

**Actors From The London Stage**

**Spring 2019 Tour: *King Lear***

**Play Synopsis**

Updated 11.19.18

**THE STORY**

Lear, King of Britain, wants to divide the kingdom among his three daughters, and offers the largest share to the one who loves him best. Two - Goneril and Regan – flatter him; Cordelia, the youngest, refuses to. Lear, infuriated, disinherits her, and divides the kingdom between the other two. The Earl of Kent objects, but Lear banishes him. One of Cordelia’s suitors, the Duke of Burgundy, withdraws his suit, but the King of France pledges to marry her.

Lear announces that, with his retinue of one hundred knights, he will live alternately with Goneril and Regan, and their husbands, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall.

Edmund, bastard son of the Earl of Gloucester, plots to supplant his legitimate older brother Edgar. He tricks their father into thinking Edgar plans to kill him. Kent, disguised, is hired by Lear as a servant. Lear, staying with Goneril and Albany, is enraged at her request that he cut his retinue, and departs for Regan's home. The Fool mocks Lear's misfortune. Edmund fakes an attack by Edgar, who flees, and Gloucester is completely taken in.

Kent meets Oswald, Goneril’s steward, at Gloucester's home, quarrels with him, and is put in the stocks by Regan and Cornwall. When Lear arrives, he objects to his daughters’ behavior and rushes out into a storm, accompanied only by his Fool. Kent later follows to protect him. Lear meets Edgar, now disguised as a mad beggar. Gloucester leads them all to shelter.

Edmund betrays Gloucester to Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril. Gloucester is arrested, and Cornwall blinds him. But one of Cornwall's servants, outraged by this, attacks and fatally wounds Cornwall. Gloucester is turned out of his own castle and meets Edgar, still disguised. Gloucester asks him to lead him to Dover Cliffs, so that he may jump to his death.

Goneril finds Edmund far more attractive than her husband, Albany. Albany is disgusted by the sisters' treatment of Lear and the mutilation of Gloucester. The French army, led by Cordelia, has landed. Albany leads the British army to meet the French. Regan too is attracted to Edmund, and the two sisters become suspicious of each other. Edgar pretends to lead Gloucester to a cliff so that he can commit suicide. They meet Lear, who is now mad.

Oswald, trying to kill Gloucester, is slain by Edgar. Cordelia is reunited with Lear, whose madness has passed. In the battle, the British defeat the French, and Lear and Cordelia are captured. Edmund sends them off with secret orders for execution.

The victorious British leaders meet, and Regan collapses, poisoned by Goneril. Edgar kills Edmund in a duel. Goneril stabs herself, and confesses to poisoning Regan. Edmund, dying, reveals his order to kill Lear and Cordelia. But it is too late: Cordelia is dead, though Lear slew her hangman. Albany urges Lear to resume his throne, but Lear collapses and dies. Albany and Edgar are left to rule the country.

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