

# King Lear

## *Cast*

<i>Lear</i> .....	<i>Trevor Peacock</i>
<i>Gloucester</i> .....	<i>Clive Merrison</i>
<i>Kent</i> .....	<i>Anton Lesser</i>
<i>Goneril</i> .....	<i>Penny Downie</i>
<i>Regan</i> .....	<i>Samantha Bond</i>
<i>Cordelia</i> .....	<i>Julia Ford</i>
<i>Edmund</i> .....	<i>Gerard Murphy</i>
<i>Edgar</i> .....	<i>David Tennant</i>
<i>Fool</i> .....	<i>John Rogan</i>
<i>Albany</i> .....	<i>David Horovitch</i>
<i>Cornwall</i> .....	<i>Rob Edwards</i>
<i>Oswald</i> .....	<i>Jonathan Tafler</i>
<i>Gentleman</i> .....	<i>Clifford Rose</i>
<i>France</i> .....	<i>John McAndrew</i>
<i>Burgundy</i> .....	<i>Christopher Gee</i>
<i>Old Man</i> .....	<i>David Shaw Parker</i>
<i>Knight</i> .....	<i>Alex Lowe</i>

## *Play description*

### ACT I

Scene 1. King Lear of Britain decides to divide his kingdom between his three daughters, giving the greater share to the one who most eloquently describes her love for him. Goneril and Regan make extravagant statements of devotion, but Cordelia, his favorite, speaks with a plainness that infuriates him. He disowns her and gives his power to her sisters, retaining only his title. He intends to reside alternately with Goneril and Regan, with a retinue of one hundred men. When the Earl of Kent berates Lear for 'This hideous rashness' he is banished. Cordelia's two suitors, the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France, learn that she has lost her dowry. France, impressed by her virtue, resolves to marry her. Once alone together, Goneril and Regan speak coldly of their father's declining judgment.

Scene 2. Edmund, the Duke of Gloucester's bastard son, intends to take his legitimate brother Edgar's land. He shows his father a letter, purportedly from Edgar, in which he plans Gloucester's murder. Edmund then warns Edgar of their father's anger, speculating that someone has defamed him.

Scene 3. Goneril instructs her steward Oswald to treat Lear with disrespect.

Scene 4. Kent returns in disguise to serve his master. Goneril orders Lear to cut his retinue by half, though her husband, the Duke of Albany, is sympathetic to the old man. The King storms off to Regan, whom he says will treat him more respectfully. Lear's Fool comments caustically on the course of events.

Scene 5. King Lear and the Fool repartee, with the fool cautioning the king that Regan will not treat him better.

### ACT II

Scene 1. Having urged Edgar to fly, Edmund cuts himself, claiming to have been wounded by his brother. Regan and her husband Cornwall arrive at Gloucester's castle.

Scene 2. When Kent beats Oswald, Cornwall and Regan put him into the stocks.

Scene 3. Edgar disguises himself by taking "the basest and most poorest shape," of a lunatic beggar, Poor Tom.

Scene 4. Lear is enraged to find Kent in the stocks. He complains to Regan about Goneril's insulting behavior, but she is unsympathetic and sides with her sister in demanding that he reduce his retinue. Crazy with anger Lear rushes out into the storm, vowing revenge.

### ACT III

Scene 1. Kent learns that Lear is ranting upon the stormswept heath. He tells a gentleman that French agents have infiltrated Britain and sends him to Dover to inform Cordelia of her father's plight.

Scene 2. Kent leads the raving king to a hovel.

Scene 3. When Gloucester confides in Edmund that there is discord between the dukes of Albany and Cornwall and hints at his own contact with the French, Edmund has no hesitation in betraying his father.

Scene 4. Kent, Lear and the Fool find Edgar/Tom sheltering in the hovel. Touched by Tom's ravings, Lear wonders "Has his daughters brought him to this pass?"

Scene 5. Cornwall vows revenge upon Gloucester.

Scene 6. Gloucester leads Lear and his motley band to a cottage. The King stages an imaginary trial of his treacherous daughters. Gloucester asks Kent to take Lear to Dover. Edgar grieves for Lear: "He childed as I fathered."

Scene 7. Gloucester has been arrested. Incited by Regan, Cornwall gouges out one of his eyes. He is challenged by a servant, who is slain by Regan. Despite being wounded, Cornwall takes Gloucester's other eye, and reveals Edmund as his father's betrayer. Regan orders Gloucester from the castle: "let him smell/His way to Dover."

#### ACT IV

Scene 1. Edgar/Tom, comes upon his blind father and Gloucester asks to be led to a cliff at Dover.

Scene 2. Albany turns against Goneril and when news comes of Cornwall's death and of Gloucester's terrible fate, swears he will take revenge.

Scene 3. Kent is told of Cordelia's sorrow upon hearing about her father. Lear is at Dover, but is ashamed to face the daughter he has rejected.

Scene 4. A doctor assures Cordelia that he can soothe Lear's anguish. The British powers are approaching, led by Edmund and Albany.

Scene 5. Regan jealously questions Oswald about Goneril and Edmund saying "My lord is dead;.../And more convenient is he for my hand..."

Scene 6. Edgar/Tom lies to Gloucester, assuring him that he is upon a high cliff. After his father has jumped from what he believes to be a great height and landed in a swoon, Edgar (now impersonating a peasant) convinces him that he has been saved miraculously. Gloucester's will to live is restored. Lear arrives and Edgar marvels: "O, matter and impertinency mixed;/Reason in madness." When Oswald tries to lay hands on Gloucester, Edgar kills him. He finds a letter from Goneril to Edmund in the dead man's pocket, in which she urges the murder of Albany.

Scene 7. Cordelia and Lear are tenderly reunited. Edmund has taken over power from the slain Cornwall.

#### ACT V

Scene 1. Regan and Goneril compete for Edmund's affections. Edgar gives a letter to Albany.

Scene 2. Edgar tells Gloucester of Cordelia and Lear's capture by Edmund.

Scene 3. Lear and Cordelia are led away to prison. Edmund secretly orders their execution. While Regan and Goneril argue over Edmund, Albany arrests him for treason. Edgar, still in disguise, takes up Edmund's challenge to anyone who would call him traitor, and they fight. Edmund is mortally wounded. As Edgar discloses his true identity, news comes that Goneril has killed herself, having poisoned Regan. Edmund sends urgently to countermand Lear and Cordelia's death sentences. The reprieve comes too late for Cordelia, however, and the broken-hearted Lear enters, carrying her body. Shattered by grief, the old king dies and Albany, Kent and Edgar are left to mourn and to restore to health "the gored state."

### *Track list*

#### Disc 1

Track 1	Act I	Scene i
Track 2	Act I	Scene ii
Track 3	Act I	Scene iii
Track 4	Act I	Scene iv
Track 5	Act I	Scene v
Track 6	Act II	Scene i
Track 7	Act II	Scene ii

#### Disk 2

Track 1	Act II	Scene iii
Track 2	Act II	Scene iv
Track 3	Act III	Scene i
Track 4	Act III	Scene ii
Track 5	Act III	Scene iii
Track 6	Act III	Scene iv
Track 7	Act III	Scene v
Track 8	Act III	Scene vi
Track 9	Act III	Scene vii
Track 10	Act IV	Scene i

#### Disk 3

Track 1	Act IV	Scene ii
Track 2	Act IV	Scene iii
Track 3	Act IV	Scene iv
Track 4	Act IV	Scene v
Track 5	Act IV	Scene vi
Track 6	Act IV	Scene vii
Track 7	Act V	Scene i
Track 8	Act V	Scene ii
Track 9	Act V	Scene iii