

TAMKANG ENGLISH

專題報導

Break a Leg, Macbeth!

Since the beginning of its long history, theatre¹ has seen many accidents and disasters. It is therefore small wonder² that superstitions³ abound⁴ in this profession.

The rationale⁵ behind some common theatrical superstitions may not be self-evident⁶. For example, it is considered unlucky to rehearse⁷ the curtain call⁸ before the dress rehearsal⁹. So is whistling in the dressing room¹⁰. Having real flowers on stage is regarded as very unlucky unless they are offered to the leading lady¹¹ at the curtain call. There could be a practical reason behind this superstition, though: under the hot stage lights, petals¹² may fall on the floor and cause the actors to slip¹³. Besides, real flowers could simply be too expensive to replace for each performance.

One of the most famous superstitions involves Shakespeare's great tragedy Macbeth¹⁴. Many actors consider it bad luck to refer to this play by name unless it is actually being produced. Instead, people would call it The Scottish Play, That Play, or The Unmentionable¹⁵.

No actor wants to hear "good luck" before a performance¹⁶: the term is believed to have exactly the opposite effect. "Break a leg!"¹⁷ is a welcome alternative¹⁸.

Diagloue

Bill: Will you come and see me in The Scottish Play next Saturday?

Betty: Sure. Which part are you playing?

Bill: The First Murderer. It's not a big part, but I'm nervous all the same.

Betty: Don't worry. Break a leg!

1. theatre (theater) (n.) 劇場，舞台，戲劇界。
2. small wonder 不足為怪，怪不得。
3. superstition (n.) 迷信。
4. to abound (v.) 大量存在。
5. rationale (n.) 理由。
6. self-evident (adj.) 清楚的，無須再多做解釋的。
7. to rehearse (v.) 排練。
8. curtain call (n.) 謝幕。
9. dress rehearsal (n.) 正式演出前最後一次彩排。
10. whistling in the dressing room (n.) 在更衣化妝間裡吹口哨。
11. leading lady (n.) 女主角。
12. petals (n.) 花瓣。
13. to slip (v.) 滑一跤。
14. Macbeth 《馬克白》，莎士比亞的四大悲劇之一，敘述野心勃勃的馬克白夫婦，為了篡奪王位，謀殺了國王，但最後遭到反抗軍消滅。場景設在蘇格蘭，因此被稱為《蘇格蘭劇》。
15. unmentionable (adj.) 不宜〈不可〉提起的。
16. performance (n.) 演出。
17. Break a leg! 祝你摔斷腿！因為祝演員好運，會給他帶來壞運，所以許個相反的願，負負得正。
18. alternative (n.) 可選擇的方案、方法，東西。

劇場裡面意外多，危險多，所以趨吉避凶的迷信也多。至於信不信，就由你囉。