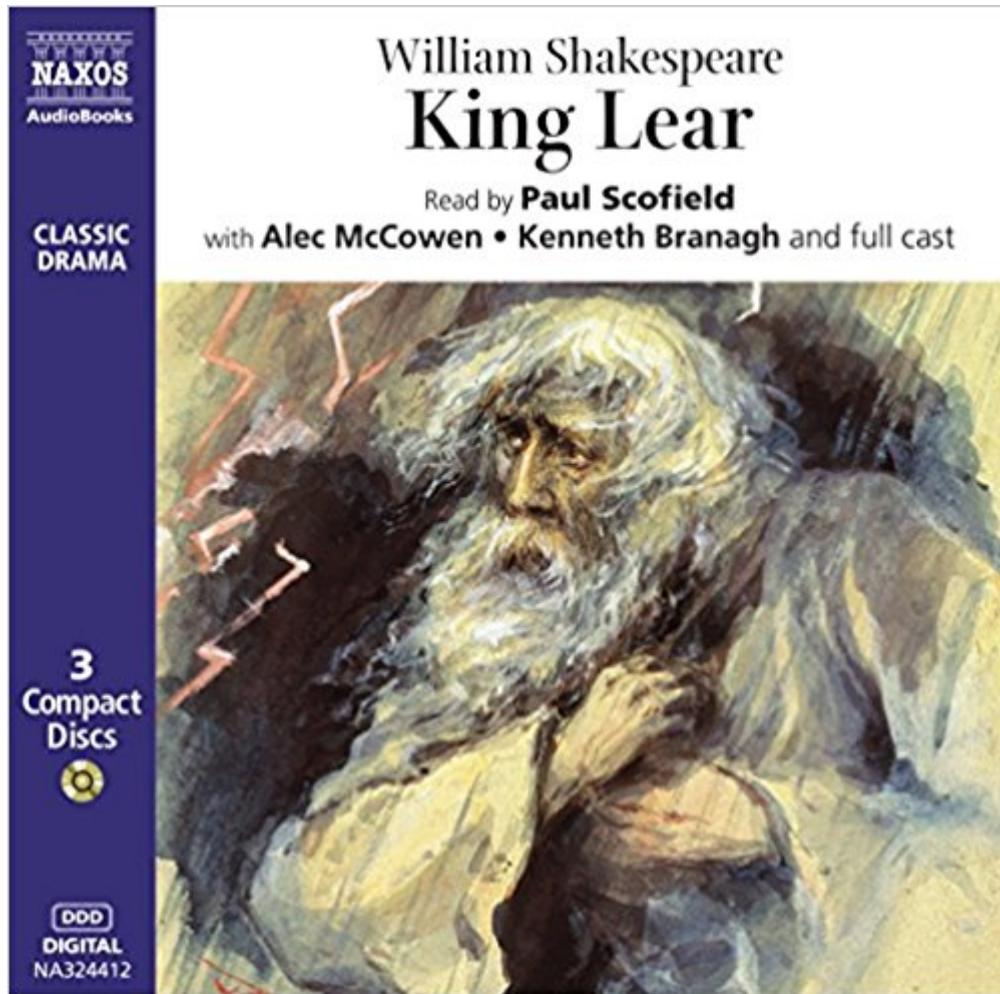




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King Lear (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

The third of Shakespeare's great tragedies, *King Lear*, written in 1605, is a tale of vanity, lust and betrayal. Using complete text of *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, this full cast performance features Paul Scofield, Britain's senior classical actor, in the title role. *King Lear* is the ninth recording in Naxos AudioBooks' series of unabridged dramatizations of Shakespeare plays.

Book Information

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

It's a great pleasure to hear Paul Scofield as *King Lear* in a recording published to coincide with the actor's 80th birthday. The famous tenderness of his voice is well suited for the intimate medium of recorded drama; Lear's Act Three prayer ("Poor naked wretches") and his later scenes of reunion and reconciliation with Cordelia, for example, are among the most memorable moments of this recording. Kenneth Branagh, who played Edmond in a 1994 BBC recording of the play, here delivers a compassionate performance as the Fool. Alec McCowen also stands out as Gloucester and conveys the range of the old man's credulity, bitterness, and humanity. John Tydeman's direction oversees a moving production. G.H. 2003 Audie Award Finalist © AudioFile 2003, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

Having purchased this recording to hear the voice of Toby Stephens as much as to enjoy this classic play, I found the experience totally satisfying in both regards. The other reviews have well covered many aspects of the performances of the main characters. I would like to focus on Toby

since this is linked to .com's ALL Toby All the Time site and might be useful to other fans. Toby plays Edmund (or Edmond per the liner notes), the bastard son of the Earl of Gloucester, an ally of King Lear. Honestly, Toby is brilliant in this. A perfect part to display all the rich tones in his voice and he make the most of it. He has a soliloquy early in the play plotting against his brother and bemoaning the fact that the accident of his birth leaves him with no inheritance. He has a big section at the end displaying his wonderful range, also. There's swordplay, calling out (think of that voice that called "Jane, Jane"), whispering, mocking, pleading - lots for Toby lovers to appreciate. I am on my second time through and enjoying it even more. The liner notes are quite helpful to place everybody. (Beware - my copy came with several blank pages including the page that should have had Toby's picture and bio. Fortunately, Naxosaudiobooks has been very responsive and is mailing me a replacement.) This is no substitute for him in all his visual glory but it satisfies by reminding me what a magnificent talent he has to display when given words worthy of it.

I purchased this audio recording as a learning tool for my AP English Literature and Composition class. Shakespeare is better understood when it is read with expression, and students approaching the text for the first time can't manage to do that. Illuminaries of the English stage add much to this performance. Paul Scofield as Lear does an excellent job of expressing royal rage and arrogance. Kenneth Branagh mixes truth with humor and gets away with it, just as a king's fool should. I recommend this product to anyone who wants to hear King Lear done well. I am coupling this audio CD with the DVD of the Sir Lawrence Olivier version of the play.

Great product, service, and prompt delivery. Thanks!

This series of Shakespeare's plays is read by artists who have wonderful skills, and you can understand the dialogue better than most stage productions. Frequently Shakespearean stage productions, for time constraints or other reasons typically abridge the complete text. These readings are complete, and can be followed word by word from the written plays. They are the best means to prepare to see a stage production, and can be used as a benchmark for judging performances. Often the directors of contemporary productions make other modifications beyond the text for modern audiences. If you want to hear how the classic version should sound, then this is it.

Excellent

Grate reecording of a grate play! It is well cast and very easy to listen to.

Is there a need for yet another recording of "King Lear"? If it is a superlative reading, then one would quote "Reason not the need" and accept it for a great addition to a swelling library of complete Shakespeare on recordings. We still have available on Caedmon audio tapes the 1965 "Lear" with Paul Scofield in the title role with Pamela Brown and Rachel Roberts as that particularly nasty pair of sisters, Goneril and Regan. 1988 brought out the BBC Audio Book (Modern Library) with Alec Guinness, Jill Bennett and Eileen Atkins in those roles. In 1994 there was a BBC Radio set with John Gielgud, Judi Dench and Eileen Atkins (again) in those three roles; while a late addition to the Arkangel Complete Shakespeare series gave us Trevor Peacock, Penny Downie and Samantha Bond, Peacock giving a more domestic, less grand reading of the role. Now Naxos Audiobooks has released on tape and CD yet another version with Paul Scofield again, Harriet Walter (Goneril, as it is spelled on this set), Sara Kestelman (Regan), Emilia Fox (Cordelia), Peter Blythe (Albany), and Jack Klaff (Cornwall) as the dysfunctional royal family. As the parallel set, we have Alec McCowen (Gloucester), Richard McCabe (Edgar), and Toby Stephens (Edmond). While Kenneth Branagh played the villainous brother in the Gielgud set, he is assigned the Fool in this production with David Burke (Kent) and Matthew Morgan (Oswald). The reading in the Caedmon recording is in the grand manner, more poetical than is the most recent; but this Naxos effort seems to move faster, is more dramatic (as should be no surprise) in our sense of the word in that it is more realistic, more "modern" sounding. But I would not dismiss the older set by any means. I found Scofield less earth-shaking in this production, sounding a little more reasonable and vulnerable than in the earlier one--but after 36 years and under a new director (Howard Sackler in 1965, John Tydemann here), an actor must rethink the role. What I do appreciate is that every word in the storm scene is spoken clearly and not drowned out by the sound effects. All Drama departments should own both Scofield versions. This Naxos release is available on tape (NA324414) and CD (NA324412). It is also the best buy since Naxos is the supreme budget label.

I love King Lear and I love Paul Scofield, who voices Lear in this production. I bet it was a dynamite version to see live. But this audio recording suffers from terrible sound mixing. Some people have used the phrase "voices dropping out" to describe the problem, but I'd say simply that they did too little post-production mixing. The volumes are wildly divergent. This is most audible when someone speaks an aside--if you turn the volume up enough to hear this line, the next line spoken at regular

volume will rattle your speakers (and eardrums). But it's a problem even in scenes with actors of different vocal styles--some people are way too loud and others very hard to hear. To give this complaint some context, I've never reviewed anything negatively on before. But this is a production problem--like getting a book printed on cheap paper--not just a matter of taste. They should have fixed this (and still could if they wanted to), and it really deserves a negative rating to warn people off of it.

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