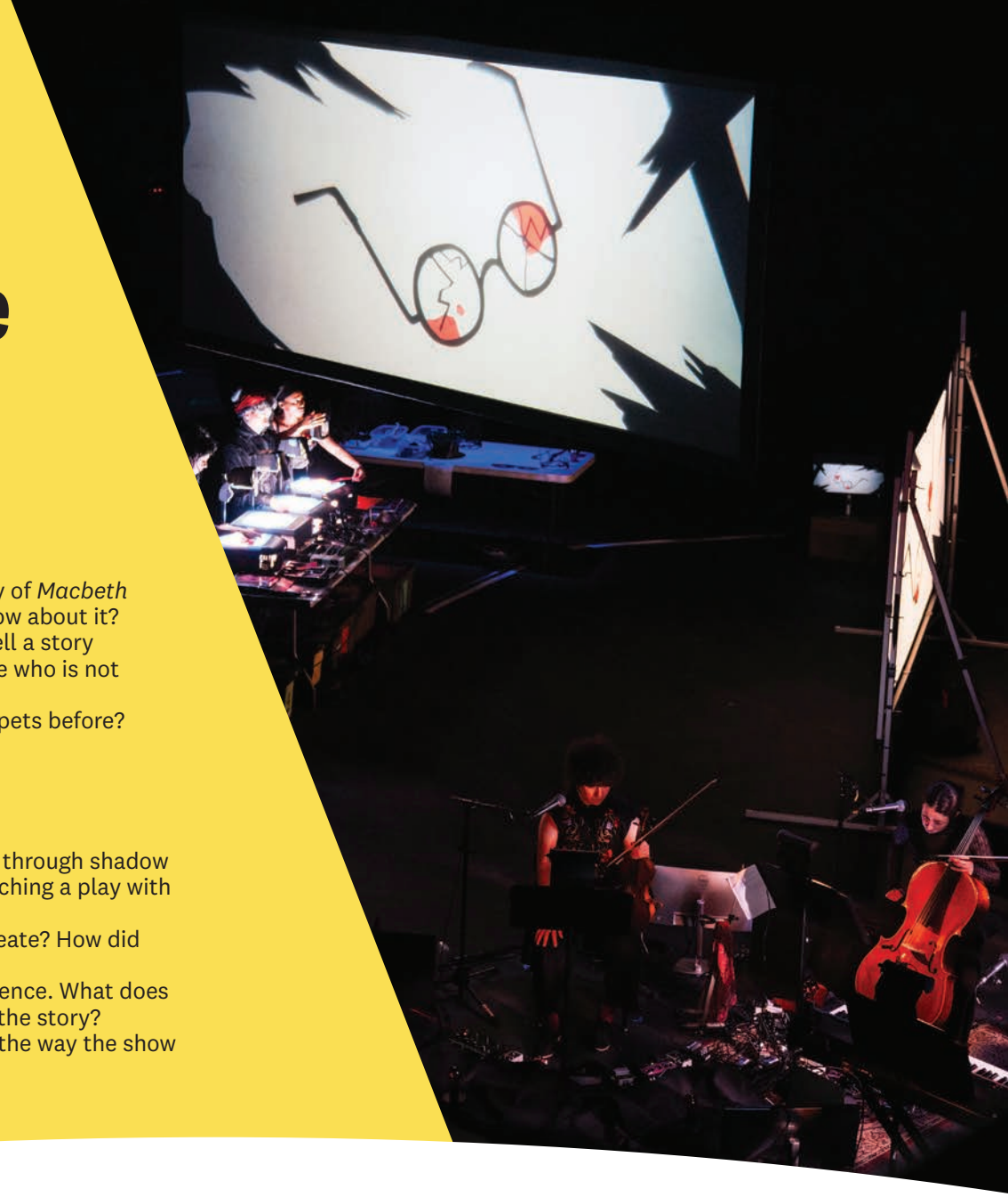
To create the show, Manual Cinema uses vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, live-feed cameras, intricate handmade puppets, live music and cinematic techniques, transforming the stage into a living, moving film.

About the Artists

Manual Cinema is an Emmy Award-winning performance collective, design studio and film/video production company founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller and Kyle Vegter. Manual Cinema combines handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques and innovative sound and music to create immersive stories for stage and screen.

The company was awarded an Emmy in 2017 for *The Forger*, a video created for *The New York Times* and named Chicago Artists of the Year in 2018 by the *Chicago Tribune*. Their shadow puppet animations were featured in the 2021 film remake of *Candyman*, directed by Nia DaCosta and produced by Jordan Peele's Monkeypaw Productions. Recent productions include *Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About A Terrible Monster*, based on books by Mo Willems, an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and a revamped production of *The Magic City*, based on Edith Nesbit's 1910 novel. In 2023, Manual Cinema completed production on their first self-produced short film, *Future Feeling*, and toured with folk rock band Iron & Wine the following year. www.manualcinema.com

Pre and Post Performance Discussion Questions



Pre-Performance

- Have you read or heard the story of *Macbeth* before? What do you already know about it?
- What do you think it means to tell a story from the perspective of someone who is not the main character?
- Have you ever seen shadow puppets before? What was that experience like?

Post-Performance

- How did watching the story told through shadow puppetry feel different from watching a play with spoken dialogue?
- What emotions did the music create? How did sound shape your experience?
- The show explores cycles of violence. What does that mean, and did you see it in the story?
- What surprised you most about the way the show was made?

Learning Activities

English Language Arts: Adaptation and Inversion

The 4th Witch takes Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and turns it upside down. This is called adaptation—taking a source text and retelling it from a new angle, in a new form or for a new audience.

Activity: Rewrite the Scene. Choose a well-known story (a fairy tale, a myth, a scene from a book you've read) and rewrite a key scene from the perspective of a minor or background character.

- What does this character see, know or feel that the original story ignores?
- How does the story change when told from this new point of view?
- Does this change the moral of the story?

Study: Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The original play (written around 1606) is one of Shakespeare's great tragedies. It tells the story of a Scottish general who becomes consumed by ambition after three witches prophesied that he will become King of Scotland. Key themes include ambition, fate versus free will, guilt and the corrupting influence of power.

- Read a scene or synopsis of *Macbeth* before attending the performance.
- After the show, compare: Who has power in Shakespeare's play? Who has power in The 4th Witch? What does the shift tell us?

Literary terms to explore: Point of view, perspective, adaptation, inversion, protagonist, antagonist.

STEM: The Optics of Shadow Puppetry

Shadow puppetry is one of the world's oldest performing arts traditions, and it relies entirely on the physics of light and shadow. Light travels in straight lines. When an object blocks light, it casts a shadow. The size and sharpness of a shadow depend on the distance between the light source, the object and the projection surface. Manual Cinema uses overhead projectors—devices that magnify flat objects onto a large screen by passing light through a transparent surface.

Classroom Activity: Shadow Puppetry Lab. Using a flashlight or lamp and simple cut-out shapes, experiment with shadow projection:

- Move the object closer to the light source. What happens to the shadow's size? Its sharpness?
- Move the object closer to the projection surface. What changes?
- Can you make a shadow that tells a short story?

Theater Arts: Storytelling Without Words

The 4th Witch tells its entire story through visual imagery and music—no dialogue, no narration. This connects to two important theatrical traditions: pantomime (storytelling through gesture and movement alone) and silent film (a film art form that predates synchronized sound).

Activity: Silent Scene. In small groups, ask students to perform a two-minute scene from a well-known story using no words—only gesture, facial expression, movement and sound effects or music (students can hum or create rhythms). After each performance, the audience guesses the story.

- Debrief: What was hardest about communicating without words? What was surprisingly effective?

History Connection: War and Civilian Perspective. *The 4th Witch* is told from the perspective of a civilian child caught in a war. This is a powerful literary and historical angle.

- Research historical accounts of war written or told from a civilian or child's perspective (e.g., Anne Frank's diary).
- Discuss: Why is it important to hear these perspectives? How do they change how we understand historical events?

Vocabulary

Adaptation: A work that retells a story from a different source in a new form, medium or perspective.

Collateral damage: Harm caused to people or things that were not the intended target of an action—in this show, referring to civilians harmed by war.

Folklore: Traditional stories, beliefs and customs of a community, passed down through generations.

Inversion: Turning something upside down or reversing its usual order—in storytelling, inverting who has power or whose perspective is centered.

Overhead projector: A device that projects flat, transparent images or objects onto a large surface using a light source and lenses.

Pantomime: Storytelling through gesture and movement, without words.

Protagonist: The main character in a story.
Shadow puppetry: A performance art form that uses flat figures held between a light source and a screen to create moving images and tell stories.

Silhouette: A dark shape seen against a light background, showing only the outline of a figure.

Resources

Manual Cinema's website: manualcinema.com

The 4th Witch production page:
manualcinema.com/work/the-4th-witch

Video trailer: Manual Cinema The 4th Witch

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for students:
folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/macbeth

History of shadow puppetry:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_play

Manual Cinema on Instagram: @manual_cinema

References

merriam-webster.com
britannica.com