

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
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EDUCATION**



On Cue

MARY STUART

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Compiled by Jacqui Cowell.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Jacqui Cowell is the Education Projects Officer for the Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Jacqui on jcowell@sydneytheatre.com.au.

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About On Cue and STC

ABOUT ON CUE

STC Ed has a suite of resources located on our website to enrich and strengthen teaching and learning surrounding the plays in the STC season.

Each school show will be accompanied by an On Cue e-publication which will feature essential information for teachers and students, such as curriculum links, information about the playwright, synopsis, character analysis, thematic analysis and suggested learning experiences.

For more in-depth digital resources surrounding productions, please visit the STC Ed page on our website.

Such resources include:

- Director documentaries
- Design sketchbooks

ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

In 1980, STC's first Artistic Director Richard Wherrett defined STC's mission as to provide "first class theatrical entertainment for the people of Sydney – theatre that is grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun."

Almost 40 years later, that ethos still rings true.

STC offers a diverse program of distinctive theatre of vision and scale at its harbourside home venue, The Wharf; Roslyn Packer Theatre at Walsh Bay; and Sydney Opera House, as its resident theatre company.

STC has a proud heritage as a creative hub and incubator for Australian theatre and theatre makers, developing and producing eclectic Australian works, interpretations of classic repertoire and great international writing. STC strives to create theatre experiences that reflect Sydney's distinctive personality and engage audiences.

Strongly committed to engagement in the community, STC's Education and Communities programs aim to inspire theatre appreciation and participation not only in theatres but also in schools, community halls; wherever people get together. STC offers an innovative School Drama™ program; partners with groups in metropolitan Sydney, regional centres and rural areas; and reaches beyond NSW with touring productions throughout Australia. Through these partnerships and initiatives, STC plays a part in ensuring a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers.

The theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists have been launched and fostered at STC, including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne, Benedict Andrews and Cate Blanchett.

STC often collaborates with international artists and companies and, in recent years, the company's international profile has grown significantly with productions touring extensively to great acclaim.

STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

sydneytheatre.com.au

Curriculum Connections



The cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.
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SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 10 to 12

SUBJECTS

DRAMA

Stage 5

Dramatic Traditions and Performance

Styles: Scripted Drama

Stage 6

Links to Topic 3: The Voice of Women in Theatre

HISTORY

Stage 4

Medieval Europe, Elizabethan Period

Stage 6

Extension History: Constructing History, Case study of Medieval and early Modern History

Stage 6

Modern History

ENGLISH

Stage 6 suggested related texts

Year 11: Advanced Module A -

Narratives that Shape the World

Year 11: Extension 1 - Texts, Culture and Value

Year 12: Common Module - Texts and Human Experience

Year 12: Extension 1 - Common Module: Literary Worlds

Year 12: Extension 1 - Elective 2: Worlds of Upheaval

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

Mary Stuart

**A new adaptation by Kate Mulvany,
after Friedrich Schiller**

MORTIMER
Fayssal Bazzi

MARY STUART
Caroline Brazier

PAULET
Simon Burke

SHREWSBURY
Peter Carroll

BURLEIGH
Tony Cogin

LEICESTER
Andrew McFarlane

DAVISON
Rahel Romahn

QUEEN ELIZABETH
Helen Thomson

AUBERSPINE
Matthew Whittet

YOUNG GIRL
Darcey Wilson

DIRECTOR
Lee Lewis

SET DESIGNER
Elizabeth Gadsby

COSTUME DESIGNER
Mel Page

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Paul Jackson

**COMPOSER &
SOUND DESIGNER**
Max Lyandvert

FIGHT DIRECTOR
Nigel Poulton

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Madeline Humphreys

VOICE & TEXT COACH
Charmian Gradwell

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Genevieve Jones

STAGE MANAGER
Minka Stevens

**DEPUTY STAGE
MANAGER**
Katie Hankin

**ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER**
Ella Griffin

**WIG, MAKEUP
& WARDROBE
SUPERVISOR**
Toni Paul

DRESSER
Zoe Lawson

FOH SOUND OPERATOR
David Trumpanis

**RPT HEAD ELECTRICIAN
/PRODUCTION
ELECTRICIAN**
Andrew Tompkins

**RPT DEPUTY HEAD
ELECTRICIAN/LIGHTING
OPERATOR**
Harry Clegg

RPT HEAD SOUND
Kevin White

RPT HEAD MECHANIST
Steve Mason

RPT HEAD FLYMAN
Chris Fleming

**REHEARSAL
PHOTOGRAPHER**
Brett Boardman

**PRODUCTION
PHOTOGRAPHER**
Brett Boardman

**1 HOURS 40 MINUTES,
NO INTERVAL**

MARY STUART PREMIERED AT ROSLYN PACKER THEATRE, ON TUESDAY 5 FEBRUARY

PRODUCTION PATRON

THE VINE FOUNDATION



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The Playwright in Conversation

Mary Stuart is a new Australian play. Can you talk about the experience of adapting *Mary Stuart* and writing it for a contemporary Australian audience?

After reading the Schiller which was translated from German I started to write and get to the heart of what the story is. I then read other adaptations which were mostly written by white European men. As an Australian female playwright I had to think about what I wanted to say. I wanted to give the women more agency. In other versions I read the queens were the chess pieces, but in this version I wanted them to be the chess players.

Early in the process I knew we were casting Helen Thomson and Caroline Brazier. I love writing for actors and wrote this play with these two wonderful actresses in mind and with their voices in my head. This set the core of what I wanted to say, to write for these strong actresses with two strong female characters pitted against one another.

The Schiller version was written in verse and prose. My version uses more colloquial language. I think it's interesting to see royalty doing normal things and speaking colloquially. Most of the play takes place behind the scenes, behind closed doors, not at a large royal event. The colloquial language suited the scenes I was writing, creating an everyday feel.

The wonderful Schiller version set up the convention of the third act where the two queens met. This never happened in real life. In other versions of *Mary Stuart* a man usually set up the meeting. I wasn't interested in a man setting up or being present at the meeting. I wanted it to be in the minds of the women. We could then explore the idea of the friendship and alliance that could have been. At the end of the party there is an intimate scene between Mary and Elizabeth, where they talk heart to heart. The end of this scene when it escalates to violence happens because of Mary's frustration to being imprisoned for 19 years. It could also be seen to have happened because of Elizabeth's guilt at locking Mary up. We expect the violence at the end of the play for the execution, but the violence in this scene is sudden and may shock the audience.

What is the main theatrical style of the play?

The main theatrical style of the play is Realism. The play ventures into the world of Magic Realism in the imagined party scene, which features the convention of the Echo. The convention of the character of Echo comes from the Greek myth, where Queen Hera tries to silence a nymph. This is a parallel of the story of Elizabeth and Mary as Elizabeth tries to silence Mary, seeing her as a threat. The bubble is burst and the scene changed back to reality when a gunman comes in and makes an attempt on Elizabeth's life.

How does this adaptation of *Mary Stuart* and the production comment on women in power?

Elizabeth and Mary were very strong women; they were survivors. They had both been abused by men in their lives and had to hold on and stay strong. I wanted to cut the men away as the story from a male perspective has already been told. I was more interested in the perspectives of the women. They could have and should have been allies. In a patriarchal world we find it hard to have one woman in power, nevertheless two. I'm interested in the animosity between women in power and exploring this dynamic in the play.

Elizabeth wasn't threatened by Mary's son, James as she was by Mary. Elizabeth knew how to control men, she didn't have the same understanding and control of women.

After Elizabeth died, James, Mary's son ruled England. Once James took the throne, he removed every painting of Elizabeth. He also created a huge monument of Mary that dwarfed Elizabeth's, moving Mary's body to Westminster Abbey. James played the long game, wooing Elizabeth during her life so he would be in her favour. Elizabeth referred to him as her son when she imprisoned Mary. It was clever and heartless of James to not help his mother when she was imprisoned, as he could have used his favour with Elizabeth to help Mary and prevent her execution.

Can you describe the inspiration for the costume design in the play?

In the Elizabethan era, colour was very symbolic. Royalty were the only people who could wear purple. The most expensive colour to wear was black as black dye was expensive so only wealthy people wore black. Red was the colour of martyrs. In the final scene of the play, Mary Queen of Scots appears in black, she takes this costume off to reveal a white dress representing purity, then she takes off this costume to reveal an elegant red dress, symbolising martyrdom. The red dress symbolises that Mary is the victor in the play. Historically, she wanted to appear as a martyr in red so her image and her death wouldn't be forgotten.

Synopsis

Mary Stuart is an examination of the lives of two powerful women of very different natures: Mary, Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I of England – cousins but not friends.

Following an uprising, Mary has fled Scotland only to be imprisoned for treason at Fotheringhay Castle in England at Elizabeth's orders. Elizabeth feels threatened – Mary is younger, more beloved, and with her own claim to the throne. Though equally headstrong, the two women's views on life couldn't be more different – one calculating and tactical, the other rash and passionate.

The question now is whether Elizabeth will release Mary or execute her. As the men around them scheme and switch loyalties to pursue their own ends, the two queens struggle to maintain autonomy. Elizabeth seems to have the power, but Mary has a final card to play.

Context & History

Mary Stuart was originally written by Friedrich Schiller as a verse play, with the first performance in June 1800 in Germany. Schiller's version was a five act psychodrama about the two rival Queens, Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart. An English adaptation was written by Joseph Mellish in 1801, used in early English productions of the play. Mellish stayed true to the original version, communicating with Schiller on the translation. Sutter (2018) states that Schiller's *Mary Stuart* has acquired notoriety as part of the German canon. Sutter cites Mahoney: "Parodies occur when a text has become so seemingly well-known that individual lines or scenes begin to take on a life of their own, independent of their original context" (Mahoney, 2015, p. 403). The play has been performed all over the world and has inspired many versions including an opera, *Maria Stuarda*. *Maria Stuarda* by Gartano Donazetti was first performed at La Scala, Milan in 1835. The tragic opera, still in its original form, was performed at The Donmar Warehouse in 2005 and then in 2007 at the LA Theatre works using Peter Oswald's new translation.

Throughout the 19th century, Schiller's *Mary Stuart* lost popularity in Britain, Germany, France and America. "The high pathos of *Mary Stuart* was beginning to wane. The consequence was a new approach to Schiller in the early-twentieth century" (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, 2018, para 5). In the later half of the 20th century and early 21st century there was a renewed interest in Schiller's script, with directors finding new approaches to the play. "It may be well that no play by a foreign dramatist has been so frequently performed in this country in such a short space of time" (Gobels & Guthrie, 2006, p. 1).

Sutter (2018) argues that even though the play remained essentially the same, it had a renewed relevance to people's lives. The production at the Derby Playhouse in 2005 using Robert McDonald's adaptation was a modern interpretation, demonstrating the play's relevance to the 21st century. The production drew parallels between the modern threat of Islamic terrorism and the threat of a Catholic uprising to Elizabethan England, which Mary Queen of Scots represented. In this production, the character of Mary Queen of Scots was portrayed as a Muslim rather than a Catholic.

Robert Icke's version in 2016 at The Almeida Theatre had a different twist. The two actresses, Julie Stevenson and Lia Williams, tossed a coin each night to decide which actor would play which part. Icke explains the premise of the play; "It's not a gimmick, but a way of conveying how politically, things operate on a very thin and fragile, arbitrary chance. One of them is going to have to go down in order that the other can triumph and the thing can finish" (Icke in Thomas-Corr, 2017, ¶ 5). Kate Mulvany was interested

Context & History (Cont.)

in historical accuracy when writing her adaptation of *Mary Stuart*. As a feminist reworking of the play, the historical accuracy was important to Mulvany to reclaim the play from the romantic depictions and celebrate the real women of the story with all of their complexities.

Kate Mulvany's *Mary Stuart* is an adaptation that follows the structure of the Schiller version, but also departs from the original in a number of significant ways. As recent major adaptations of the play have been written by men, Mulvany brings a unique feminist perspective to this version, positioning the two women at the centre of their own story. The play deviates from Schiller's original play by focusing on the women and their obsession with each other. In an article Mulvany comments, "The other versions of this play have got the queens as pawns. They are chess pieces getting moved around by the men in their court. We've given them much more agency than that. They are the ones playing the chess pieces rather than being the pieces" (Mulvany in Crysanthos, 2019, p. 15). Mulvany wanted to focus solely on the women, with the motivations and desires of the male characters being secondary.



Helen Thomson & Caroline Brazier in Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.
© Brett Boardman

Character Analysis

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Mary Queen of Scots was a regal Queen, a leader, a survivor and a devout Catholic. She was crowned Queen at six days old and was Queen of Scotland until she was forced to flee and give up her crown. Mary is described by some characters in the play as a witch and by others as a saint. She makes a joke about this, saying she has married the devil twice. Mary, a devout Catholic, maintains her innocence throughout the play: “But I am a Catholic and will serve no one but God. As my husbands discovered”.(Mulvany, 2018, p. 9).

Mary lived passionately, making poor decisions about love, with two disastrous marriages to Darnley and Bothwell. She gave birth to her son King James I, but did not see him after the age of 10 months, because of her exile and escape to England. Reflecting on her absent son, Mary says; “I can still remember his head in my hands. The smell of this skin” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 58).

Elizabeth accused Mary of plotting to kill Darnley, her own husband. Shrewsbury gives insight into the rumours surrounding the death: “It is indeed suspected that she had her husband murdered. It is true she wed his killer. But it happened at a dark, unfortunate time, in the shadow of a civil war, where she, the weak one, as invaders approached, had to find protection in the most unlikely of places. Women are frail beings and this world serves them too cruelly” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 32). Mary is accused of treason and wanting to take Elizabeth’s throne, saying “I did not come to England to take the throne. I willingly abdicated my own throne. Why would I want another one?” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 11).

Mary’s Catholic faith gives her strength during her imprisonment and in the lead up to her execution. Whilst imprisoned, Mary’s status rises and she is revered by her supporters in England. Shrewsbury describes her as a “saint to the Catholic cause” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 30). Elizabeth adversely accuses Mary of infecting the hearts and minds of many of the English people: “A picture of mournfulness. Your head angled just so. Your hands clasped in prayer. Your lips moving as you speak to God, asking him to forgive their Queen for the torment she is inflicting upon you. All the while planning my death. Fantasising about my crown on your head” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 57).

Elizabeth is jealous of Mary’s privileged and comfortable upbringing, saying “Against you, sitting there in a French court wearing two crowns on your head, surrounded by wealth and education and comfort and adoration and love” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 55). The following line in Mulvany’s play, indicates Mary’s pride and stoicism, her lack of freedom and her frustration of being imprisoned by Elizabeth. “I have one title. Mary Stuart. And I have no control over that name or its legacy. Because you’ve locked it away. Silenced it” (Mulvany, 2018, p. 58). Mary had little control over her life, but her final act to be executed in a regal red dress, representing her martyrdom, left a strong visual image and legacy.



Helen Thomson and Caroline Brazier in Sydney Theatre Company’s *Mary Stuart*.
© Brett Boardman

Character Analysis



QUEEN ELIZABETH I

Mulvany describes Elizabeth's character as: "Elizabeth was cheeky and dirty and mean. She liked to drink and party and she loved dirty jokes and she loved theatre" (Mulvany in Crysanthos, 2019). Gloriana or Bess, as she was known, ruled England for 44 years. She was vain, amorous, academic, driven, flirtatious and stubborn. She loved to be admired and in control of her court. Elizabeth is described by Paulet in Mulvany's play as merciful, saying "She does have a heart of Mercy. She is not her sister. She cares. Deeply" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 19).

Elizabeth could also be cold hearted and manipulative, treating men as pawns. Elizabeth explains her reasoning to Leicester: "It's a trinket. A trifle. It's important the French think they might win me. We have to let them believe they mean something in the grand scheme of things. We can't disrupt international relations for the sake of your bleeding heart" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 27). Elizabeth knew how to manipulate the men in her court using her feminine traits: "A woman is not weak, gentleman. There are plenty of strong souls amongst my sex. You look upon one now. I will hear no more of this weakness you both speak of" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 32). Elizabeth was excommunicated by the Catholic Church and declared a heretic. However, she was not as radical as her half sister Mary Tudor.

Elizabeth is obsessed with Mary Queen of Scots, she continuously asks her advisors about Mary's height, skin, weight and beauty, saying "She may be taller, but she has no advantage, for I have often been told I am exactly the right height" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 33) and "She haunts me. If I dare sleep I dream of her. When I wake, I hear her name echoing through the streets" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 42).

Elizabeth believes she suffers more than Mary, constantly fighting for survival to retain her crown. This survival instinct colours many of Elizabeth's decisions, including her ultimate decision to stay unmarried to retain power. In Mulvany's play she states "Since I was born a woman. Since the first look of disappointment on my father's fat face. Since my mother's execution for being a whore and a witch. Since being sent away to live as an orphan and a pauper, in the houses of strange men with strange ways. Since I was imprisoned by my own sister for being a threat to her throne. Living every day wondering if it were my last" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 55).

Character Analysis (Cont.)



The cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.
© Brett Boardman

BURLEIGH

Lord Burleigh is the chief advisor to Elizabeth and encourages the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Burleigh delivers the news to Mary that she has been found guilty of treason and conspiring to kill Elizabeth. He is persistent in condemning Mary's treacherous activities as guilty because of her name, status and supposed political activities and plots to overthrow Elizabeth. His emphasis on the need to have Mary executed quickly and his overinflated belief in his authority suggests that his advice to Elizabeth is more for his own self interest and less towards the interest of the crown.

In his first interaction with Elizabeth in the play, Burleigh is insistent that every action against Elizabeth is an assassination attempt by the Catholics. He firmly believes in the plots of Catholic enclaves and won't acknowledge Shrewsbury's contradictions to connections between said enclaves and Mary. Burleigh treats Elizabeth as helpless and thinks his position and opinions have more authority than is realistic. His oppressive guidance is evident when he doesn't inform Elizabeth of her excommunication from the Catholic Church and angers quickly when Elizabeth doesn't follow his advice.

SHREWSBURY

Shrewsbury is a secondary advisor to Elizabeth. His advice to Elizabeth is said with loyalty to the crown, as opposed to Burleigh's self-interested advice. It is unclear whether Shrewsbury is apathetic to Mary's situation. He thinks that Mary's death, at Elizabeth's orders would be detrimental to the longevity of Elizabeth's reign and would tarnish her crown.

Character Analysis (Cont.)



PAULET

Paulet is Mary's gaoler, he is also Mortimer's uncle. He is a conservative, religious and traditional man. Paulet doesn't completely trust Mary, after she is found to be conspiring against Elizabeth with her supporters through letters; "Idle hours make for wicked thoughts" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 5). However, Paulet sympathises with Mary and her predicament. He refuses to inflict cruelty on Mary and tries to make her comfortable, especially before her execution.

Paulet is a family man with a wife and daughter he hardly sees. His main purpose is to serve Elizabeth and keep watch over Mary. Paulet describes himself as "the keeper of Queens" (Mulvany, 2018, p.11). The stress of his position takes its toll on him: "I don't sleep at night, for fear I've left your door unlocked. That I've let the enemy out, or in. I check it every hour, obsessed, I tremble until morning" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 11). On Elizabeth's command Paulet dutifully removes letters and possessions from Mary's cell including her regal clothing, jewellery, books, music and rosary beads.

AUBESPINE

Ambassador Aubespine is the Ambassador for France and represents Francois, the Duke of Anjou, he is in England to solidify the marriage between Queen Elizabeth and the Duke. Aubespine attempts to appeal to Elizabeth's vanity but is talked in circles by her intelligence. He is eventually ordered to return to France with Elizabeth refusing the Duke's proposal.

Character Analysis (Cont.)



MORTIMER

Mortimer is the only non-historical character in the play, created by Schiller. Mortimer is Paulet's nephew and a devout Catholic. He is infatuated with Mary but pretends to be 'true' to Elizabeth. He uses his good looks to his advantage to flirt with Elizabeth and be in her favour: "You're very handsome Mortimer. Your eyes. They're very beguiling. I can see myself in them." (Mulvany, 2018, p. 70). Mortimer is hired to assist Paulet as Mary's gaoler. He verbally abuses Mary in front of Paulet to prove his allegiance, calling Mary a whore and accusing her of murdering her husband then taking his killer as her husband. Once Mortimer is alone with Mary, he explains his cover and professes his allegiance and devotion to the Catholic faith. He is enamoured with Mary and shows her tattoos of Catholic icons and her face on his torso. Before coming to England, Mortimer travelled to sacred places in Rome, Spain and France as a pilgrim. He tells Mary "and on my travels, I took a picture of you with me" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 13). In this meeting, Mortimer informs Mary of an uprising he is planning with other Catholic warriors from Europe to kill Elizabeth, set Mary free and reinstate her to the crown as Queen of England. Mortimer is killed by Leicester after his tattoos are revealed by Elizabeth, aligning him with the Catholic cause and Mary.

YOUNG GIRL

The character is described in the script as "a young nameless girl" (Mulvany, 2018). The girl carries out functional duties, including mopping up the blood at the execution. She plays a maid in the play. The young girl character is an invention of this adaptation and doesn't appear in the Schiller version. The character could represent the working class and the powerless characters looking at the powerful.

Style and Language

ROMANTICISM

Mulvany's *Mary Stuart* is a modern feminist adaptation after Schiller. The playwright focuses on the psychology of the two Queens, their passions, fears and desires. Therefore, the style of this adaptation of *Mary Stuart* contains elements of the style of Romanticism in a modern context and setting.

The German poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller was described as "the country's most romantic thinker" (Connolly, 2009). He wrote poetry, essays and popular plays in the 18th and 19th century including *William Tell*, *The Maid of Orleans* and *Mary Stuart* in the age of Romantic Theatre.

Romanticism is defined as "the exploration of fantasy in juxtaposition to the world of natural phenomena. Romanticism reflected a belief in the affinity of man and spirit and of man and nature. The Romantics believed in the autonomy of inspired genius, the necessity of releasing the imagination, the spontaneity of intuitive feeling, the freedom of artistic expression and a vision of nature as part of a unified cosmos" (Crawford, Hurst, Lugerling, 1995, p. 171). In Germany the Romantic movement was called Sturm and Drang (Storm and Stress). Schiller, alongside Goethe, was one of the most prominent ambassadors of Romanticism in Germany.

Schiller wrote in the Romantic vein. He was an admirer of Shakespeare's work, adapting Shakespeare's plays for the German theatre. "Schiller found a love for Shakespeare's vitality in describing the passions and secret movements of the heart in the specific expressions of the persons' (Frezza, 2019, ¶ 4).

Magical Realism is defined as a genre where magical or unreal elements play a natural part in an otherwise realistic environment. The style contains imaginary or fantastical elements that can be unsettling. In Magical Realism, magical elements co-exist with the characters accepting the magical or unrealistic elements as real.

The style of Magic Realism is evident in *Mary Stuart* in Elizabeth's party scene. The real and imagined worlds co-exist in the party scene. The conversation between Elizabeth and Leicester is realistic. The conversation between Mary and Elizabeth is played out in Elizabeth's imagination as Mary is imprisoned at this point in the play. The use of the vocal echo also complies with the style of Magic Realism. The party scene is highly stylised and hallucinatory with music, dancing, mask and lighting effects.

LANGUAGE

Mulvany's *Mary Stuart* is a modern feminist adaptation after Schiller. The use of language in Kate Mulvany's *Mary Stuart* differs from previous versions. The play is not in verse as it was in the Schiller version.

The language in the play moves between formal and colloquial language. The language of the male characters tends to remain formal. However, the language of the female characters is more colloquial, which makes the female characters relatable for the audience. Mulvany wants the audience to see the women as their true selves not just as monarchs.

Repetitive and colloquial language is evident in the play with Elizabeth repeatedly asking Leicester to kiss her as she has a sore tooth, establishing the intimacy between the two characters. In the party scene, repetitive language is used through the device of the Echo (see page 14) with both women asserting their right to the throne. Elizabeth and Mary repetitively saying "I'm the Queen" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 51) representing the competitive and obsessive nature of their relationship.

MAGIC REALISM

Themes and Ideas

POWER: OBSESSION

Kate Mulvany has adapted Schiller's *Mary Stuart* with a strong feminist approach, examining the psychology of the two queens and the enduring and obsessive nature of their relationship. Mary and Elizabeth lived parallel lives as women in power, but underwent different journeys in their personal lives and circumstances.

Mary and Elizabeth have a complex and connected relationship; they were queens, cousins, allies and rivals. Elizabeth and Mary never met face to face, but were connected from childhood, writing letters to one another since they were young. They regularly asked their advisors about the others' beauty, height and intellect.

During the 19 years Mary was captive in England and under Elizabeth's protection, she begged Elizabeth to meet with her: "All I request in those letters is her audience. To look her in the eye so that she may see I am not the enemy. I am her equal. She is the only person in the world that could possibly understand me - as a sister, as a woman and as a Queen. And I am the only person in the world that could possibly understand her, for the very same reasons" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 7). It is thought that Elizabeth's refusal to meet Mary may have centred on her concern about the emotional impact of a meeting, hindering her ability to make decisions about Mary's situation and future.

In Mulvany's version, Mary and Elizabeth's meeting happens in Elizabeth's imagination. Historical records suggest that Leicester hosted a party for Elizabeth as a gift, the party famously lasting for 10 days. Mulvany has taken the idea of the biggest party of all time and made it the location of Mary and Elizabeth's meeting.

Mulvany has written into the script a character called Echo, written as a mythical character. The Echo character in Mulvany's play starts as a voice, repeating what Elizabeth says. Leicester states "I got you your very own Echo, my Queen" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 45). The character of Echo is actually Mary, who, once revealed, converses with Elizabeth. In Greek mythology, Echo is a nymph who associates with Zeus and thereby attracts the jealousy of Zeus' wife Hera. Hera enacts her revenge by making Echo only able to speak the last words spoken to her. The character of Echo, and the theme of female rivalry, therefore resonates on many levels in the plot of *Mary Stuart*. Elizabeth views Mary as a threat to the Crown and wants to silence her, which she does by imprisoning her.

The imaginary scene abruptly finishes, with the appearance of a gunman, who makes an attempt on Elizabeth's life. Burleigh accuses Mary of plotting the attempted assassination to which Mortimer replies, "It wasn't Mary. She slept through the night. I kept watch" (Mulvany, 2018 p. 66).

Mulvany writes the attempted assassination as a real event in the play, with the stage directions: "Elizabeth is there. Her hair and dress are damp. She is covered in blood. Dazed" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 68). Burleigh relays that Elizabeth was hysterical and delusional after the party, convinced she had been talking to Mary. After the attempt on Elizabeth's life, the decision is made to expedite the execution of Mary because of citizen unrest and the threat of a Catholic uprising. "We don't have time. The citizens are restless. There's been riots. The Queen has had two attempts on her life in one day. We have to get this done" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 73).

Themes and Ideas

POWER: POLITICAL POWER

Mary Stuart and Elizabeth inherited their position, status and power. They were aware of the office they were born into and duty to their people. The women were very different as Queens and political figures. Elizabeth ruled England for 44 years, the longest reigning English monarch and the last of the Tudor line. Mary was less fortunate, ruling Scotland for 25 years until her exile.

Mulvany writes about the two women's political power in reference to women in power today, saying "Now is the time to really look at who we put in power, why they're in power and how quickly the powerful fall in this day and age" (Mulvany in Crysanthos, 2019, p. 15). Mulvany likens the challenges Mary and Elizabeth faced and the constant fluctuations in their popularity to the predicament of women in contemporary politics.

Mary spent most of her youth in France, returning to Scotland at 18 as a young widow. Scotland had changed considerably in Mary's absence. The country had become predominantly Protestant, where as Mary was resolved to practice Catholicism. (In Profile: Mary Queen of Scots, 2018). Mary did not have the relationship and trust of the Scottish people that Elizabeth developed with her English subjects. In Mulvany's play, Mary states "I confess to hating my Scottish subjects. Lewd, thick-legged, insolent, turncoats that they are". (Mulvany, 2018, p. 82).

Mary's marriage in 1565 to her Catholic second cousin, Henry, Lord Darnley, sparked a breakdown in relations between Mary, the Scottish nobles at court and her people. Mary abdicated from the Crown in 1567 when her people revolted and the Scottish nobles raised an army against her at the battle of Carberry Hill.

Elizabeth was first in line to take the English throne, after Mary Tudor's death in 1558. Her father, Henry VIII married her mother Anne Boleyn while still married to Catherine of Aragon. Therefore, many Catholics believed Elizabeth was a bastard child and opposed her ascent to the throne.

Elizabeth came to rule England at the age of 25. She was a Queen for all seasons (Archer, 2018). Known as Good Queen Bess, she was devoted to her people. Elizabeth started her rule at a time when England was a patchwork of religious enclaves, with the difficult task of uniting a fractured government. Despite this, her era of rule, known as The Golden Age, was peaceful and prosperous. Elizabeth had a unique style of governing. She liked to have control over her government and her court. Her ladies in waiting could

only marry with her permission and she demanded constant attention from her male courtiers. Elizabeth was witty and smart, having had excellent tutors in various disciplines as a child.

In 1568, Elizabeth and Mary's lives became intertwined politically and personally. When Mary fled Scotland, fearing for her life, she lost her political power and status, placing herself under Elizabeth's protection. At first, Mary had luxuries and freedom, with servants, visitors and outings on horseback under the custody of the Lord of Shrewsbury. As the years went on Elizabeth grew increasingly suspicious of Mary's intentions and plots for a Catholic uprising in alliance with her supporters. She imprisoned Mary, removing her possessions and reducing her lifestyle. Mary was still able to get letters out to Catholic supporters, financing English Catholic exiles in France and creating secret channels of communication, rarely detected by Elizabeth.

One of Mary's main allies was Thomas Howard, the 4th Duke of Norfolk, an Englishman who worked with Roman Catholic nobles on plans to restore Catholicism to England. One plan was for Norfolk to free and marry Mary and instate her to the throne. However, Norfolk wasn't bold enough to ask Elizabeth's consent for the marriage or rise an insurrection against her. Norfolk became involved with Roberto Ridolfi who was planning a Spanish invasion of England to overthrow Elizabeth and institute Mary as the English Queen. The Ridolfi plot failed when documents were found and Ridolfi's messenger and Norfolk's servants were arrested, confessing to the plot and Norfolk's involvement. Elizabeth sentenced Norfolk to death, making an example of him in order to prevent further Catholic uprisings.

Elizabeth believed her title was bestowed upon her by God and at that time it was widely accepted that the Monarch's right to rule was divine. Elizabeth's purpose was to defend the realm, protect her people and head the Church of England. She used her monarchical authority sentencing Norfolk and Mary Queen of Scots to death for plotting to overthrow her.

Elizabeth was threatened by Mary Stuart's claim to the English throne. Mary Stuart was the last remaining surviving legitimate descendant of Henry VII through her grandmother Margaret Tudor. However, Henry VIII had excluded the Stuart's from ascending to the throne in his last will and testament. Catholic supporters believed Mary was the rightful Queen of England.

Themes and Ideas (Cont.)

Kate Mulvany explains the crux of the play:

“Two incredibly powerful, smart, witty, political heavyweights pitted against each other. There’s always got to be a winner” when it comes to women”

(Mulvany in *Crysanthos*, p. 15, 2019).



Caroline Brazier and Matthew Whittet in Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.

Themes and Ideas (Cont.)



Helen Thomson and Caroline Brazier in Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.
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POWER: MARRIAGE, FEMININE AND SEXUAL POWER

In the sixteenth century, marriage and offspring were necessities for monarchs to produce an heir and create a dynasty. Mary married three times, but Elizabeth's decision not to marry was a strategy calculated to preserve her autonomy. In the sixteenth century, if a Queen married, her husband became the dominant ruler in the partnership by force of circumstance, detracting from the woman's independence (Muhlstein, 2017). As Elizabeth aged, marriage became too much of a risk to her autonomous rule, power and relationship with the English people.

Mary was married three times, to the French King, Lord Darnley and Lord Bothwell. Mary's marriage to the French King in 1558 was a grand occasion, at the cathedral of Notre Dame with crowds of French people attending. Mary declared herself "one of the happiest women in the world" (Shannon, 2018). Mary's marriage lasted only one year, with Francis dying suddenly in 1560.

Mary, an 18 year old widow returned to Scotland and ruled successfully. In 1565, she met Henry Darnley and married, despite opposition from the Scottish nobles. Their courtship was swift and passionate and the marriage an unhappy one, with Darnley having affairs and visiting brothels. Mary didn't trust Darnley and refused to grant him sovereignty. Whilst married to Lord Darnley, she gave birth to a son, James, who became the King of Scotland upon Mary's exile. Mary's closest ally during her unhappy marriage was David Rizzio, her secretary. Darnley, jealous of this relationship, led rebel lords of the court into the palace and stabbed David Rizzio to death, claiming that Mary and Rizzio were having an affair.

After the collapse of his marriage to Mary, Darnley retired to Glasgow and died during an explosion at his house. Darnley was found outside the house, which increased speculation that he had been murdered. Mary was suspected to have been involved in the planning of his murder with Lord Bothwell: "Mary's suspected involvement in the spectacular murder of Darnley in 1567 was a political mistake of the first order" (In Profile: Mary Queen of Scots, 2018).

Themes and Ideas (cont'd)

MARRIAGE, FEMININE & SEXUAL POWER

Mary did not have the support of her advisors or the Scottish people to marry Lord Darnley or Lord Bothwell. Bothwell was a prominent Scottish nobleman. Bothwell first met Mary, whilst she was married to the French King at which time she appointed him a nobleman of the French King's chamber. Mary and Lord Bothwell continued to be close throughout her reign. Muhlstein (2007) describes Bothwell as being brutish, with a reckless and furious energy. After Darnley's death, Bothwell kidnapped Mary on her way to Edinburgh and took her to his castle in Glasgow. Historical reports state that he raped Mary, to enforce his union and marriage with Mary. The extent to which Mary was an accomplice or a victim to his crude actions is unknown.

Elizabeth was not as passionate and impulsive as Mary. She prioritised the love of her position and her people over romantic love, marriage and children. Instead, Elizabeth knew how to use her feminine and sexual power with men in her court. She strung many potential suitors along and was rumoured to have had a long standing affair with her childhood friend and close advisor Lord Dudley whom she called Leicester. Robert Dudley was a handsome man and was favoured by the Queen. Many thought that if Dudley's wife were to die, the Queen may marry him (Muhlstein,

2007). After Dudley's wife died, he proposed to Elizabeth which she refused as she did not want to be associated with the rumour that Dudley had killed his wife in order to marry her.

Elizabeth fielded many marriage proposals and enjoyed carrying out marriage negotiations. Elizabeth came close to accepting the proposal of the Duke of Aron in France, whom Elizabeth called her 'little frog'. The Duke of Aron was the only suitor Elizabeth met in person. The marriage would have been an advantageous match forging the countries together. Aubespine, the Ambassador to France plays a small role in Mulvany's play, he tries to influence Elizabeth to accept the Duke of Aron's proposal. After the assassination attempt Elizabeth is rattled; she tells Aubespine to leave and states she will not accept the Duke of Aron's proposal: "I don't want any hideous frogs in my court. And tell the Dauphin and his queer King Brother that this Queen lives. This Queen is alive" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 69).

When Mary produced an heir, Elizabeth felt increased pressure to produce an heir. "I may be Queen, but I am still expected to oblige nature. Submit to its terms. My people insist on an heir you see" (Mulvany, 2018, p. 24). Muhlstein (2007) describes how Mary's position strengthened after producing a male heir. Elizabeth was under pressure by her advisors and the people of England to marry and procreate, in order to avoid the accession of a Catholic Queen.



Matthew Whittett and Faysal Bazzi in Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*.
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The Elements of Production



Set design by Elizabeth Gadsby for Sydney Theatre Company's *Mary Stuart*. © Brett Boardman

COSTUME DESIGN

The costume design by Mel Page has Elizabethan and contemporary influences. The costumes for the male characters are stylised contemporary black suits with white ruffs. This design is indicative of the patriarchal, restrained and conservative sixteenth century society the characters lived in.

The costumes for the women have a livelier, contemporary style. At the beginning of the play, Mary wears a simple garment after her clothes and fineries are removed by Elizabeth. In the execution scene, Mary's costume is symbolically theatrical with three layers. She goes to her execution in a black cloak, mourning her death. She takes off the black cloak to reveal a white dress, symbolic of purity and innocence. The final reveal is an elegant bright red dress. This dramatic clothing reveal happened historically with Mary being executed in an elegant red dress, symbolic of martyrdom.

Elizabeth's costumes in the play are ornate, colourful and glamorous. Elizabeth changed her image and style consistently. She used fashion and clothing to make herself iconic, similar to current young royal women today. Elizabeth feared losing her beauty and sexual power. In the party scene, Elizabeth wears a chic gold contemporary dress, representing freedom and fun. The other costumes she wears throughout the play are regal, elegant and colourful.

The party scene in the play is unique in terms of costume design. All characters except for Elizabeth wear identical black plastic skirts, making the characters identical.

SET DESIGN

The main element of the set design for *Mary Stuart* is a large tiered platform. This dominant structure is where the action of the play takes place. The stage is bordered with large windows complementing the lighting design.

The set revolves in the final scene, the execution scene. The moving revolve is symbolic of the world being out of order with the events in the play leading to the execution of a Queen.

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