

David Timson  
**STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE**  
**The Plantagenets**

Read by **Anton Lesser** and cast

JUNIOR  
CLASSICS



NA391912D

WITH EXCERPTS FROM THE PLAYS

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<b>1</b>	<b>Richard II</b>	4:34
<b>2</b>	This Royal throne of Kings, this sceptred isle,	1:32
<b>3</b>	Gaunt tried to warn King Richard...	3:43
<b>4</b>	So when this thief, this traitor Bolingbroke...	0:31
<b>5</b>	But Richard's confidence soon vanished...	2:13
<b>6</b>	The young Duke of Aumerle bade Richard...	2:18
<b>7</b>	And so Richard, with no power left to him...	2:00
<b>8</b>	Here, cousin, seize the crown...	1:36
<b>9</b>	Richard's grief at his loss overwhelmed him...	0:59
<b>10</b>	In despair, Richard smashed the mirror...	3:11
<b>11</b>	That hand will burn in never-quenching fire...	0:33
<b>12</b>	In his dying moments, ex-King Richard...	0:59
<b>13</b>	<b>Henry IV Part One</b>	1:28
<b>14</b>	The son, who was the theme of honour's tongue...	0:39
<b>15</b>	Prince Hal, although he was the Prince of Wales...	2:16
<b>16</b>	Prince Hal had another friend...	2:38
<b>17</b>	Hotspur had hoped to strike a deal...	1:23
<b>18</b>	A plague of cowards still, say I...	2:03
<b>19</b>	By the time Falstaff had finished his tale...	1:27
<b>20</b>	But Falstaff's plans for their evening's entertainment...	1:46

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21	Then Hal and Falstaff swapped parts...	2:29
22	Their play was interrupted by the arrival...	0:30
23	That night at the palace...	1:09
24	I will redeem all this on Percy's head.	0:52
25	King Henry was moved by his son's...	2:29
26	And such have I to fill up...	0:59
27	King Henry made one final offer...	1:33
28	The Battle of Shrewsbury raged.	1:39
29	What? Old acquaintance?	0:37
30	But as Hal left the battlefield, old Falstaff...	1:09
31	And hoisting the body of Hotspur...	1:46
32	<b>Henry IV Part Two</b>	2:00
33	What is the gross sum that I owe thee?	1:20
34	The cunning Falstaff talked very sweetly...	2:24
35	You whoreson candlemine you...	1:14
36	There was no time for any further questions.	5:08
37	Why doth the crown lie there upon his pillow...	1:10
38	Hal was sure his father was dead...	0:26
39	Too full of sorrow for his father, Hal...	4:21
40	God Save Thy Grace King Hal...	2:30

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<b>41</b>	<b>Henry V</b>	1:25
<b>42</b>	Your Highness lately sending into France...	2:43
<b>43</b>	Henry decided that it was time...	1:32
<b>44</b>	He's in Arthur's bosom, if ever a man went...	1:19
<b>45</b>	The first battle for Henry in France...	1:58
<b>46</b>	Their courage renewed by their leader...	1:03
<b>47</b>	My Lord High Constable, the English...	1:28
<b>48</b>	King Henry, meanwhile, was wandering...	2:53
<b>49</b>	But with the morning, Henry's spirits...	1:51
<b>50</b>	And so the Battle of Agincourt began...	0:36
<b>51</b>	Here comes the Herald of the French...	1:45
<b>52</b>	And so the battle concluded...	0:59
<b>53</b>	Fair Katherine, and most fair...	2:20
<b>54</b>	<b>Henry VI Part One</b>	4:17
<b>55</b>	Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd's daughter...	1:19
<b>56</b>	She was Joan of Arc, called Joan...	2:30
<b>57</b>	'Tis Joan, not we, by whom the day is won...	0:46
<b>58</b>	But old Lord Talbot was an experienced...	2:35
<b>59</b>	Tut tut, here is a mannerly forbearance...	2:21
<b>60</b>	And so the noble Lords of England divided...	4:25

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61	Who craves a parlay with the Burgundy?	1:55
62	Unaware that he had been deserted...	1:22
62	Come hither, you that would be...	1:08
63	With Burgundy on their side...	1:00
64	A heavy battle followed...	0:55
66	...thou art come unto a feast...	1:48
67	So father and son fought valiantly...	1:20
68	The French could hardly believe...	1:13
69	Now, ye familiar spirits...	1:32
70	Left alone, and weak without her spirits...	0:49
7	Be what thou wilt...	3:01
72	Margaret's father, the Earl of Anjou...	0:53
73	Is all our travail turn'd to...	0:38
74	Charles the Dauphin was arrogant...	1:08
75	I feel such sharp dissension...	0:29
75	Peace had been declared...	0:47
77	<b>Henry VI Part Two</b>	1:45
78	Brave Peers of England, pillars of the state...	1:17
79	These counties were the keys of Normandy...	0:33
80	So, there goes our Protector...	0:59

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81	Some Lords agreed with the Cardinal...	0:39
82	A day will come when York shall...	1:22
83	If the Protector, Gloucester, was ambitious...	1:01
84	My Lord of Suffolk...	1:17
85	To Margaret, the Court of England seemed...	4:48
86	I know their complot is to have my life...	1:33
87	The angry Lords had Gloucester dragged away.	1:12
88	My brain, more busy than the labouring spider...	1:03
89	That night, the Duke of Gloucester was...	0:30
90	What, doth my Lord of Suffolk...	0:54
91	Queen Margaret too, though really glad...	1:00
92	But this speech was only pretence...	1:13
93	Give me thy hand, that I may dew it...	1:05
94	While Suffolk boarded a ship for France...	2:15
95	Be brave, then, for your captain...	1:00
96	The force the city of London sent...	3:04
97	How now! Is Somerset at liberty?	1:09
98	There was uproar in the Court.	2:40
99	<b>Henry VI Part Three</b>	1:49
100	The factious Duke of York, descend my throne...	1:27

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101	Who was to be King?	1:20
102	O timorous wretch!	1:27
103	And so, joining the Northern Lords...	1:04
104	The army of the Queen hath...	1:04
105	York was surrounded by his worst enemies.	4:38
106	And Clifford and Queen Margaret...	0:36
107	Dazzle mine eyes...	1:02
108	And Edward took his heraldic sign...	3:14
109	Oh God, methinks 'twould be a happy life...	1:30
110	As he dreamed, King Henry imagined...	0:46
111	Likewise, Henry saw a father...	1:21
112	The tide of battle at Toughton turned...	1:34
113	Ay, Edward will use women honourably...	2:02
114	When Warwick arrived in France to arrange...	0:48
115	No more my king...	1:21
116	And to prove his change of heart...	1:29
117	Here is the Duke. Why, Warwick...	1:19
118	While Edward was imprisoned...	1:31
119	Now Warwick, wilt thou ope the city gates?	2:19
120	A fierce battle was fought at Barnet...	1:33

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121	While King Henry remained locked in his cell...	1:44
122	Butchers and villains. Bloody cannibals...	0:32
123	But her ravings had no effect...	1:07
124	Good day my Lord. What? At your books...	3:46
125	So England returned to peace...	0:50
126	<b>Richard III</b>	1:46
127	Now is the winter of our discontent...	1:50
128	Nothing was going to stop Richard...	0:40
129	Methoughts I had broken from the Tower...	1:22
130	And his bad dreams weren't for nothing...	1:43
131	Was ever woman in this humour wooed?	0:44
132	Meanwhile, Edward IV's illness...	3:44
133	Thus high, by thy advice and thy assistance.	1:35
134	The truth was that Richard could not...	1:55
135	All the time that Richard had been planning...	1:10
136	Dream on thy cousins smothered in the Tower.	2:35
137	Next morning, the sun was not shining...	0:54
138	Rescue, my Lord of Norfolk, rescue...	1:43

**Total time: 3:52:05**



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David Timson

# STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE

## The Plantagenets

The eight Shakespeare plays that run from *Richard II* to *Richard III* tell the story of a family. The Plantagenet family. The name Plantagenet is derived from the plant 'common broom', which is known as *planta genista* in Latin. It was originally spelled *Plante Genest* or *Plante genest* or *Plantagenet*. It originated with Geoffrey of Anjou, father of King Henry II of England. It is most commonly claimed that the name arose because he wore a sprig of it in his bonnet; or perhaps because he planted broom to improve his hunting covers. It is thought that its wildness and its vivid golden flower is a symbol of the character of the Plantagenets.

Henry II was the first in a long line of fourteen Plantagenet kings, stretching from Henry II's accession through to Richard III's death in 1485. Shakespeare only concentrates on the last turbulent hundred years of the family, when they

were fighting amongst themselves.

Richard II was the last direct descendant of the Plantagenet Kings, as he was the son of the Black Prince, first-born of Edward III. The later Plantagenets became divided into the House of Lancaster and the House of York, which were descended from different sons of Edward III.

The purpose of Shakespeare's 'History' plays is to show the troubles England went through to arrive at a united kingdom – the kingdom ruled over by Elizabeth I (though of course Scotland and Ireland were not yet considered to be a part of Britain).

Elizabeth I's ancestors had been very involved in the story Shakespeare was telling. It was her grandfather Henry Tudor who brought the Wars of the Roses to an end by killing Richard III, the last of the Plantagenets, at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. Henry was a Lancastrian, and he

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married a Yorkist (Edward IV's daughter) and so united the red rose and the white to create the Tudor rose, and the Tudor dynasty: Henry Tudor became Henry VII; his son was Henry VIII (famous for having lots of wives!) and his children who reigned after him were Edward VI, who died young, Mary and Elizabeth I. So in writing these plays, Shakespeare was really paying a huge compliment to Elizabeth's family, who had saved the nation from chaos.

It was probably the patriotic feelings that had been stirred up by the attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that led Shakespeare to write about England's exciting past. The Spanish King Philip II sent a huge navy to invade England and convert it back to the Roman Catholic faith, but a small English navy, led by adventurous men like Sir Francis Drake, successfully fought off the invaders against all odds.

People were in the mood then for swashbuckling stories from history with plots and battles, murders and mayhem – and often Shakespeare got so carried away that he even re-wrote history. It is

not a good idea to think that everything that happens in the History plays is true – with Shakespeare a good drama was what mattered. Sometimes characters fight at battles in the play when they weren't actually there, or even born, and Henry VI, who starts as a baby, seems to grow up very quickly as the story develops!

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PLAYS**

### **RICHARD II**

This play contains one of the most famous speeches in Shakespeare – John of Gaunt's 'This Royal Throne of Kings'. It describes England, and was regularly broadcast on the radio in World War II to inspire people at a difficult time.

This play nearly got Shakespeare and his fellow actors put into prison. In 1602 Shakespeare's company was asked to perform it by the Earl of Essex, the day before he led a rebellion that planned to get rid of Queen Elizabeth I, in the same way that Bolingbroke, in the play, gets rid of Richard II. The rebellion failed and Elizabeth was safe, but the actors had a

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lot of hard talking to do to show they were innocent!

*Richard II* was popular in the 19th century as it contains lots of opportunities for processions and display of costume. Actor-managers tried hard to copy exactly the clothes and furnishings of Richard II's time.

Sometimes actresses like to play the male parts in Shakespeare's plays. Some have played Hamlet, some King Lear, and in 1995, Fiona Shaw played Richard II – probably the first actress to do so. Sir John Gielgud was a famous Richard in the 1930s, and in 2005 the Hollywood actor Kevin Spacey starred in a modern dress production at London's Old Vic theatre.

### **HENRY IV Part One**

This play has been performed regularly since Shakespeare's day. This is mainly because of the character of Sir John Falstaff, who, despite being a rogue who cheats and lies, is great fun to watch on stage.

Even when Oliver Cromwell closed the theatres down in 1642, Falstaff managed to keep going in a short version of the play called *The Bouncing Knight*, which

was only performed at fairgrounds.

Falstaff is one of the greatest comic parts ever written and every comic actor has wanted to play it. George Robey, a famous music-hall comedian (not an actor), played it on stage in the 1930s, and in Laurence Olivier's film *Henry V*.

### **HENRY IV Part Two**

This play is not performed as often as the first part of *Henry IV*. Perhaps this is because it does not have much of a plot, though there is a lot of Falstaff. Nevertheless, the coronation of Henry V at the end of the play has meant that it has often been revived at the time of a coronation. Elaborate productions with lots of costumes and processions were put on for the coronation of George III in 1761, and of his son George IV in 1821. The two parts of *Henry IV* are often played back to back, sometimes on a single day! This gave the great actor Laurence Olivier an opportunity to play two very different parts at the Old Vic theatre in the 1940s: Hotspur in part one, and old Justice Shallow in part two.

In 1964 Orson Welles, the Hollywood

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director and actor, made a film out of the two parts of *Henry IV* called *Chimes at Midnight*, concentrating mainly on the character of Falstaff, which Welles played.

### **HENRY V**

*Henry V* was probably the first play to be put on in the new Globe Theatre when it opened in 1600. It was a big success, celebrating the battle of Agincourt, when a few English soldiers beat a bigger French force. Nearly three and a half centuries later, in 1944, Laurence Olivier made his famous film version of *Henry V* at the height of World War II to pay a similar tribute to the few British Airmen who had fought off the larger German Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain. Kenneth Branagh made another film version in 1989, and, in 1984, was the youngest actor to play the part at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. He was twenty-four – younger even than the real Henry, who was twenty-eight at the time of Agincourt.

### **HENRY VI Parts One, Two & Three**

The three parts of *Henry VI* are amongst the earliest plays written by Shakespeare. They are dated between 1589, when Shakespeare was twenty-five, and 1593, when he was twenty-nine – still quite a young man. Indeed, *Henry VI* part three might even be his very first play, but as with so many facts about Shakespeare, no one can be sure.

Shakespeare created the idea of telling the story of the Wars of the Roses in three exciting parts, long before Hollywood thought of it for films like *Rambo* or *Rocky*!

The *Henry VI* plays may not have been written in order. *Henry VI* part one was probably written after parts two and three. Shakespeare no doubt felt that after the success of *Henry VI* part three he needed a ‘prequel’ (just like George Lucas did with his *Star Wars* films!)

Because Shakespeare did not worry too much about being historically accurate, *Henry VI* part one is full of deliberate mistakes. Shakespeare is very unfair to Joan of Arc, whom he presents as a witch (a popular English opinion at

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the time). It took another British writer – George Bernard Shaw – to turn her into a saint 400 years later in his play *St Joan* (1927).

Thomas Nashe, a writer and possibly a friend of Shakespeare's, wrote that 'ten thousand spectators at least (at several times)' had seen this play, which means it was very popular indeed. After its huge popularity in Shakespeare's day, however, *Henry VI* part one had hardly any performances until the 20th century, and then only with the other two parts.

*Henry VI* part two may have been written before part one, as it deals with the conflict in England *following* the wars in France. Shakespeare may have originally thought he could start his story with the squabble in the English court, but then decided it was important to show how England lost her French possessions.

The Duke of York and Queen Margaret are developed by Shakespeare in this play into strongly dramatic characters; while the rebellion of Jack Cade and his followers is treated comically. As a young and inexperienced playwright, Shakespeare was trying out his ideas in

this play. Later he would often include comic and tragic figures side by side.

*Henry VI* part three telescopes many of the events of the final years of the Wars of the Roses. To increase the drama, Shakespeare has Queen Margaret herself kill York, whereas in reality he died fighting in the Battle of Wakefield. It seems that it was true, however, that Gloucester killed Henry VI in the Tower. Richard of Gloucester, with his bloodthirsty speeches, is the first great character that Shakespeare created.

Often when presented on stage, directors and actors have felt the need to re-write both parts two and three and thereby produce a single play. John Crowne, for instance, did this in 1680 with a play he called *The Misery of Civil War*. In the 18th century Theophilus Cibber produced a similar adaptation, throwing in some lines from *Henry V* for good measure.

In 1906 all three *Henry VI* plays were performed together by Frank Benson's company at Stratford-upon-Avon, perhaps for the first time since Shakespeare's day. Since then, the RSC at Stratford have done several sequences under the

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directors Peter Hall, Adrian Noble, Terry Hands and in 2007–8, Michael Boyd.

### **RICHARD III**

The character of Richard III has always been popular, because he makes the audience laugh whilst committing his wicked crimes. Shakespeare went to great lengths to create his villain with a humped back, a withered arm and a lame leg, though there is no strong proof that the real Richard was so physically handicapped. Shakespeare took his facts from a history of Richard III's reign written in the late 15th century by Sir Thomas More, who was trying to flatter the new king Henry VII, who had beaten Richard at the Battle of Bosworth. Henry was the first of the Tudor family to reign over England, and when Shakespeare was writing his play, it was Henry's granddaughter Elizabeth I who was Queen; so naturally Shakespeare wanted to exaggerate Richard's evil deeds to show her family in a good light.

The part of Richard has attracted the greatest actors of every century. In the 20th century Laurence Olivier gave

a chilling performance, which was later captured on film. Ian McKellen also made a successful film in 1996, when he played Richard in modern dress, as a Nazi.

### **Notes by David Timson**

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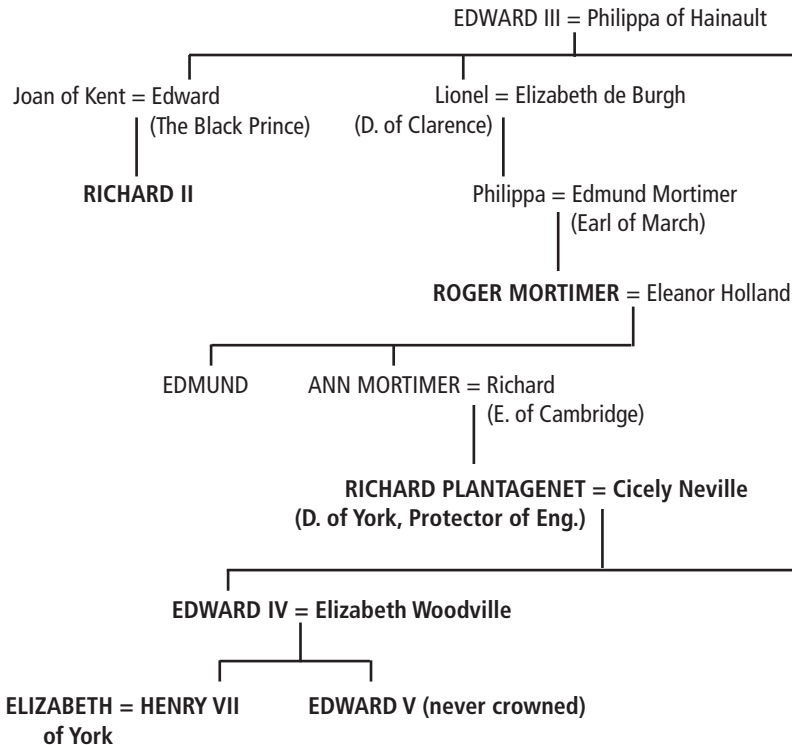
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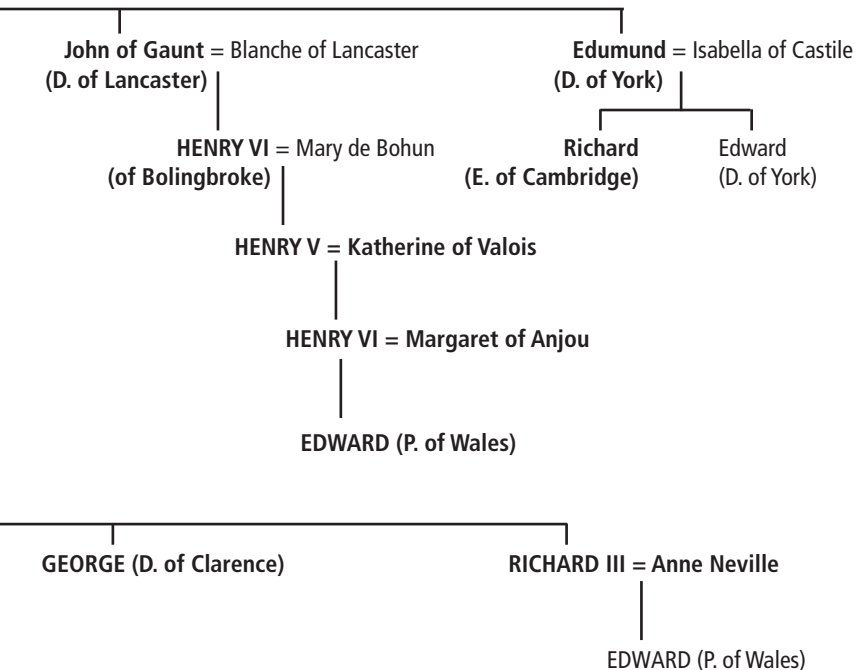
# THE PLANTAGENETS: FAMILY TREE





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## LANCASTER AND YORK (1327–1485)





One of Britain's leading classical actors, **Anton Lesser** has worked extensively at the National Theatre, and is an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company, where, over the years, he has played many of the principal roles, including Romeo, Troilus, Petruchio and Richard III. His many television appearances include roles in *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear*, *The Politician's Wife*, *Vanity Fair*, *Perfect Strangers*, and *Dickens*. Films in which he has appeared include *Charlotte Gray*, *Fairytale – A True Story*, *Imagining Argentina*, *River Queen*, and most recently, *Miss Potter*. A familiar voice on radio, he has been involved in countless plays and recordings, and has become particularly associated with his award winning readings of Dickens for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Hugh Ross** trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television. Theatre credits include *The Woman in Black* at the Fortune Theatre, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* at the Royal National Theatre, and *Bent* at Trafalgar Studios. He has acted in *Charlotte Grey* and *Trainspotting*, among other films. His television work includes *Sea of Souls*, *Lovejoy* and *Absolutely Fabulous* for the BBC. Hugh is also active as a director, with credits including *After Liverpool* with The Royal Shakespeare Company. He has also read *Aristotle: An Introduction* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Clare Corbett** was the Carleton Hobbs winner in 2000 and since then has been heard on BBC Radio Repertory and seen in regional theatres. She is a familiar face to television viewers having appeared in *The Bill*, *Fastnet*, *Spooks*, *Casualty* and *Final Demand*. She has also read *Venus and Adonis*, *Great Scientists and their Discoveries* and *Stories from Shakespeare 3* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Jonathan Keeble's** theatre work includes leading roles at Manchester's Royal Exchange, Coventry, Liverpool, Exeter, Lancaster and West Yorkshire Playhouse. TV includes *People Like Us*, *The Two of Us* and *Deptford Graffiti*. Jonathan has featured in over 250 radio plays for the BBC and was a member of the Radio Drama Company. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded *Black Beauty*, *Classic Chilling Tales*, *Macbeth*, *Oedipus the King* and *Krapp's Last Tape*.



**Benjamin Soames** trained at LAMDA. Since then, he has been active on both stage and screen, appearing in the popular TV series *Sharpe* and touring worldwide in the acclaimed Cheek by Jowl production of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* directed by Declan Donnellan. He also reads *Tales from the Norse Legends*, *The Tale of Troy*, *The Adventures of Odysseus*, *More Tales from the Greek Legends*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Great Inventors and their Inventions* and *Great Scientists and their Discoveries* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**David Timson** has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He also reads *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I, II, III, IV, V and VI* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes I, II and III*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Valley of Fear* and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*.

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## Credits

Produced by David Timson

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited by Malcolm Blackmoor and Sarah Butcher

Cover picture: Henry V receives a box of tennis balls from the French Dauphin / Charles Folkard in *The Children's Shakespeare*, 1911

Courtesy of The Mary Evans Picture Library

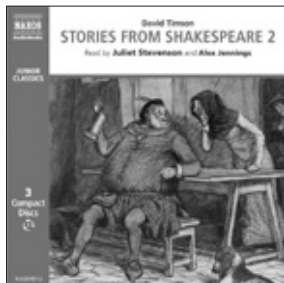
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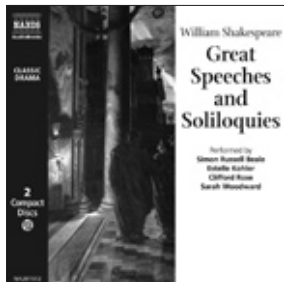
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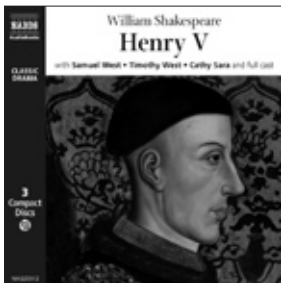
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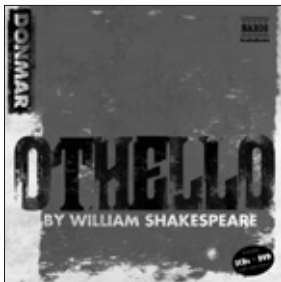
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David Timson

# STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE

## The Plantagenets

Read by **Anton Lesser** and cast

Richard II • Henry IV, parts 1 & 2 • Henry V, parts 1, 2 & 3 • Henry VI • Richard III

Read by **Anton Lesser**  
with **Hugh Ross, Clare Corbett, Jonathan Keeble,**  
**Benjamin Soames** and **David Timson**

**Anton Lesser** leads a cast of actors to relate the stories of Shakespeare's eight plays based on the Plantagenet Kings of England – from Richard II to Richard III. Entertaining and informative, they present the plots and introduce the main characters through a combination of story-telling and carefully-chosen excerpts from the plays themselves. An ideal way to get to know the plays in preparation for a visit to the theatre, reading or studying.

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