

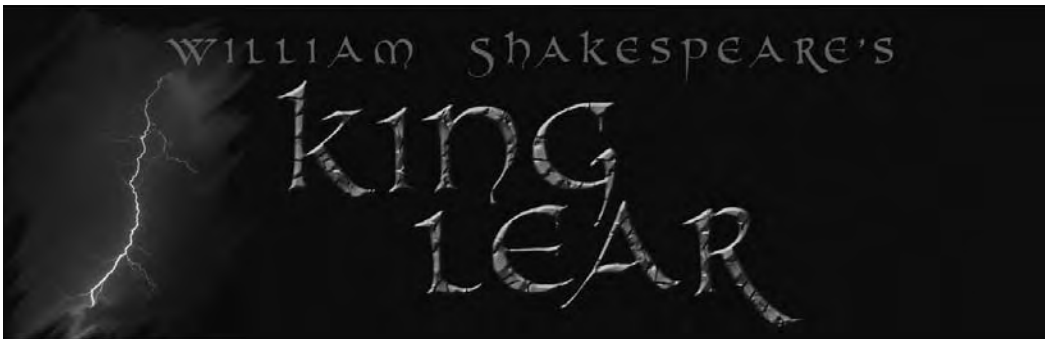
BOB JONES UNIVERSITY

CONCERT, OPERA & DRAMA SERIES

P R E S E N T S

THE UNIVERSITY CLASSIC PLAYERS

in



Directed and Designed by *Jeffrey Stegall*

Lighting Design by *Richard Streeter*

Original Music by *Kenon D. Renfrow*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lear, <i>King of Britain</i>	Lonnie Polson
Goneril, <i>Lear's eldest daughter</i>	Annette Pait
Duke of Albany, <i>her husband</i>	Phil Adams
Oswald, <i>their steward</i>	David Schwingle
Regan, <i>Lear's second daughter</i>	Lauren Hamblen
Duke of Cornwall, <i>her husband</i>	Chris Gilliam
Cordelia, <i>Lear's youngest daughter</i>	Rebecca Hervas
King of France, <i>suitor to Cordelia</i>	Patrick Reilly
Duke of Burgundy, <i>suitor to Cordelia</i>	Michael Essian
Fool, <i>to Lear</i>	William McCauley
Duke of Kent	Jeff Gray
Duke of Gloucester	Ron Pyle
Edgar, <i>son to Gloucester</i>	Philip Eoute
Edmund, <i>illegitimate son to Gloucester</i>	Abe Stratton
A Gentleman	Dave LaPage
Servants, Messengers, and Soldiers	John Colpitt, Michael Essian Paul Michael Garrison, Josh Innerst Patrick Reilly, Thomas Sneed, Zach Stafford

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer	Darren Lawson
Dramaturg	Janie McCauley
Production Manager	Rodney McCarty
Costume/Makeup/Hair Manager	Dan Sandy
Assistant Director	Laurie Mehus
Fight Coach	Jay Bopp
Assistant to the Scene Designer	Matt Moreau
Sound Effects	Paul Hancock
Scene Painter	Jason Waggoner
Set Construction	Brian Bolton, Daniel Glass, Randall Snively

Costume Construction	Pam Adams, Barb Filipisic, Rebecca Jelliff, Joyce Parsons, Becky Sandy, Jean Sponseller, Bess Whittington
Wardrobers	Rebecca Lake, Cynthia Long
Wig Master	Rose Marie Blumer
Assistant Wig Master	Ashley Feagin
Assistant to the Production Manager	Sandy Jaworski
Props Master	David Vierow
Stage Manager	Stephen Gagnon
Technical Engineer	Gayland Slick
Audio Supervisor	Max Masters
Recording Instrumentalists	Kenon D. Renfrow, Debbie Barrett, Sharon Gerber, Emily Shearer

CYCLES OF LIFE IN *KING LEAR*: “Fortune, Turn Thy Wheel!”

The rigid circular ring we know as the “wheel,” one of the ancient world’s most important inventions, has for millennia been a dynamic symbol in literature and art. Having no beginning and no end, a ring reminds us of love, life, and everything we consider eternal by nature. In addition, the wheel’s capability of motion increases its potential as a rich and varied artistic symbol.

Shakespeare employs the wheel in *King Lear* to represent man’s life with its cyclical changes. If life is a journey, it is a circular one that ends where it began. In the well-known Seven Ages of Man speech in *As You Like It*, written some six years before *King Lear*, the character Jacques argues that the end of life is like the beginning: before a person dies, he experiences “second childishness, and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything” (II.vii.165–66).

Both the main and secondary plots of *King Lear* feature old fathers whose judgment in dealing with their adult children has descended into “second childhood.” King Lear and the Earl of Gloucester are easily flattered, deceived, and manipulated by their grown offspring. Shakespeare’s tragic events unfold after Lear in a fit of anger divides his kingdom between his evil daughters, Goneril and Regan, and casts off his virtuous daughter, Cordelia, for refusing to publicly flatter him.

Similarly, the Earl of Gloucester is tricked by his evil, illegitimate son, Edmund, into banishing his noble, legitimate son, Edgar. Edmund’s machinations eventually lead to the cruel physical torture of his own father. Once the bonds between parent and child have been so abused, Lear’s entire kingdom descends into chaos.

In *King Lear* Shakespeare alludes to the goddess Fortuna, a capricious, blindfolded woman who turns a large wheel that determines every person's "fortunes" or fate. Fortune can at will either raise a person to the heights of prosperity or plunge him into wretchedness. The characters usually depicted on her wheel are elaborate personifications of rulers and other men of high rank, but figuratively they represent all men and women.

Alluding to the great personal and political fall his master Lear suffers after dividing his kingdom between Goneril and Regan, the Fool advises Kent against remaining with a master whose fortunes are waning: "Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following." On the other hand, he opines, "The great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after" (II.iv.71-74).

As Fortune casts one man down into adversity, the Fool unwittingly implies, she simultaneously raises another to prosperity. A schemer who falsely accuses his father of treason, the villain Edmund remarks callously, "The younger rises when the old doth fall" (III.iii.25), revealing his greedy ambition to possess Gloucester's land and titles.

Although Wheel of Fortune iconography derives from pagan culture, it was regarded in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as an apt illustration of biblical teaching about life in a fallen world. Some suggest, for example, that the vagaries of Fortune persuade us that pride and ambition will eventually be brought low.

Most obviously, Fortune's wheel illustrates the transitory nature of wealth, power, and glory. The king who sits high on his throne today may be utterly cast down tomorrow. Rather than earthly riches and rank, then, man should seek the eternal glory of God. Writing in the sixth century, the Roman philosopher Boethius argues that so-called Fate or Fortune is really a means of carrying out the disposition of divine will. In short, God works through temporal events.

In another sense, the wheel is an emblem of the structure of Shakespearean tragedy in general and *King Lear* in particular. After reaching its lowest point, an object affixed to a wheel takes an upswing. King Lear reaches the lowest point of his life in the storm on the heath, where he experiences extreme physical and mental anguish. Through his suffering, however, Lear gains self-knowledge. He comes to regret his lifelong apathy toward those at the bottom of the social order. He decries his pride and misjudgment that have brought suffering, inequity, and injustice to others.

Yet love ultimately triumphs over hate and truth over falsehood in *King Lear*. In the play's final scenes all wrongs are set right and all conflicts resolved.

Lear learns humility, begs Cordelia's forgiveness, and becomes her tender, loving father. In the words of Harold C. Goddard, "*King Lear* is the story. . . of how a bad king became a beautiful man."

Like a handful of other female characters in Shakespeare's tragedies, Cordelia dies an innocent victim of others' sin, but not before she has been reconciled with the father she so deeply loves. In depicting suffering innocents, Shakespeare impresses his audience deeply with man's enormous capacity to commit evil, unjust acts against his fellow man.

As dark and sad as *King Lear* seems on the whole, by the end of the play, in the words of the villain Edmund, "The wheel is come full circle" (V.iii. 175), or retribution has fallen on the evil characters. Edmund, who repents before he dies, ends where he began, at the bottom of Fortune's wheel. The other cruel betrayers of family and king—Goneril, Regan, Cornwall—meet the horrible ends they deserve.

On a more optimistic note, Shakespeare's characterization of Cordelia, Edgar, and Kent suggests that mankind is capable of remaining virtuous or, in the case of Albany, developing positively. In a universe dominated by evil, they maintain the positive values of love, forgiveness, sacrifice, and loyalty.

The wheel comes full circle for Lear when he dies with Cordelia in his arms, apparently believing that she still lives. In the new order of Lear's kingdom, Edgar has the last word, an assurance that we will never see such sorrow and evil again.

Janie Caves McCauley

RODEHEAVER AUDITORIUM
November 16, 17 & 18, 8 p.m.
November 19, 2 p.m.

Music will be played and lobby lights will flash three minutes before the end of intermission. After the
houselights are dimmed following intermission, no one will be readmitted to his seat.

Cameras and recording equipment are not permitted in the Auditorium during any performance.

We request that signal watches and all communication devices be turned off during the program.

Tickets for this production have been sponsored by

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