

Theater Sgaramusch:

Queen

Two radio-play actors record a radio play using simple equipment about the lives of Queen Elisabeth of England and Mary Queen of Scots. More and more they become taken over by the characters they are playing until even the tape recorder itself starts joining in too.

Accompanying Material

1. Preparation – Introduction suggestions for Teachers

2. Follow-up work – Evaluation, suggestions for teachers

- Questions for a discussion or essay
- Make your own radioplay
- FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

3. Information about the production

4. Notes for Pupils (to copy)

Note

This paper is a translation from German and has been written for children who don't happen to live *in* Great Britain. If you and your pupils do, you will have to adapt a few points and questions that refer to England and Scotland as foreign countries. We're confident you'll find equally valuable replacements for these parts.

1. Preparation – Introduction suggestions for Teachers

The following suggestions can be used as a basic introduction to the piece.

The text is already simply formulated and targeted to achieve a feeling for and understanding of the times.

Suggestion

Five hundred years ago, two women in power.

The show you are about to see is a radio play. Two performers will be recording it live in front of you.

The story that they are going to record takes place 500 years ago. That's a long time ago. But if we look at it in terms of history, it is really like "the day before yesterday". People already refer to this as part of "Modern times". The middle ages were already long gone, America had been discovered and in Europe there was a great variety and growth in the arts, education, religion, and economics. Nevertheless, life was still very different then to how it is today.

The story takes place not in Switzerland (where the actors come from) but on the Island that today we call Great Britain. In England and Scotland. The two heroines are **Elisabeth**, the Queen of England and **Mary**, the Queen of Scotland.

Lots has been written about them at the time and later and then passed on. There are a lot of books about them and letters from both of them from the time have also been found. We don't know exactly if everything really happened exactly as we have been lead to believe or if indeed the reality was quite different.

But both women really existed and they were both Queens, that much is sure. 500 years ago **it was extremely unusual that women could reign over an entire country.**

Also we should not forget that at that time, a King or Queen had much more power than say a Prime Minister or a President has today. They were **very powerful** people indeed. The Queen could basically decide over everything, but she would still have to be careful not to lose the support of the people or not to make too many enemies who could plot against her.

This struggle for power was huge. So that they didn't have to rule and make all decisions completely alone, a Queen or King would also have **advisors** to counsel them. These advisors often had a great influence on the King or Queen.

At this time, the whole of Europe was ruled over by a series of **Aristocratic and Royal families** who were connected and **related to each other** across the entire continent.

In these Aristocratic families people **married** not because of love, but because of convenience or rather because of the politics of power. Someone would marry a King because of his wealth or because he could make someone else wealthier. Or people married the Kings of other lands to avoid conflicts or wars, so that they would not have to be afraid of them anymore.

It was decided who would next be King or Queen through **Birthright**. You could not become the next King or Queen simply through marriage, you had to produce children. The most important task for a Queen was to provide heirs to the throne in order for the Royal family to continue in power through its line of succession.

If a King died, without a direct heir, then there often began a terrible row between the relatives of the dead King, over **who should succeed** to the throne. This is how it was with two cousins, Elisabeth and Mary Stuart.

If you lost power, then you could lose everything and be very quickly locked up in a tower for the rest of your life or even sentenced to Death. They would simply say **“Off with their head!”**

If you became ill in these times it was not at all sure that you could get better. In those days there were lots of **terrible diseases** which we are no longer have to be afraid of today; the Plague, Dysentery, typhoid, smallpox... Death was much closer to people then and the royal families were also not safer!

As you can see it wasn't a harmless easy world in which the two of them lived and fought. You'll hear about how they dealt with this it in the play.

2. Follow-up work

Evaluation, Suggestions for Teachers

Questions for a discussion or an Essay:

Understanding

- What can you remember most strongly about the piece?
- Could you tell us the story in your own words, and say what it was about?

Elisabeth and Mary

- How would you describe Elisabeth? What sort of a woman was she?
- Do you understand her?
- And Mary?
- What is the difference between the two of them? Which one of them did you find the most sympathetic? Why?
- The two Queens were not friends. You could describe them as best enemies. Do you also have a best enemy?
- Should Mary have listened more to her Advisor?
- What do you think of Mary's various Husbands?
- Why did Elisabeth never marry? What do you suppose?

Framework Topics

- Do you know anything about England or Scotland? Maybe you once had a Holiday there, or because of a relative?
- What else do you know about these places?
- Have you ever been in a King's castle? What did you think of it?
- Is it normal nowadays for Women to be in power? What do you think about it?

Power and Responsibility

- If your country had a King or Queen, how would it be different?
- If you were King or Queen of your country, you could decide over everything. Except yourself of course, because you would have a lot of responsibilities. What would they be for example? Would you still want to be King or Queen? What decisions or rules would you make?

History

- Did everything happen exactly as we told it in our radio play?
- Were the two actors always in agreement about what happened?
- Has it ever happened to you, that you and someone else have both told different versions of the same story? For example, after a fight or an argument?
- Does the story of Elisabeth and Mary have any consequences for life today?
- Would the world be a different place today if things had gone differently?

Advanced...

- Have you ever experienced, that a small action can have big results?
- An Example: “If I had only closed the cellar window, then we wouldn’t have had to turn back to close it when it started to rain, and we wouldn’t have missed our train. Then we wouldn’t have met these people in the next train, who are today our best friends.”
- Is it possible to tell a story without having an opinion about what happened? And do you tell stories differently depending on what you think about them?
- If people afterwards have different versions of a story – Isn’t that also then how they experienced it? Has this ever happened to you?
- If you can’t be sure of what exactly happened, how can you be really sure that something is actually real?

Make your own Radio Play

The most entertaining follow-up work would be to make a small radio play with the pupils. To record it you only need a simple cassette recorder, but if you have an external microphone or a Mini-Disc recorder then even better.

Even simpler would be to play a sound-effects game, in which one or more persons make specific sounds or a sound-scapes (Playground, Jungle etc) whilst the others with closed eyes try to guess what it is they are hearing.

Short Instructions

1. The story

Make up a story!

2. The sounds

First of all decide which sounds are needed to tell the story. Then find the sounds. They can be sounds made with the voice, with the body, or with paper, plastic, wood, stones, water etc ...

3. Das Drehbuch

Now write yourselves out a simple script in which the story and the sounds needed are written out alongside each other. Here's an example

Narrator: "Elmer slowly opened the cupboard."

Sound: Squeaking made with fingernails on the blackboard.

Elmar: "Is someone Inside?"

Narrator: "Nothing. Elmer closed the cupboard again."

Sound: School desk lid being closed.

Gnome: "Hello! Here I am!"

Sound: Elmar shocked.

3. The story with sound effects

First decide who is doing what: Who is the Narrator, who are the characters and who will be making the sounds etc. Find out during rehearsals when exactly the sounds need to be made.

N.B. Silence can also be very exciting!!!

4. The Show

Set up a table with all the things that you will need, including text and material for creating sounds. Then off you go, Action!

(A tip for the audience; try listening as well with your eyes closed.)

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

Why did Mary claim to be the legitimate Queen of England?

With the beheading of her mother, Elisabeth was no longer in line to the throne and so become only the illegitimate child of the King. Her next of kin or rather her nearest "legitimate" born relative is Mary. So when Elisabeth is no longer in the bloodline to the throne, next in line would be Mary.

Sorry, can you repeat the story?

Both the Royal households of England and Scotland have produced female offspring.

In England it is sunny and warm, but the King is furious he doesn't want a daughter - he wants a son! He has his wife beheaded and sends his daughter **Elisabeth** out to the countryside. Because of the beheading of her mother, Elisabeth is now seen as a „Bastard“, as an illegitimate child. When her father the King dies, because no other ruler is in place, Elisabeth still manages to become Queen of England

In Scotland it is cold and wet, but at least the Scots are pleased about the birth of the little girl **Mary**. To bring some money in, Mary is engaged to the heir to the French throne and sent to France. Here she becomes Queen. When her husband, the French King dies Mary can no longer remain Queen. She must return to Scotland. However, someone plants an idea in her head; if Elisabeth technically is only the illegitimate heir to the throne, then is she Mary the next in the Bloodline and as such the legitimate Queen of England! Elisabeth of course disputes this vehemently.

Following the advice of her advisor **Rizzio**, Mary starts looking for a powerful new husband who could help her to attack and conquer England. Elisabeth thinks up a plan to trick Mary and sends her own advisor and lover **Dudley** to Scotland to marry Mary. This way Elisabeth could secretly control power in Scotland.

But Mary is not so easily tricked. Instead of listening to her advisor and marrying a powerful King, she marries the very young and not very influential **Didley**. He very quickly becomes a problem for Mary. He is not only unpopular with the people but he is constantly jealous and quick-tempered.

As Mary distances herself from him, the jealous Didley organises a Putsch, kills Rizzio and imprisons Mary. Only her military minister Dodley can free her from her tower.

At the same time, Mary falls in love with **Dodley**, but he is already married! Only the thought of becoming King of Scotland convinces him to divorce his wife.

Then they decide that they must get Didley out of the way. He is lying ill in bed with smallpox. They take him to a remote country house that they then blow up.

The people smell something fishy going on and they don't like it. When Mary and Dodley finally marry it proves too much and both of them have to flee Scotland. Elisabeth was right not to have married her Dudley. Mary arrives in England where Elisabeth immediately arrests her and locks her up as a suspected murderer.

Mary is imprisoned for twenty years in England and refuses to renounce her claim to the English throne. From her prison cell she plots how to kill Elisabeth and to become Queen herself. As these plans become more and more dangerous Elisabeth is forced, reluctantly to sign the secret death warrant for Mary.

Mary was beheaded and Elisabeth reigned for quite a while longer. Her reign was a time of growth and development for England.

Is that all true?

Yes, give or take one or two theatrical simplifications. For example, between the reign of Elisabeth and her father (Henry VIII, who beheaded Elisabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn) there were other Monarchs; including Mary Tudor – known as “Bloody Mary” for her hard actions against the Protestants. To aid understanding we have decided to leave out the subject of **Catholicism vs. Protestantism**.

In reality wasn't Elisabeth much more mean and frustrated?

This is a myth which goes back to the play by Schiller. Elisabeth was a confident and strong monarch with a sense of responsibility and a great deal of success. She tried many times to deal with the threats from Mary through tactical means before she finally decided to pass the death sentence.

Were they really called Dudley, Didley und Dodley?

No, we made that up - almost: Elisabeth's lover Dudley was really called Robert **Dudley**, Mary's second husband Didley, Henry **Darnley**. And Dodley, Mary's third husband was Earl James **Bothwell**.

What books are available on the subject??

Quite a lot. Also a book for children, *Beware, Princess Elizabeth* von Carolyn Meyer, edited by Harcourt. It is limited to Elisabeths youth, though. *Maria Stuart* by Stefan Zweig is a german classic, available in english translation. *Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart: The Perils of Marriage* by Anka Muhlstein (edited by Haus Publishing) gives a good overview over the relation between the two queens.

For my pupils I need a few basic Dates and some more historical context.

The Wikipedia webpages for Elisabeth I. and Mary Stuart are recommendable. There you will find biographies of all those involved.

For the understanding of the piece, topics such as **European marriage politics** or the **unusual positions of power of both women** are important.

A little **geography** of Great Britain could also help.

(N.B: in the show its always sunny in warm in rich England, while in poor Scotland its cold and wet...).

3. Information about the Show

Director/Text:	Carol Blanc
Performers:	Nora Vonder Mühl Gerhard A. Goebel
Set and Props:	Britta Hagen
Sounds:	Olifr Maurmann
Conceptwork:	Stefan Colombo
Production/Administration:	Ariane Waldvogel
Graphic Design	Simon Renggli
This documentation	Urs Bräm
	Roman Weishaupt
Translation	Phil Hayes
Technical Support	Samuel Hartmann
Produced by	Theater Sgaramusch Postfach 3166 CH-8201 Schaffhausen
Tel/Fax	052 624 58 68
www	www.sgaramusch.ch theater@sgaramusch.ch

4. Notes and materials for pupils

- Introduction sheet
- Figures to cut out and paint
- Map for sticking the figures on

Queen

A play by Theater Sgaramusch

In "Queen" you will be watching two actors make a sound recording, like a radio play. In their old fashioned recording studio they are using very simple equipment without the use of computers, samplers or sound-effects CDs to record their story.

Today they will be adding sound to a story that took place a long time ago, but that could still happen today. It is a story about two very different women:

Elisabeth, the Queen of England and **Mary**, the Queen of Scotland. They were cousins, but they argued a lot. Maybe because they were so different, or maybe because they were just related....

It's difficult to believe what actually happened to them, but it's really true!

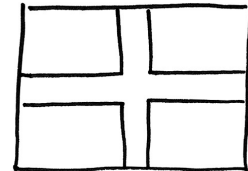
The Characters

Because there are so many characters in this story, we've going to introduce you to them on the next page.

You can cut them out, paint them or colour them in and stick them in the right place on the map.

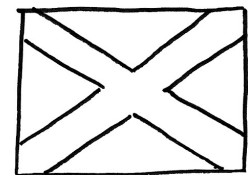
England and Scotland

Oh and something else, this is the English flag:
Please colour the cross Red.
These are the colours of England.



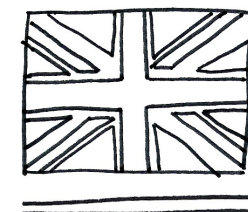
And this is the flag of Scotland:
Please colour the triangles blue.
These are the colours of Scotland.

+



Today there are part of one larger country, Great Britain.
However, Great Britain didn't exist then.

=



Also here; please colour in !
The triangles blue,
The cross and the diagonal stripes red.

The Characters

The Queens:



Elisabeth, Queen of England

When she was a little girl, her father had her mother beheaded and she was forced out of the castle. But at the age of 25, she did become Queen.



Mary, Queen of Scotland

Even as a six day old baby she was already Queen of Scotland but in Scotland it rained too much.

Their Advisors:



Dudley

He is Elisabeth's most important advisor and also her lover. But he isn't her husband as Elisabeth never marries.



Rizzio

He is Italian, likes to sing and is Mary's most important advisor.

Mary's husbands:



Nr. 1

The French Prince

Mary lives with him for a while in France.



Nr.2

Didley

National horse-riding champion. Young and very jealous.



Nr. 3

Dodley

Mary's military minister.

England and Scotland

Stick the characters here

