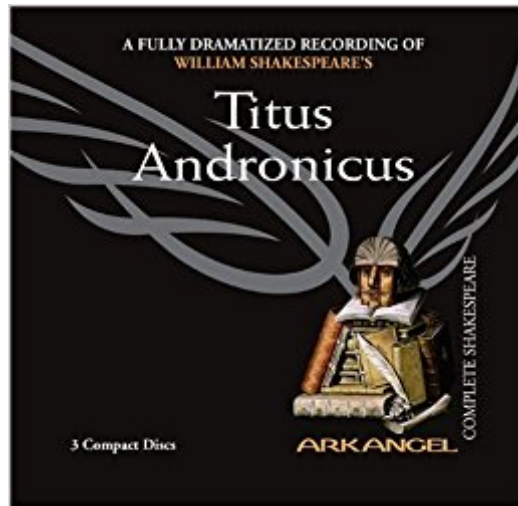




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Titus Andronicus (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)



Synopsis

[Full-Cast Audio Theater Dramatization. Titus is played by David Troughton and Tamora by Harriet Walter. Paterson Joseph is Aaron, and David Burke is Marcus.] This macabre, often brilliant tragedy comes from the earliest stage of Shakespeare's dramatic career. The noble Titus returns victorious to Rome bringing Tamora, Queen of the Goths as his captive. When one of Tamora's sons is condemned to die, she vows revenge, and, aided by the villainous Aaron, she exacts a terrible retribution, inaugurating a grim cycle of rape, murder, and cannibalism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, is the most widely known author in all of English literature and often considered the greatest. He was an active member of a theater company for at least twenty years, during which time he wrote many great plays. Plays were not prized as literature at the time, and Shakespeare was not widely read until the middle of the eighteenth century, when a great upsurge of interest in his works began that continues today.

XXXXX(This review is for the talking book version of this play on compact disc by the "Arkangel Complete Shakespeare")"I'll find a day to massacre them all,And raze their faction and their family,The cruel father and his traitorous sons,To whom I sued for my dear son's life."The above is said as aside by Tamora (voiced by Harriet Walter), the Queen of the Goths, captured by Titus Andronicus (a father with many sons) and his soldiers. She is out for revenge because Titus (voiced

by David Troughton) and his sons have sacrificed her eldest son. Her intense desire for revenge sets off a series of bloody and gory events. This forms the basis of this play by William Shakespeare (1564 to 1616). This play is the first known tragedy (a revenge tragedy written circa 1590) in his canon. Having this play recorded on this compact disc set is a real treat. This play (of five acts or fourteen scenes) is presented as uncut, fully dramatized, and accompanied by original music. This recording aids in comprehension by bringing the play to life using the voices of distinguished actors. Included with the compact disc set are liner notes that include, among other things, a complete cast list and a synopsis of each scene. What I did was, before each scene, I paused the recording, read a particular scene's synopsis, and then listened to that scene as Shakespeare wrote it. Doing this resulted (for me anyway) in complete comprehension of the play, something not easily obtainable when you simply read the play. With respect to the play itself, this play has been called "bad Shakespeare." What this really means is that this play is not "cerebral Shakespeare." It is, instead, "visceral Shakespeare" or "shock Shakespeare." More than any other Shakespeare plays, this play shows the writer as a practical man of the theatre whose instincts tell him exactly what his audience craves and who gives it to them--in spades. Thus, this play is fascinating both because of its horror and for what it tells us about Elizabethan popular taste. Look for a couple of unique stage directions in this play: (1) "Enter the Empress' sons, with Lavinia, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravished." (Lavinia is Titus Andronicus' daughter.) (2) "Enter Messenger with two heads and a hand." Also, look for Shakespeare's first truly evil villain in this play named Aaron. He was probably the first prototype of Shakespeare's later villains. To give you an idea of how purely evil Aaron is, consider what he says when he is finally caught for all his evil-doings: "But I have done a thousand dreadful things As willingly as one would kill a fly, And nothing grieves me heartily indeed But that I cannot do ten thousand more." By the way, the actor who voices Aaron in this play, Paterson Joseph, does a magnificent job of getting Aaron's evil across to the listener. Finally, be aware that disc 2 and disc 3 do not have the act and scene numbers specified on the computer screen (for those playing these discs on their computer). Only the track numbers are specified. However, track, act, and scene number are indicated on the discs themselves. Also, again for those playing these discs on their computer compact disc player, beware that a "cookie" of 0.1 KB size is stored on your computer's hard drive. A "cookie" is just a small piece of text and is NOT a virus. It can do no harm but for those that don't want it, it can be easily erased. In conclusion, this compact disc set brings this revenge tragedy to life aiding in comprehension and thus enjoyment!! (2006; 2 hr, 40 min; 3 compact discs; 19 tracks) XXXXX

Now that the film "Titus" is about to open, I thought I had best hear a recorded version of the complete play to keep my mind clear during what is bound to be a perversion. Of course, many consider "Titus Andronicus" a perversion anyway; and to tell the truth, I do get a little queasy during the various mutilations that make the deaths at the end a relief rather than a shock. But accepting the play on its own terms, you will find the reissue on tape of the 1966 Caedmon recording of (CF 277) possibly the best directed of the entire classic series. Howard Sackler has a bunch of professionals on hand and he lets them (with one exception) tear up the scenery. Poor Judy Dench, who has so little to say as Lavinia before the plot makes her say no more, can only make pathetic noises for most of the play until her final death cry. The evil brothers, played here by John Dane and Christopher Guinee, are not only evil but sarcastically so--and this works on a recording as it might not on the stage. Perhaps Maxine Audley's Tamora is a bit too Wicked Witch of the West now and then; but her co-partner in evil, Aron the Moor, is brought to life by Anthony Quayle in a role he made famous on stage, going even further in the outright enjoyment of his ill-doing. Yes, this play can easily raise laughs and takes an Olivier to keep the audience in the tragic mood. (Reports are that he did it so well that some audience members became ill and had to leave.) Which brings us to Michael Hordern's Titus. Hordern is a fine actor but not a great one. He suffers well but not grandly. I am surprised that his Big Moment--"I am the sea"--is lost among all the other images in that speech. But anyone can direct someone else's play. This recording, soon to be rivaled by one in the Arkangel series, is definitely worth having for Quayle's performance alone.

To the helpful and thoughtful reviews by Julie and Frank Behrens I would only like to add that one of the great virtues of this presentation of Titus is an excellent performance by Charles Gray as Saturninus. Gray has one of the finest voices in his profession. He is best known to most people as one of the top Bond villains (Blofeld in Diamonds Are Forever) and the on screen narrator of the Rocky Horror Picture Show (It's just a jump to the left).

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