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The Winter's Tale



Synopsis

At the opening of this late Shakespearean drama, Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, has been the longtime guest of Leontes and Hermione, the king and queen of Sicily. When the time comes for Polixenes to leave, Leontes urges him to stay longer. At first Polixenes refuses, but soon he yields to the entreaties of Hermione. His rapid change of mind convinces Leontes that the two are lovers and that Polixenes is the father of Hermione's unborn child. Leontes' obsessive jealousy leads him to a course of action that has potentially disastrous consequences for all concerned and for the future of his kingdom.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 3 hours and 10 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Original recording

Publisher: Listen2aBook.com

Audible.com Release Date: December 15, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01N0QWLRI

Best Sellers Rank: #212 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Drama #5608 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Dramas & Plays

Customer Reviews

I feel like this Shakespearian play doesn't get enough face time. The first time I ever saw its title, I was in High School, looking at the names of all the plays Shakespeare ever wrote. We all know about his overly famous plays, like Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, but what about The Winter's Tale? I was intrigued by the title at the time, and the fact that I'd never heard of it before (and with a brother heavily into Shakespeare and acting, that was unusual). I've never seen this title on a playbill, though I'm sure it must be performed somewhere, and my curiosity about this play was peaked--though in High School I didn't do anything about it. Recently, I had to teach Hamlet, and as I was looking on for a copy for my Kindle, I once again came across The Winter's Tale. As it was a free copy, I scooped it up and read it right away, just to assuage my curiosity. It was interesting. In my opinion, it's not really like Shakespeare's other plays. It's a bit intense in the beginning, and though there are comedic scenes, I wouldn't necessarily classify this as a comedy, nor a tragedy either. A romance, I suppose, but for me, it's a bit strange. Through a

little research I found that Shakespeare actually modeled his play off Pandosto, by Robert Greene (which I've never read), but I, personally, see much of Oedipus Rex in this play. I know Shakespeare dealt a lot with Greek mythology in his works, and *The Winter's Tale* seems to really follow that of Oedipus Rex. I'm not going to give the entire synopsis away, or any spoilers, but, like Oedipus, King Leontes is a haughty man, paranoid. He refuses to listen to oracles and attempts to do away with his newborn child by sending her away to die. While there are many differences between *The Winter's Tale* and Oedipus, there are also many similarities and I found this rather interesting, especially because I really enjoy Oedipus. That being said, I'd like to see this play preformed someday, I always tend to like plays more when they're preformed, so I'll have to keep my eyes peeled for this one. (Please note: I use the star rating system of Goodreads, which is different from that of . My overall rating is that I liked it.)

"*The Winter's Tale*" marks Shakespeare's entrance into a prescient world of High Romantic ideals, where the stagnancy of a courtly world dominated by emotionally afflicted males is subverted by a vernal world of female power. Leontes, King of Sicilia, is one of Shakespeare's most convincingly self-tortured characters, while Hermione is an icon of long-suffering patience, incarnated in the famous statue of the play's conclusion. Her daughter Perdita is the subject of potentially blasphemous adoration, not only for her suitor Florizel but for the entire world; she glows in the suggested light of pagan mystery cult, the Eleusinian mysteries of mothers and daughters in secret collusion with nature and against the withering forces of jealousy and death. In this light, the critical essay included with this edition is sadly tone-deaf to Shakespeare's potent poetic raptures in this play, hearkening instead to a dogmatic, albeit at least clearly presented, rehearsal of Renaissance attitudes about "patriarchy" which deadens Hermione and her faithful advocate Paulina into mere totems for self-exculpating males of the sort whom Shakespear embodies, with withering criticism, in Leontes and the judgmental Polixenes.

For me, reading Shakespeare is kind of like trying to work through a slightly familiar written foreign language. These Folger books are helpful because they explain difficult phrases and unusual words on the page facing the confusions as they occur. They also tell you about the storyline and emphasize the important points, which are so easy to miss while trying to plug through the old English. Having read four of the Folger paperbacks and then attending the plays, I am just now starting to get fluent enough to enjoy the books and the language without constant referral to the notes. I don't know how else I would have been able to stick with ol' William without Folger as a tour

guide.

Love the Classic

We are abruptly thrown into a man's paranoia which has very tragic consequences, The play then takes us through slow paced central scenes and then to an surprise and abrupt ending. I think that I liked the play because of the magical ending. I read this downloaded version while I listened to an audioplay performed by Shakespearean actors.

It's just bare bones but it's free and helpful for those of us who spend a ton of money on school books. I loved it on kindle since we can change font, spacing, margins and even my 8 year old can follow along then. We do Shakespeare as a family subject.

William Shakespeare is always a good lecture option.

Playscripts are more like blueprints than finished products, and this one is no exception. I just last weekend saw a wonderful production of "Winter's Tale," but when I just read it, it was disappointing. Nevertheless the printed version was useful to me because I don't hear well and reading the script in advance helped me to miss fewer lines in the production.

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