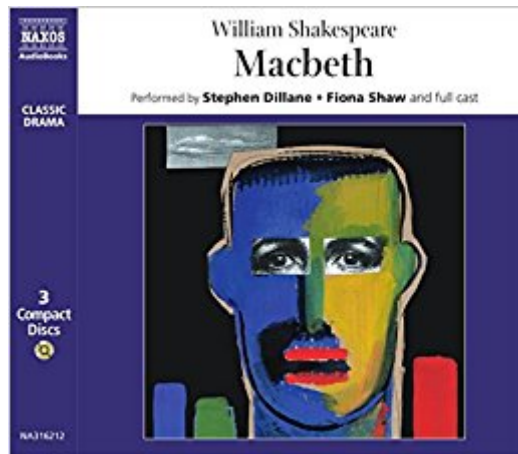




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Macbeth (New Cambridge Shakespeare (Naxos Audio))



Synopsis

MACBETH, Shakespeare's last great tragedy, has remained one of the most popular plays since its first performance in 1606 - probably in front of King James. This exciting audiobook production is directed with fresh imagination by Fiona Shaw who breaks the conventional strait jacket that has hampered the development of Shakespeare on audio. We are as much in the 21st century as in medieval Scotland - the tensions, the politics, the struggle for power and dark ambition is part of our lives. This is also reflected in the sound world, with modern machinery and tanks. MACBETH is part of Naxos AudioBooks' exciting series of complete dramatisations of the works of Shakespeare, in conjunction with Cambridge University Press. It uses the New Cambridge Shakespeare text, as used by the Royal Shakespeare Company and educational institutions across the world.

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Customer Reviews

A very different Lady Macbeth here .. Cossotto's rendition is secretive ... she only hits high notes when she really has to .. the reading of the letter before her first aria ... she whispers ... she doesn't seem like is reading some lines in the podium of a convention like the others do .. this is my 5th studio recording of this opera ... the witches choruses and ballet are perfect ... Carreras at his peak in his short little role and Milnes sounds dark like in any of his many recordings of the 70's I believe from all the ones I have this is the faster paced of all .. I can't just go and re listen theres piles and piles of piles of piles of opera sets in my collection .. but I remember the sound in all of them ... Macbeth is one of my favorite operas in the whole repertory I will not decide for one only ,

no way , but this one I think it can be the best together with the totally unappreciated Sinopoli one ... about the sound of this particular format was remastered in 1986 ... you can just decide .. me I have no problem .. I have a 20 bit mp3 converter so no matter how the original sound is .. I can't tell anything about it .. maybe if you want to try a later format and remastering it may have the perfect sound, but I see that many of those repackaged EMI >> THE HOUSE OF OPERA series is just the 1980's remasters differently packaged .. I know bcos the converter I have extracts all the info of the tracks unlike the windows media player and most of them say they are the original 80's remasters well, I don't know what to say about that ... final words .. this is a very good Macbeth to have and even if you're a one version only opera buyer .. this one I can recommend very much ...

I have come late to the Early Verdi fold, and this original Macbeth is the last fillip to my collection. I have loved the revised Macbeth for a very long time but only this past year fell under the spell of Verdi's early 'galley' operas. That term 'galley' implied something to me that is totally untrue; that those operas from Nabucco thru Luisa Miller were cranked out like Warner Brothers cartoons and not worth much. But throughout the years I kept happening upon critics who said these early works were worth a look-see. Experts like Julian Budden, who I respect, did not really help the situation with his left-handed compliments, implying, again that these early pieces, with the notable and questionable case of Nabucco, and Ernani, were largely avoidable. Nabucco, Luisa Miller then Rigoletto and forward, that was all one needed to know. As time has passed other early works, Attila, I Masnadieri and I due Foscari, have come more into focus as creditable compositions worthy of staging. I have found over the last months that Verdi's early operas are chockfull of brilliance and interest and excitement. He was always a composer who never settled for the mundane, for very long anyway. Everything he composed, even the feeble Oberto, have moments of wild surprise in which he tossed in unexpected chord progressions and instrumental groupings that take one aback. The original version of Macbeth is truly his first towering masterpiece. The revision made 17 years later is also a masterpiece but is, for all intents and purposes, an entirely different opera! How wonderful!! Macbeth I and Macbeth II. I have lived long enough to have experienced a miracle in the opera world!. The first act of this original version is largely the same as the revision, with bits and pieces altered in the orchestration and differences in chordal progressions that do not alter the tinta of the piece, but throw it more into the I Lombardi and Attila court than the La forza del destino and Un ballo in maschera arena after its revision. Of all the operas that came after this original Macbeth I am most reminded of I vespri Siciliani, a wonderful and grossly under-rated middle masterpiece, warts and all. The big changes are noticeable beginning in Act II. The duet between Macbeth and his

lady is much altered and much more 'raw', like the duets between Attila and Odabella. Her role is far more laden with coloratura, less subtle and more exciting. Listening to Act II I thought that this role of Lady Macbeth would never have suited any mezzo-soprano as the tessitura rises very high and very full of runs and trills. Rita Hunter is brilliant in this role, btw. Act III is also much altered and, I think, improved in the revision. The haunting 'shew of kings' is far finer in the later version. In the original Verdi seems to not have fully grasped the possibilities of this scene, but following the composition of *Un ballo in maschera*, Act II especially, he discovered an entirely new and deeper psychological opportunity in this scene. This and the Lady's aria 'La luce langue' are huge improvements on the original. I prefer the original ending with Macbeth with Macduff killing Macbeth on stage instead of the rather feeble and unsatisfying choral ending of the original. Like *La forza del Destino* I wish companies would make a hybrid, like Bayreuth did with Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and mix and match the best parts of both versions. As every writer knows he is not his best editor, every composer, in the same vein, does not always make the best decisions when they set about revising an older work. Verdi's four act revision of *Don Carlo*, for instance, is a failure, if you ask me, but it was a wise professional decision made in order to not tire the old ladies in the fifth row of the orchestra seats at The Met. Musically, however, it is a flop compared to the five act original. The other thing about the revised *Macbeth* is the inclusion of a ballet, which I happen to love. Only Sinopoli, Abbado and Muti include this ballet in their recordings of the revised version. In the original version its non-appearance is less of a problem because it did not exist at the time and there is not a feeling of Something Missing during the Act III scene with the witches. And Macbeth has much more to sing in the original in that scene as well. Peter Glossop is an extremely fine Macbeth, one of the best, right up there with Bruson, Warren, Cappuccilli, Taddei and Milnes. Rita Hunter rivals the best ladies on record, including Birgit Nilsson and Leonie Rysanek who do not possess Hunter's agility in coloratura, as well as her power and shining top notes. Mara Zampieri (Sinopoli) still holds the Lady's crown, however. Maria Callas was unique but her only complete recording is in bad sound and in less than stellar company. John Tomlinson is about the finest Banco I've heard. His panic and dramatic urgency before he is murdered is hair-raising and heart-breaking. Kenneth Collins is an exemplary Macduff and I wonder why he didn't have a bigger career in these larger Verdi roles on record. John Matheson does a fine job with the BBC Orchestra and Singers. He doesn't take risks but neither is he pedestrian. The Chandos sound is superb, though it lacks that last ounce of theatrical drama that Sinopoli, Schippers and Leinsdorf capture in their famous recordings of the revised version. This is an important recording of a Verdi opera. I am fortunate to have snagged the last affordable used copy. It was in pristine condition and the booklets and written

material of the highest order, almost on the same level as the late great Andante Records releases. If you can afford the cost of this no-longer available gem then get it! Hopefully Chandos will rerelease this at some future date but it probably won't include the wonderful printed material. There is a libretto in four languages and a plethora of photographs and a gorgeous reproduction of the actress Ellen Terry as the Lady.

This recording was very uneven. The principal voices are terrific (as you might expect!) WHEN you can hear them. It must have been a live recording without microphones. When the singers are far away, so is their sound. If you are a major fan of Christa Ludwig, she sounds awe inspiringly good in this performance. Milnes is good also, but the uneven level of sound was pretty bothersome.

This is a very desirable Macbeth. Cossotto is nasty as Lady, the very attitude needed, and with that voice.!!

Very difficult to hear.

I agree wholeheartedly with the reviews of R. Levine and R. Payne. Here we have Verdi's first try at a Shakespeare tragedy, *Macbeth*, premiered in 1847, with more music, more interaction between the principals, closer to the original intent of the play, than in the later revised 1865 score. The vacillation and weak resolve of the future king, and the machinations of his scheming consort, are given more prominence in this version, making the finale that much more tragic, and closer to the source than the later, abridged, rendition. All the principals are excellent. Peter Glossop (*Macbeth*) and Rita Hunter (*Lady Macbeth*) provide exciting dramatic performances; and John Tomlinson (*Banquo*) and Kenneth Collins (*Macduff*) are equally convincing in their roles. All are immensely believable characters. The orchestra, the BBC Concert Orchestra, under John Matheson, play with feeling and dramatic pace. Verdi had a life-long fascination with Shakespeare's works, starting with *Macbeth* (1847), and finishing, close to the end of his own life, with *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893), his two masterpieces. A *King Lear* was in the works, but that was not to be, regrettably, considering his very personal interest in father-daughter relationships (e.g., *Nabucco*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, etc). This recording of the original version of *Macbeth* is a worthy tribute from one great genius to another.

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