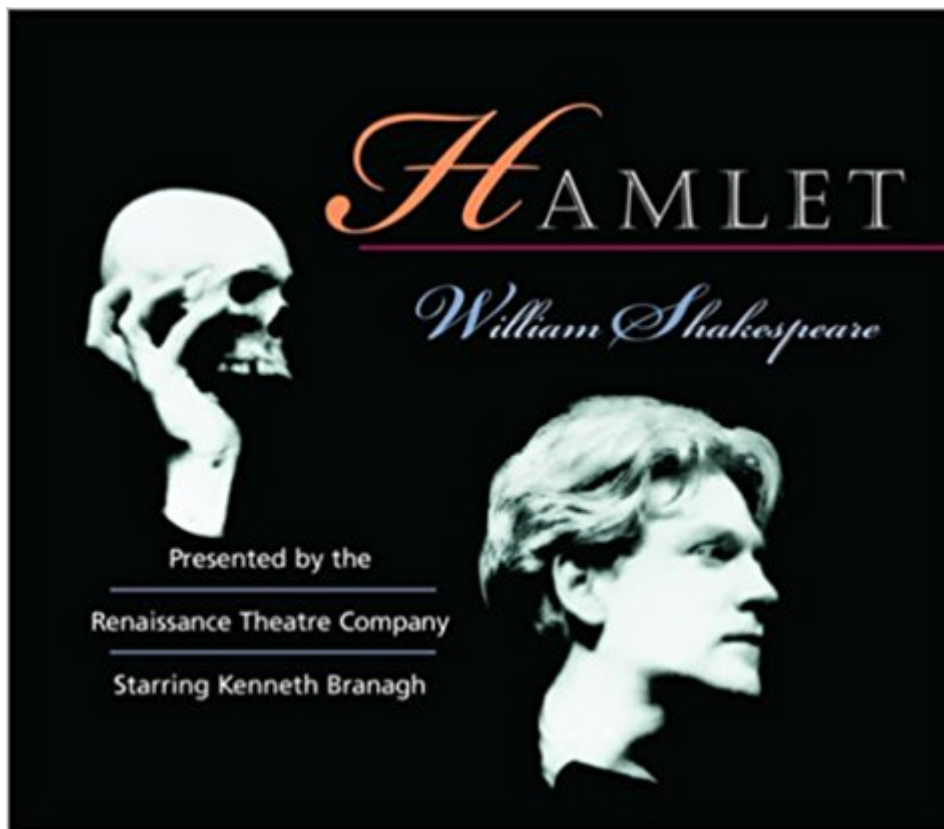


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Hamlet (BBC Radio Presents)



Synopsis

Among Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet is considered by many his masterpiece. Among actors, the role of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is considered the jewel in the crown of a triumphant theatrical career. Now Kenneth Branagh plays the leading role and co-directs a brilliant ensemble performance. Three generations of legendary leading actors, many of whom first assembled for the Oscar-winning film *Henry V*, gather here to perform the rarely heard complete version of the play. This clear, subtly nuanced, stunning dramatization, presented by The Renaissance Theatre Company in association with BBC Broadcasting, features such luminaries as Sir John Gielgud, Derek Jacobi, Emma Thompson and Christopher Ravenscroft. It combines a full cast with stirring music and sound effects to bring this magnificent Shakespearean classic vividly to life. Revealing new riches with each listening, this production of Hamlet is an invaluable aid for students, teachers and all true lovers of Shakespeare -- a recording to be treasured for decades to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is a tragedy that all actors seem to crave to perform, and the Renaissance Theatre Company clearly relishes the chance to present Hamlet for the ear. It is a contemporary cast from which one has come to expect superior Shakespearean acting on stage and screen: Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet; Sir John Gielgud as the Ghost; Derek Jacobi as Claudius; and Emma Thompson as the Player Queen. Unlike the Recorded Books version (Audio Reviews, LJ 8/90), this BBC edition may be a little hard to follow by those unfamiliar with the play's text, particularly since stage directions

are not provided and speakers are not clearly identified. But the program does give the complete version, a rare treat, and the accompanying booklet offers insights into both the acting and the production. Highly recommended.- Joyce Kessel, Villa Maria Coll., Buffalo, N.Y. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Praise for William Shakespeare: Complete Works: "A feast of literary and historical information." -The Wall Street Journal From the Trade Paperback edition.

Readers should note that this site does not distinguish between the various editions of Shakespeare, so the reviews you read may be for audiotapes, modern translations, etc. I am reviewing the Kenneth Branagh BBC Radio recording of Hamlet. It is adequate, which I consider high praise for this challenging play. Like Branagh's movie a few years later, it includes the entire text of the play, which is a nice way to remind yourself of some issues you may have forgotten. The performances are pretty good, and include Branagh (of course) as Hamlet and Derek Jacobi as Claudius, giving us a hint of the performances they would later give in the movie. No one's performance really blew me away, although Jacobi was excellent. Ultimately, the play loses quite a bit when transferred to audio only. There's a lot to be conveyed with stage placement, physical action, expression, etc. Somehow, listening to the play limited my imagination on those issues, preventing my from using my "mind's eye" to the fullest.

This is my favorite performance. Love it.

I listened to this version of Hamlet over and over again in preparation for a production I costumed last year. And I still listen to it on long car rides -- it's a great production. Having the full text read so well led me to new insights about the characters. Contrasting these interpretations to those of our own actors showed how flexible Shakespeare's writing is. And listening to the full text helped me understand why our director cut what she did. While the volume level is sometimes uneven (as it always seems to be with BBC Radio and TV productions), this is still essential listening for anyone preparing to act in, direct, or study Hamlet. Branagh is, well, Branagh -- sometimes the ego gets in the way, and sometimes he is astounding. The "oh, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt" speech is one of my favorites -- he falls into a wonderful rhythm that just carries it forward at the perfect pace. I think he handles the "my thoughts be bloody, or nothing worth" speech better here than in the film version -- the shouting and musical crescendo overwhelmed what should have been

a more intimate speech. In any case, buy and listen -- you won't regret it.

This is THE best rendition of Hamlet that exists on audio. I only wish I could find more high quality audio of some of his other plays. Very difficult. =/

I consider this production to be perfect. I first heard it, and taped it, in the original Radio 3 broadcast. Then I bought it when it came out as CDs. I lent the third of the CDs to a pupil who didn't manage to return it. So I've bought the set again just to replace that CD, and I think it was £30 well spent. What surprises me is how few copies there seem to be left in the world.

An absolute star-studded cast radio production of what is possibly Shakespeare's greatest play! Everyone in the cast is FANTASTIC!!!

I first listen to it in high school, but I couldn't finish it. So I bought it used and oh my god! What a pleasure.

There's an old joke about a woman who saw Hamlet performed for the first time. "I don't know what anybody sees in that play," she said, "it's just a bunch of cliches strung together." Whether Hamlet spawned or merely perpetuated cliches, the play abounds with phrases that have passed into the common speech. From beginning to end, from "There's something rotten in Denmark" to "goodnight sweet prince", familiar language assaults the ear. The long life of these sayings attests to Shakespeare's powerful plotting and powerful language. Critics have hailed "Hamlet" as Shakespeare's masterpiece, prompting Oscar Wilde to ask "Are the critics mad or merely pretending to be?" It is a complex and paradoxical play, with complex, paradoxical protagonists engaging in complex, illogical behavior. Whether the play is a masterpiece or a disasterpiece, good or bad, is fairly debatable. But good or bad, it commands our attention and entertains us. The "BBC Presents" audio version of Hamlet is long--3 1/2 hours over four cassettes. Most audio publications of Shakespeare's plays run to two cassettes. One contributing factor to the length is the inordinate amount of music. Lengthy musical performances mark the separation between acts and major scenes. The music does not enhance the production.

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