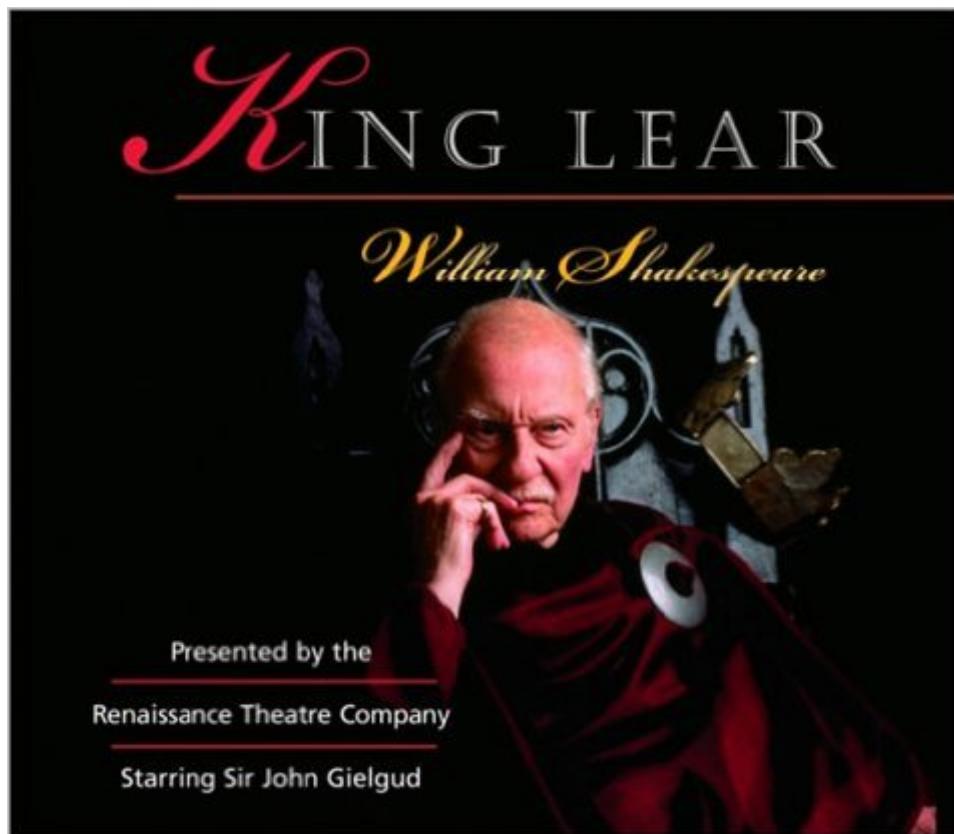


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King Lear: BBC Dramatization (BBC Radio Presents)



Synopsis

A king foolishly divides his kingdom between his scheming two oldest daughters and estranges himself from the daughter who loves him. So begins this profoundly moving and disturbing tragedy that, perhaps more than any other work in literature, challenges the notion of a coherent and just universe. The king and others pay dearly for their shortcomings—“as madness, murder, and the anguish of insight and forgiveness that arrive too late combine to make this an all-embracing tragedy of evil and suffering. Each Edition Includes: • Comprehensive explanatory notes • Vivid introductions and the most up-to-date scholarship • Clear, modernized spelling and punctuation, enabling contemporary readers to understand the Elizabethan English • Completely updated, detailed bibliographies and performance histories • An interpretive essay on film adaptations of the play, along with an extensive filmography

From the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

One of the things you can assume when you write about Shakespeare--given the hundreds of thousands of pages that have already been written about him in countless books, essays, theses and term papers--is that whatever you say will have been said before, and then denounced, defended , revised and denounced again, ad infinitum. So I'm certain I'm not breaking any new ground here. King Lear, though many, including David Denby (see Orrin's review of Great Books) and Harold Bloom consider it the pinnacle of English Literature, has just never done much for me. I appreciate the power of the basic plot--an aging King divides his realm among his ungrateful

children with disastrous results--which has resurfaced in works as varied as Jane Smiley's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Thousand Acres* (see Orrin's review), and Akira Kurosawa's last great film, *Ran*. But I've always found the play to be too busy, the characters to be too unsympathetic, the speeches to be unmemorable and the tragedy to be too shallow. By shallow, I mean that by the time we meet Lear he is already a petulant old man, we have to accept his greatness from the word of others. Then his first action in the play, the division of the kingdom, is so boneheaded and his reaction to Cordelia so selfishly blind, that we're unwilling to credit their word. Then there's the fact that Shakespeare essentially uses the action of the play as a springboard for an examination of madness. The play was written during the period when Shakespeare was experimenting with obscure meanings anyway; add in the demented babble of several of the central characters, including Lear, and you've got a drama whose language is just about impossible to follow.

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