SUGGESTED TEXTS

CLASSICAL

Below are a selection of scenes from previous Physical Lab residencies and productions as well as links to the complete texts online. Though actors are welcome to bring any text to the workshops, these are scenes which we believe lend themselves particularly well to the training and methodologies of the Lab.

If you want work with any of the scenes below, please make sure you are as familiar with your chosen character the play as a whole prior to the workshop.

Please note, Physical Lab work and train with gender blind casting and character genders are listed as they appear in the original text for reference only.

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01 MACBETH

(Complete play: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html)

LADY MACBETH (F): ACT I SCENE V "UNSEX ME HERE"

Upon hearing news of the prophecy that predicts her husband's rise to claim to the throne of Scotland, Lady Macbeth summons all her strength to support her husband in the terrible deeds they must commit.

MACBETH (M): ACT II SCENE I "IS THIS A DAGGER..."

Intercepted by visions of a dagger, Macbeth falters en route to kill the king.

MACBETH (M): ACT III SCENE I "TO BE THUS..."

Macbeth has secured the throne, but much still stands in his way. A childless king, his throne will pass to Banquo's children. With the witches' prophecy fresh in his mind, he is plagued by a desperate need to eliminate all those who could challenge his reign.

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02 ANTIGONE

(Complete play: antigone.doc; transl. E. F. Watling)

ANTIGONE (F): "THAT ORDER DID NOT COME FROM GOD"

Antigone defies the crown and buries the body of her brother- who had been declared an enemy to the state and left to rot. Confronted by her uncle, Antigone defends her actions and her beliefs.

CREON (M): "MY COUNTRY'S ENEMY"

Having inherited a divided and unstable kingdom, Creon lays down the law to his people with unshakable conviction.

03 MEDEA

(Complete play: medea.pdf transl. J. Michael Walton and David Thompson)

MEDEA (F): "I SHALL SEND MY SERVANT" (PART ONE) "I SHALL SEND MY SERVANT" (PART TWO)

Jason, the father to Medea's children, is set to remarry. Consumed by loathing and resentment, Medea decides to avenge his betrayal.

JASON (M): "THIS IS BY NO MEANS THE FIRST TIME..."

Jason attempts to reason with Medea, defending his actions and extending his support. But it is too little too late for Medea, a woman scorned and abandoned with a fierce temper which knows no limit.

04 AS YOU LIKE IT

(Complete play: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/asyoulikeit/full.html)

PHEBE (F): ACT III SCENE V "THINK NOT I LOVE HIM..."

After an encounter with the cutting and disdainful Rosalind, Phebe finds herself unexpectedly falling in love - against her better judgement.

ORLANDO (M): ACT I SCENE I "AS I REMEMBER ADAM..."

In the wake of his father's death, the young Orlando finds himself living a miserable existence under the "care" or his elder brother. He must find a way to secure his freedom and end his suffering.

ROSALIND (F): ACT III SCENE II "LOVE IS MERELY A MADNESS"

Rosalind, in disguise as a man, puts her suitor to the test. A witty, scathing look at love and the effect it has on men and women alike.

05 RICHARD III

(Complete play: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/richardiii/full.html)

RICHARD GLOUCESTER (M), ACT I SCENE I 'THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT'

The first and perhaps the most famous monologue of the play. Having helped his older brother Edward defeat his enemies and rise to the throne, Richard now plots to destroy him and be king himself.

HENRY, EARL OF RICHMOND (M), ACT V SCENE III 'TIME TO ARM'

Future King Henry VII speaks to his soldiers, preparing them for battle against the 'bloody tyrant' Richard.

LADY ANNE (F), ACT IV SCENE I 'WHEN HE THAT IS MY HUSBAND NOW'

Having been seduced by Richard literally over her first husband's dead body, Anne now fears her new husband is planning to kill her, too.

QUEEN MARGARET (F), ACT IV SCENE IV 'I CALLED THEE THEN'

Queen Margaret has lost everything. So has Queen Elizabeth, her daughter in law, whose two sons were killed by Richard, Margaret's son. Even this shared pain will not soften Margaret's heart.

01

MACBETH

ACT I SCENE V “UNSEX ME HERE”

LADY MACBETH

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

01

MACBETH

ACT II SCENE I “IS THIS A DAGGER”

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

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UPDATED: NOV 2026

A bell rings
I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

01

MACBETH

ACT III SCENE I “TO BE THUS...”

MACBETH

To be thus is nothing;
But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters
When first they put the name of king upon me,
And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
Rather than so, come fate into the list.
And champion me to the utterance!

02

ANTIGONE

“THAT ORDER DID NOT COME FROM GOD”

ANTIGONE

That order did not come from God. Justice,
That dwells with the gods below, knows no such law.
I did not think your edicts strong enough
To overrule the unwritten unalterable laws
Of God and heaven, you being only a man.
They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting
Though where they came from, none of us can tell.
Guilty of their transgression before God
I cannot be, for any man on earth.
I knew that I should die, of course,
With or without your order. If it be soon,
So much the better. Living in daily torment
As I do, who would not be glad to die?
This punishment will not be any pain.
Only if I let my mother’s son
Lie there unburied, then I could not have borne it.
This I can bear. Does that seem foolish to you?
Or is it you that are foolish to judge me so?

02

ANTIGONE

CREON “MY COUNTRY’S ENEMY”

CREON

No man who is my country’s enemy
Shall call himself my friend. Of this I am sure—
Our country is our life; only when she
Rides safely, have we any friends at all.
Such is my policy for our common weal
In pursuance of this, I have made a proclamation
Concerning the sons of Oedipus, as follows:
Eteocles, who fell fighting in defense of the city,
Fighting gallantly, is to be honored with burial
And with all the rites due to the noble dead.
The other—you know whom I mean—his brother, Polynices,
Who came back from exile intending to burn and destroy
His fatherland and the gods of his fatherland,
To drink the blood of his kin, to make them slaves—
He is to have no grave, no burial,
No mourning from anyone; it is forbidden.
He is to be left unburied, left to be eaten
By dogs and vultures, a horror for all to see.
I am determined that never, if I can help it,
Shall evil triumph over good. Alive
Or dead, the faithful servant of this country
Shall be rewarded.

03

MEDEA

“I SHALL SEND MY SERVANT” (PART ONE)

MEDEA

Oh Zeus, and your daughter, Justice, and the light
Of Helios the Sun-god! Now, good friends,
I shall triumph over all my enemies!
I shall wreak vengeance upon those I hate!
Just where my bark most faltered, this man appears
To offer me safe haven; to him I will make fast
The cables of my prow when I have reached
The town and citadel of Athens.
And now I will explain my plains in full.
Do not expect to hear a pleasant story.

I shall send my servant to ask Jason
For one more interview; and when he comes
I shall address him reasonably, saying,
“This pleases me,” and, “that is good,”
I’ll even praise the marriage to the princess
My treacherous lond now celebrates:
“It suits us both,” I’ll say.
“It is a clever move.” And then I’ll beg him
To let my children plead against their exile.
Not that I really mean to leave them here
Exposed to insults in a hostile land,
But so that I can use them cunningly
As messengers of death against the princess.
I’ll send them in with gifts to plead with her
Against their banishments; they'll carry
A finely woven robe, and a gold chaplet.
With such dire poisons I shall smear my gifts
That, if she puts them on,

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UPDATED: NOV 2026

She will die horribly,
And all who touch her.

03

MEDEA

“I SHALL SEND MY SERVANT” (PART TWO)

MEDEA

My next move
I shudder at myself. For I must kill
The children I have borne. No one shall stop me.
And when I have quite ruined Jason’s house
I’ll leave this land, escape all punishment
For this Unholy act, my dear sons’ murder.
I cannot, will not, tolerate
The scorn of those I hate.

So be it. What use is life to me?
I have no country now, no home, no refuge
From my despair. Oh, I was wrong
To leave my father’s house. I never should
Have been persuaded by that glib Hellene
Who now, with the god’s help, will pay
A dreadful price. Never again will he see alive
The sons I bore him; nor from his new bride
Breed other heirs, for she must die
An agonising death, slain by my poisons.
Let no one see me as a poor weak woman
Who sits with folded hands. I’m of another mould/
Kind to my friends; implacable to foes.
To such as live like me the glory goes.

03

MEDEA

“THIS IS BY NO MEANS THE FIRST TIME...”

JASON

This is by no means the first time I have noted
The destructive effect of an unruly temper.

You, Medea, might have stayed here in this land,
Even in this house, if you had bowed
Submissively to the wishes of your rulers,
But now your thoughtless words have banished you.

You can revile Jason as the worst of me
As much as you want; but having spoken ill
Of the King and his daughter,
You must count your life a bonus,
Mere exile your good fortune.
At all times I have tried to modify
The fury of the King, and would have kept you here.
But you would not forego your childish rages
Went on reviling them: and so are banished.

Yet even after all this, I’ll not desert you.
My good will continues. I am come to you now
Having taken much thought for your future.
So that you and your sons will not be destitute
Or want for anything when you are exiled,
For exile brings a host of troubles with it.
However badly you may think of me, Medea,
I shall never bear ill will towards you.

04

AS YOU LIKE IT

ACT III SCENE V “THINK NOT I LOVE HIM...”

PHEBE

Think not I love him, though I ask for him:
'Tis but a peevish boy; yet he talks well;
But what care I for words? yet words do well
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
It is a pretty youth: not very pretty:
But, sure, he's proud, and yet his pride becomes him:
He'll make a proper man: the best thing in him
Is his complexion; and faster than his tongue
Did make offence his eye did heal it up.
He is not very tall; yet for his years he's tall:
His leg is but so so; and yet 'tis well:
There was a pretty redness in his lip,
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mix'd in his cheek; 'twas just the difference
Between the constant red and mingled damask.
There be some women, Silvius, had they mark'd him
In parcels as I did, would have gone near
To fall in love with him; but, for my part,
I love him not nor hate him not; and yet
I have more cause to hate him than to love him:
For what had he to do to chide at me?
He said mine eyes were black and my hair black:
And, now I am remember'd, scorn'd at me:
I marvel why I answer'd not again

04

AS YOU LIKE IT

ACT I SCENE I “AS I REMEMBER ADAM...”

Orlando

As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion bequeathed me by will but poor a thousand crowns, and, as thou sayest, charged my brother, on his blessing, to breed me well: and there begins my sadness. My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit: for my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better; for, besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired: but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth; for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I. Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the something that nature gave me his countenance seems to take from me: he lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education. This is it, Adam, that grieves me; and the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude: I will no longer endure it, though yet I know no wise remedy how to avoid it.

04

AS YOU LIKE IT

ACT III SCENE II “LOVE IS MERELY A MADNESS”

ROSALIND

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves
as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and
the reason why they are not so punished and cured
is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers
are in love too. Yet I profess curing it by counsel.
And in this manner. He was to imagine me
his love, his mistress; and I set him every day to
woo me: at which time would I, being but a moonish
youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing
and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow,
inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles, for every
passion something and for no passion truly any
thing, as boys and women are for the most part
cattle of this colour; would now like him, now loathe
him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep
for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor
from his mad humour of love to a living humour of
madness; which was, to forswear the full stream of
the world, and to live in a nook merely monastic.
And thus I cured him; and this way will I take upon
me to wash your liver as clean as a sound sheep's
heart, that there shall not be one spot of love in't.

05

RICHARD III

ACT I SCENE I “THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT”

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barded steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity:
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,

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I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here
Clarence comes.

05

RICHARD III

ACT V SCENE III “TIME TO ARM...”

RICHMOND

Why, then 'tis time to arm and give direction.
More than I have said, loving countrymen,
The leisure and enforcement of the time
Forbids to dwell upon: yet remember this,
God and our good cause fight upon our side;
The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
Like high-rear'd bulwarks, stand before our faces;
Richard except, those whom we fight against
Had rather have us win than him they follow:
For what is he they follow? truly, gentlemen,
A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One raised in blood, and one in blood establish'd;
One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughter'd those that were the means to help him;
Abase foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy:
Then, if you fight against God's enemy,
God will in justice ward you as his soldiers;
If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain;
If you do fight against your country's foes,
Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire;
If you do fight in safeguard of your wives,
Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors;
If you do free your children from the sword,
Your children's children quit it in your age.
Then, in the name of God and all these rights,
Advance your standards, draw your willing swords.

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For me, the ransom of my bold attempt
Shall be this cold corpse on the earth's cold face;
But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt
The least of you shall share his part thereof.
Sound drums and trumpets boldly and cheerfully;
God and Saint George! Richmond and victory

05

RICHARD III

ACT IV SCENE I “HE THAT IS MY HUSBAND…”

LADY ANNE

When he that is my husband now
Came to me, as I follow'd Henry's corpse,
When scarce the blood was well wash'd from his hands
Which issued from my other angel husband
And that dead saint which then I weeping follow'd;
O, when, I say, I look'd on Richard's face,
This was my wish: 'Be thou,' quoth I, ' accursed,
For making me, so young, so old a widow!
And, when thou wed'st, let sorrow haunt thy bed;
And be thy wife--if any be so mad--
As miserable by the life of thee
As thou hast made me by my dear lord's death!
Lo, ere I can repeat this curse again,
Even in so short a space, my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words
And proved the subject of my own soul's curse,
Which ever since hath kept my eyes from rest;
For never yet one hour in his bed
Have I enjoy'd the golden dew of sleep,
But have been waked by his timorous dreams.
Besides, he hates me for my father Warwick;
And will, no doubt, shortly be rid of me.

05

RICHARD III

ACT IV SCENE IV “I CALLED THEE THEN”

QUEEN MARGARET

I call'd thee then vain flourish of my fortune;
I call'd thee then poor shadow, painted queen;
The presentation of but what I was;
The flattering index of a direful pageant;
One heaved a-high, to be hurl'd down below;
A mother only mock'd with two sweet babes;
A dream of what thou wert, a breath, a bubble,
A sign of dignity, a garish flag,
To be the aim of every dangerous shot,
A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
Where is thy husband now? where be thy brothers?
Where are thy children? wherein dost thou, joy?
Who sues to thee and cries 'God save the queen'?
Where be the bending peers that flatter'd thee?
Where be the thronging troops that follow'd thee?
Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
For queen, a very caitiff crown'd with care;
For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
For one that scorn'd at me, now scorn'd of me;
For one being fear'd of all, now fearing one;
For one commanding all, obey'd of none.
Thus hath the course of justice wheel'd about,
And left thee but a very prey to time;
Having no more but thought of what thou wert,
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
Thou didst usurp my place, and dost thou not
Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow?

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Now thy proud neck bears half my burthen'd yoke;
From which even here I slip my weary neck,
And leave the burthen of it all on thee.
Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance:
These English woes will make me smile in France.