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her granddaughter in New York City. The grandmother, sitting at the downstage table opposite the customs officer, speaks into a camera mounted on her monitor. Her visage appears on the large screen, but framed as if on a computer monitor. The granddaughter, seated in front of her computer in the middle of the acting area, yet angled upstage, talks into a camera and microphone embedded in her computer while her image is projected onto the large screen, but as an inset in the grandmother's frame. What we witness in this story line are two family members who continually try to connect with each other despite two primary difficulties: distance and failing memory. The image of the grandmother is mostly a clear, steady image although it begins to break down by the end of the performance, reflecting the dementia assaulting her mind.

One of the granddaughter's most urgent issues when chatting online is to procure a copy of the deed to the grandmother's home, which she obtains through the Sri Lankan government. The government, which used a database in order to keep and retrieve these records, employed a program of surveillance and information accumulation that supersedes memory. The database knows more about the grandmother, at least as a homeowner, than she herself does. Hence the surveillance engendered by the database in this narrative consolidates her identity as her memory of her self-identification disintegrates.

*Super Vision* shows that these forms of surveillance are part of the technology of our daily lives, that we are always inside of, surrounded by, and part of this machine. By utilizing linear narratives, The Builders Association reveals information about these individuals that the database can never account for. Whether the database is used for positive or negative ends, *Super Vision* reminds us that this kind of surveillance should not be the final arbiter of our identification practices.

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**RADIO MACBETH.** Created by SITI Company.

Directed by Anne Bogart. The Wexner Center for the Arts, Performance Space, Columbus, OH. 15 February 2007.

SITI Company's latest production, which premiered at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, began with a nearly empty stage: tables, chairs, a piano, a small curtain, and microphones. On a balcony overlooking the stage stood a



Stephen Webber (Macbeth) and Ellen Lauren (Lady Macbeth) discuss Duncan's murder while actor Gian-Murray Gianino looks on. Photo: Michael Brosilow, courtesy of SITI Company.

figure in the shadows. The play began in darkness and silence, broken by voices emanating from far off-stage. A group of actors entered the dark theatre, huddled together for safety. One actor lit his Zippo lighter and found his way across the stage. After noisily crashing into a pile of equipment he found the light switch, at which point the stage blazed with light. The actors then moved casually around the stage, dressed in the style of the 1930s or 1940s. They removed their coats, set up chairs, snacked on apples, and paged through scripts; some fiddled with microphones, others tinkered with the piano. Then one by one they took up the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and performed it as they would a radio show.

Codirected by SITI's sound designer Darron L. West, *Radio Macbeth* highlighted the rich sounds inherent in Shakespeare's script. Just as a radio drama builds its world by manipulating sound, the production created every movement and every sound precisely on the stage: the crack of biting into an apple, a Zippo lighter igniting, a ladder clattering to the ground. Actors used the live microphones to create the play's atmosphere, whispering dialogue, ringing bells, singing, blowing, and gasping into them. They used the available properties to create sound as well: slapping a board on the table, pulling on the curtains, slamming their scripts shut. During battle sequences they rattled chairs and growled into the microphones. This impressive use of sound created a rich atmosphere for Shakespeare's spookiest play. The very setting of an abandoned theatre emphasized the haunted world of *Macbeth*. The witches, for instance, spoke and sang into the microphones, while other actors whistled like the wind into them. Rather than creating their familiar scenes with cauldrons and dances, the witches produced a cacophony of sound by filtering their voices through the

microphones. In other words, controlling the sound meant controlling the world of the play.

Stephen Webber, the actor who portrayed Macbeth, began the play as the figure on the balcony. However, when another actor (Will Bond) began speaking the role of Macbeth, Webber climbed down, pushed Bond aside, took over his role, and began directing the rest of the actors. Webber's Macbeth, in addition to aiming for the throne of Scotland, attempted to control the performance of the play itself: he cued actors, positioned microphones, and generally conducted the action. He performed Macbeth like a passionate actor who, caught up in the story, deviates from the script. As the play progressed and Macbeth lost control over the events occurring in Scotland, Webber's character lost all power over his fellow actors; just as Macbeth was overthrown, the tyrant-director was cast aside.

*Radio Macbeth* framed the stage play with the conventions of a radio drama. While the actors performed Shakespeare's play, the live audience witnessed what a radio audience could not see. Actors whispered together in the corners; from time to time they dropped objects or crashed into furniture; they mouthed compliments to one another after performing difficult passages. The production's use of sound, then, became a key to understanding the play. A radio audience relies on actors' voices and sound effects to comprehend the action; *Radio Macbeth* abided by the same conventions. Several actors narrated the play for the radio audience, detailing entrances, exits, locations, and passage of time. Webber's Macbeth orchestrated the action by controlling the sound effects on stage; in other words, he manipulated the sounds, space, and bodies of the stage to control the total effect heard on the radio.

SITI Company produced a fascinating amalgamation of genres that featured the interplay of several worlds. First there was the performance of the play itself: the live audience witnessed the action behind the action—the use of one genre (stage) to construct another (radio). The action of *Radio Macbeth* began with character-types straight out of early twentieth-century entertainment; these types then morphed into Shakespeare's characters, into the second layer: the tragic world of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with all of its deceit, guilt, and quests for power. Just as Webber's director paralleled Macbeth's descent, the radio-drama format became eclipsed by the events of the play. The final layer emerged via the inevitable comparison, through the use of radio and the play *Macbeth*, with actor Orson Welles's career. The production's amalgamation of radio and *Macbeth* conjured both Welles's famous 1936 *Voodoo Macbeth* and his broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*. SITI

Company used this blend of multiple mediums and historical echoes to illuminate the complex tale of *Macbeth* and its equally complex history on and off the stage. The production illuminated the play's emphasis on sound, the intricacy of its characters and situations, and—through Stephen Webber's characterization of Macbeth/director—the provocative parallels between political and artistic control.

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**THE AMBASSADORS.** Created by the ensemble. Nova Arts Project. Midtown Arts Center, Houston. 14 April 2007.

Billed as "A Tragedy of Tragical Proportions," *The Ambassadors* is in fact an example of *tragedia*, a lesser-known branch of the *commedia dell'arte* family that takes basic tropes of tragedy—wicked royals, doomed young lovers, political machinations, murders, suicides, and so on—and drastically overplays them for comedic effect. The core ensemble behind this project is a group of young American and Spanish actors who met at the International School of Comic Acting run by *commedia* maestro Antonio Fava in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Working from a historical *canovaccio* (literally, a "canvas" or scenario) obtained from Fava, the group developed *The Ambassadors* as a full-length piece for Nova Arts Project, an ambitious start-up company based in Houston that has proved adept at reinvigorating works plucked from the theatrical past.

As in every surviving *canovaccio* for *tragedia*, the story of *The Ambassadors* revolves around the young *innamorati*, Flavio and Isabella. In this case, Flavio is a young diplomat who marries Isabella while on a mission to make peace with the king of a neighboring land who has become a mad warmonger due to repeated poisonings orchestrated by his wife. Seeking to seduce Flavio, the lecherous queen captures Isabella and has her brutally tortured. When Isabella finally escapes from the dungeon and kills the queen, she has been so badly disfigured that Flavio fails to recognize her. He runs her through with his sword, and then, realizing his mistake, kills himself. Finally, the king enters, regains his senses, and his heart explodes.

*Tragedia* does not parody tragedy so much as it intensifies tragedy's shocks to the point of lunacy. *The Ambassadors* succeeds due to the actors' commitment to grounding their improvisations in this very particular form of theatrical exaggeration. The lovers are played with such great earnestness that