



BOB JONES UNIVERSITY
**CONCERT, OPERA
& DRAMA SERIES**

P R E S E N T S

THE UNIVERSITY CLASSIC PLAYERS

in

William Shakespeare's

**KING
LEAR**

Directed by *David Schwingle*

Set and Costume Design by *Jeffrey Stegall*

Lighting design by *Richard Streeter*

Music by *Kenon Renfrow*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lear , <i>King of Britain</i>	Ron Pyle
Goneril , <i>Lear's eldest daughter</i>	Erin Naler
Duke of Albany , <i>Goneril's husband</i>	Harrison Miller
Oswald , <i>Goneril's steward</i>	Nathan Pittack
Regan , <i>Lear's second daughter</i>	Emily Arcuri
Duke of Cornwall , <i>Regan's husband</i>	Alex Viscioni
Cordelia , <i>Lear's youngest daughter</i>	Gabrielle Prairie
King of France , <i>suitor to Cordelia</i>	Seth Skaggs
Duke of Burgundy , <i>suitor to Cordelia</i>	Isaac Talbert
Fool , <i>attending on Lear</i>	Anna Brown
Earl of Kent	Lonnie Polson
Earl of Gloucester	Darren Lawson
Edgar , <i>Gloucester's eldest son, later disguised as Tom o' Bedlam</i>	Jack Sterner
Edmund , <i>Gloucester's younger, bastard son</i>	Wilbur Mauk
Lear's Gentleman	Zach Daab
Kent's Gentleman	Seth Skaggs
Cornwall Servants	Mary Conn, Rebecca Conn, Sam Stephens
Doctor	Emma Pait
Herald	Kate Jones
Curan , <i>Gloucester's servant</i>	Emma Pait
Captain	Megan King
French Soldiers	Mady Bell, Aubrey Murray, Emma Claire Stephens, Sam Stephens,
British Knights & Soldiers	Micah Baughman, Kate Jones, Megan King, Aubrey Murray,
	Kate Riedy, Josiah Shank, Henry Schwingle, Seth Skaggs, Sam Stephens, Isaac Talbert,
French Attendant	Emma Claire Stephens
Maid	Kate Riedy, Madeline Bell, Emma Claire Stephens
Flower Girl	Piper Eoute
Ring Bearer	Charlton Schwingle

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer	Darren Lawson
Assistant Director	Ben Hamann
Production Manager	Rodney McCarty
Scenic Artist	Jason Waggoner
Fight Coach/Choreographer	Teri Parker Lewis
Fight Captain	Kate Riedy
Voice Coach	David Schwingle
Assistant to the Production Manager	Sandy Jaworski
Props Master	Kate Riedy
Assistant Stage Manager	Jonah Lawson
Costume/Makeup/Hair Manager	Dan Sandy
Costume Construction	Kandy Busche, Becky Sandy, Julie Tillman
Wig Master	Alicia Carr
Technical Engineer	Micha Moyer
Sound Design	Bob Johansen
Music Director	Kenon Renfrow
Musicians	Nikki Eoute, Philip Eoute
Recording Engineer	Matthew Steel
Recording Instrumentalists	Mitchell Beck, Anna Brown, Derek Eilert,
	Nikki Eoute, Steve Pettrir, Kenon Renfrow, Caleb Rollins, Madison Skillman, Mariah Skillman

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It is a fearful thing to write about Shakespeare (brief let me be!). The fear increases when one approaches the towering achievement that is *King Lear*. The wheel turns a bit more toward a paralyzed state if one considers the laden, ceremonial barge of relevant scholarship on the subjects. (Imagine entering a room and seeing the eminent Shakespeare scholar, Emma Smith, or our local Spenser and Shakespeare scholar, Ron Horton, comfortably seated, smiling at you!) And yet, though surrounded by giants on every side, some of Lear's own making, King Lear pushes on, so I'll push on and pen a few words about Lear, language, and love.

If it's fearful to write about Shakespeare, it is terrifying to play him. Or it seems to be—mostly because of “the language.” Shakespeare's language is unfairly characterized as being strange and difficult. Like all slander, we have to look past the oft-repeated to see the truth. Actually, Shakespeare mostly uses words we still speak every day. Shakespeare gives us rich, concrete, and active language that is easier to understand when spoken and heard aloud. So give your ear time to adjust to the language. It is so tempting to layer an organizing idea over the text, or to mine underneath the language for hidden structures and psychologies. Actors and scholars alike are tempted in both directions. These efforts obscure. Better to enter through the language. It is through the experience of saying and hearing the language aloud that we actually understand and experience the play. Thought, emotion and action (even stage directions!) all reside in the text and its shape. It's not a secret code (“every third word turned sideways . . .”); it's a pathway. If the actors will think and speak simultaneously, the life in Shakespeare's text will inspire the actor and the audience. The speeches will move forward and *move*. So, while there may be fear surrounding Shakespeare, once you meet his plays on their feet (or on your feet), much of that fear will dissipate.

Another fear that may be alive in the audience (and even in the actors) is the sadness of Shakespeare's serious plays. *King Lear* is, of course, a tragedy; the audience will be submerged in a wave that leaves them stunned, gasping, stung with water and salt. But the wave will not kill them or leave them catatonic; sometimes a good, salty, sand-blasting is what we need. Most of us love a sad song; witness the recent billboard chart-toppers. Why not love a sad play? As a tragedy, *King Lear* has at times been considered too bleak—almost meaningless in its sadness. As Emma Smith noted in a 2012 Oxford lecture, scholarship has moved from branding Lear as “too cruel,” to seeing it as actually hopeful, then back to labeling it as cruel, but in an appropriate, “that's-how-life-is” kind of way.¹ We might ask, “If it's ‘too cruel,’ then why is it ‘great?’ Why did we pay to see this again?” *King Lear* is very sad—and yet it is not a picture of a futile, meaningless life. In its characters, language, *and* sadness, a silencing beauty shines. This is partly why it is Art, partly why we need to see it, and partly why it's less familiar. After all, good art is not prevalent.

Famously, Nahum Tate rewrote *Lear* (the first of many to do so) in 1681. He changed the ending, placing a smiling group on stage to enjoy a happily ever after. (Whew! That was close!) But we need not rewrite *Lear* in a burst of wishful thinking to “rescue” it from despair. The play's final stage direction, “Exeunt with a dead march,”² seems to acknowledge the sadness of the ending; the physical action and pacing of a “dead march” gives the audience time to breathe and ponder before moving off into the night. The music and the pause are things not experienced in a mere reading. At Blackfriars or the Globe, dead characters didn't simply disappear—they stood up again in the light, bowing, slowly reviving in a reversal of the suspension of disbelief, and the audience (we assume) applauded. This transition to applause is more than tradition; it's an important part of theatre (and tragedy). We see the end of the story and acknowledge it as such.

At times *King Lear* has been considered too violent. It probably helps a contemporary audience to learn that just before *King Lear* was written, Shakespeare's country had endured the Gunpowder Plot and its aftershocks. If successful, the plot would have taken out England's ruling family and ruling class and sent the country into a bloody civil war. It's easier for a contemporary audience to understand the eye-gouging violence against Gloucester if they imagine the mood of a country just after a terrorist attack such as 9/11 or the recent Paris bombings. That the Gunpowder plot failed in no way negates its effect; it was as if nuclear devices had been discovered under the White House and a full Congress session on the evening of a state of the union address. Never mind that the fuse was not lit; England had almost gone up in smoke. Shakespeare's audience was on

¹ Smith, Emma. “King Lear.” *Approaching Shakespeare*, University of Oxford, 22 Feb. 2012, itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/approaching-shakespeare/id399194760?mt=2.

² From the 1623 Folio

edge, fearful of traitors and their supposed allies. Surely Shakespeare's tragedy remains relevant today. Terror, political polarization, and bloody violence remain a part of our human condition.

But if we move past these fears and potential objections, *King Lear* remains relevant and important for a contemporary audience. How? Take *Lear*'s portrayal of relationships and families. *Lear* is a brilliant and vital picture of what too many of us know: families can be the cruelest places on earth. They can also be the only place where unconditional love is experienced. These two truths defy simple explanations; they are complex, and *Lear* follows suit. In *Lear* we have a missing wife and mother; *Lear*'s wife most likely was unfaithful to him. We have a father who declares a favorite daughter (his "joy"). His love is unjust and conditional—corrosive in the least or not love at all. In Gloucester's family, we have another missing mother, an affair, an illegitimate son, and the brooding angst of not belonging. Lust and conditional or partial love abound. We could easily think of Shakespeare's most famous sonnet: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."³ Edmund, even in his death rattle, seems to say he acted as he did so that someone would love him ("yet Edmund was beloved").⁴ This explanation by no means pardons him—but it helps us to fully see him and how a lack of true love poisons. Importantly, it helps us to see ourselves. These are no cartoon characters signifying abstract platitudes we can cordon off and ignore ("I'm glad I'm not like that!"). These characters live all around us. Isn't the lack of unconditional love in families and communities a major concern today? If so, the play's relevance endures.

Arriving from France, late in the play, Cordelia seems to come from another world—a world where love is not unfaithful or unjust, but cleansing in its power. Cordelia brings in her hands unconditional love, and this finally remedies *Lear* (that and a storm from heaven). Their brief and incomplete reunion gives a glimpse of what could have been. This contrasts with much of what we see in *Lear*, and it makes us long for a better world while at the same time terrifying us: for we see in the light of contrast our own imperfections. As Cordelia bestows undeserved favor, forgiveness, and love ("no cause, no cause") on *Lear*—not for what she can get and in spite of *Lear*'s faults—we are awakened to a terrifying beauty. This beauty doesn't take away the pain; rather, the pain amplifies the beauty, embedding the difference in our souls, and with the difference, a longing for the better.

Simplistic or sentimental drama (experienced in safety—in indifference, really—because we know nothing really bad will happen permanently) not only cannot show us beauty like this, but actively obscures beauty. *King Lear*, despite its apparent distance, offers a deeply satisfying and necessary experience for 2018, an experience we miss at our peril.

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

2018/2019 BJU Performing Arts season at bju.edu/arts

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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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³ Sonnet 116

⁴ *King Lear*, Act 5, Sc. 3