



POETRY

From Shakespeare ~ with love

THE BEST OF THE SONNETS

Read by **David Tennant**
Juliet Stevenson
Anton Lesser
Maxine Peake
Stella Gonet *et al.*

Devised and directed by
David Timson

NA195612D

400th
Anniversary
Edition

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|----|--|------|
| 1 | Sonnet 2: When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
Read by David Tennant | 1:01 |
| 2 | Sonnet 6: Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
Read by Bertie Carvel | 0:55 |
| 3 | Sonnet 7: Lo! in the orient when the gracious light
Read by David Tennant | 0:53 |
| 4 | Sonnet 8: Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Read by Bertie Carvel | 1:01 |
| 5 | Sonnet 9: Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye
Read by David Tennant | 0:52 |
| 6 | Sonnet 10: For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any
Read by Bertie Carvel | 0:56 |
| 7 | Sonnet 11: As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
Read by David Tennant | 1:00 |
| 8 | Sonnet 12: When I do count the clock that tells the time
Read by Bertie Carvel | 0:57 |
| 9 | Sonnet 14: Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck
Read by David Tennant | 0:55 |
| 10 | Sonnet 17: Who will believe my verse in time to come
Read by David Tennant | 1:00 |

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| 11 | Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Read by David Tennant | 0:58 |
| 12 | Sonnet 19: Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws
Read by Anne-Marie Piazza | 0:58 |
| 13 | Sonnet 20: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted
Read by Hugh Ross | 1:04 |
| 14 | Sonnet 21: So is it not with me as with that Muse
Read by Hugh Ross | 1:00 |
| 15 | Sonnet 22: My glass shall not persuade me I am old
Read by Hugh Ross | 0:58 |
| 16 | Sonnet 23: As an unperfect actor on the stage
Read by Anne-Marie Piazza | 0:59 |
| 17 | Sonnet 25: Let those who are in favour with their stars
Read by David Timson | 0:54 |
| 18 | Sonnet 26: Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Read by Anne-Marie Piazza | 1:02 |
| 19 | Sonnet 27: Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed
Read by Anne-Marie Piazza | 0:59 |
| 20 | Sonnet 29: When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
Read by David Timson | 1:00 |

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| 21 | Sonnet 30: When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
Read by Stella Gonet | 0:51 |
| 22 | Sonnet 31: Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts
Read by Stella Gonet | 0:51 |
| 23 | Sonnet 32: If thou survive my well-contented day
Read by David Timson | 0:58 |
| 24 | Sonnet 33: Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Read by Gunnar Cauthery | 0:54 |
| 25 | Sonnet 35: No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done
Read by Gunnar Cauthery | 0:59 |
| 26 | Sonnet 37: As a decrepit father takes delight
Read by Hugh Ross | 0:55 |
| 27 | Sonnet 38: How can my muse want subject to invent
Read by Hugh Ross | 0:54 |
| 28 | Sonnet 40: Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all
Read by Stella Gonet | 0:58 |
| 29 | Sonnet 41: Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits
Read by Alex Jennings | 0:54 |
| 30 | Sonnet 42: That thou hast her it is not all my grief
Read by Alex Jennings | 1:03 |

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- 31 **Sonnet 49:** Against that time, if ever that time come
Read by David Timson 0:59
- 32 **Sonnet 50:** How heavy do I journey on the way
Read by Benjamin Soames 0:57
- 33 **Sonnet 53:** What is your substance, whereof are you made
Read by Stella Gonet 0:53
- 34 **Sonnet 55:** Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Read by Benjamin Soames 0:55
- 35 **Sonnet 57:** Being your slave what should I do but tend
Read by Benjamin Soames 0:55
- 36 **Sonnet 61:** Is it thy will, thy image should keep open
Read by Stella Gonet 0:53
- 37 **Sonnet 63:** Against my love shall be as I am now
Read by Anton Lesser 0:52
- 38 **Sonnet 65:** Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
Read by Anton Lesser 1:02
- 39 **Sonnet 69:** Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
Read by Benjamin Soames 1:01
- 40 **Sonnet 71:** No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Read by Juliet Stevenson 0:46

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| 41 | Sonnet 73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold
Read by Anton Lesser | 0:59 |
| 42 | Sonnet 80: O! how I faint when I of you do write
Read by Anton Lesser | 0:58 |
| 43 | Sonnet 83: I never saw that you did painting need
Read by Anton Lesser | 0:53 |
| 44 | Sonnet 86: Was it the proud full sail of his great verse
Read by Anton Lesser | 0:51 |
| 45 | Sonnet 87: Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing
Read by David Timson | 1:09 |
| 46 | Sonnet 89: Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault
Read by David Timson | 0:50 |
| 47 | Sonnet 90: Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now
Read by Maxine Peake | 0:52 |
| 48 | Sonnet 91: Some glory in their birth, some in their skill
Read by Roy McMillan | 0:55 |
| 49 | Sonnet 92: But do thy worst to steal thyself away
Read by Roy McMillan | 0:50 |
| 50 | Sonnet 93: So shall I live, supposing thou art true
Read by Roy McMillan | 0:52 |

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- 51 **Sonnet 94:** They that have power to hurt, and will do none
Read by Roy McMillan 0:58
- 52 **Sonnet 97:** How like a winter hath my absence been
Read by Maxine Peake 0:50
- 53 **Sonnet 99:** The forward violet thus did I chide
Read by Maxine Peake 0:56
- 54 **Sonnet 104:** To me, fair friend, you never can be old
Read by Juliet Stevenson 0:58
- 55 **Sonnet 106:** When in the chronicle of wasted time
Read by Maxine Peake 0:50
- 56 **Sonnet 109:** O! never say that I was false of heart
Read by Trevor White 0:56
- 57 **Sonnet 116:** Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Read by Juliet Stevenson 0:51
- 58 **Sonnet 120:** That you were once unkind befriends me now
Read by Trevor White 0:58
- 59 **Sonnet 121:** 'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd
Read by Trevor White 0:56
- 60 **Sonnet 127:** In the old age black was not counted fair
Read by Jonathan Keeble 0:59

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- [61] **Sonnet 128:** How oft when thou, my music, music play'st
Read by Gunnar Cauthery 0:57
- [62] **Sonnet 129:** The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Read by Jonathan Keeble 1:03
- [63] **Sonnet 130:** My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun
Read by Gunnar Cauthery 0:58
- [64] **Sonnet 133:** Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
Read by Tom Mison 0:54
- [65] **Sonnet 134:** So, now I have confess'd that he is thine
Read by Tom Mison 0:53
- [66] **Sonnet 136:** If thy soul check thee that I come so near
Read by Tom Mison 0:55
- [67] **Sonnet 137:** Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes
Read by Tom Mison 0:50
- [68] **Sonnet 138:** When my love swears that she is made of truth
Read by Trevor White 0:59
- [69] **Sonnet 140:** Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press
Read by Maxine Peake 0:53

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| 70 | Sonnet 141: In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes
Read by Tom Mison | 0:52 |
| 71 | Sonnet 144: Two loves I have of comfort and despair
Read by Tom Mison | 0:49 |
| 72 | Sonnet 147: My love is as a fever longing still
Read by Maxine Peake | 0:50 |
| 73 | Sonnet 148: O me! what eyes hath Love put in my head
Read by Maxine Peake | 1:02 |
| 74 | Sonnet 149: Canst thou, O cruel! say I love thee not
Read by Tom Mison | 0:55 |
| 75 | Sonnet 154: The little Love-god lying once asleep
Read by David Tennant | 1:02 |

Total time: 1:15:28

From Shakespeare ~ with love

THE BEST OF THE SONNETS

As with so many of the aspects of Shakespeare's life, it's not known exactly when he wrote his sonnets, or for whom, or if they are in any way autobiographical.

He may have begun writing them as early as 1593, at the same time as he was writing his epic love-poem *Venus and Adonis*. The eroticism found in this poem is echoed in several sonnets, and such titillating verse was very popular at the time. These sonnets are youthful poems, but others are written from the perspective of middle age, and as the sonnets did not appear in print until 1609, when Shakespeare was 45, he may well have been adding to the collection throughout his working life. However, it is debatable whether they reflect Shakespeare's later poetic style as well as his earliest. The Irish writer and scholar C.S. Lewis once commented: 'If Shakespeare had taken an

hour off from the composition of *Lear* to write a sonnet, the sonnet might not have been in the style of *Lear*'.

The sonnets were certainly in existence by 1598, when a Cambridge schoolmaster, Francis Meres, compiling a book of celebrated English writers, mentions Shakespeare's 'sugared sonnets' that had been circulating amongst the author's friends and colleagues. The following year, two of the 'sugared sonnets' appeared in a collection called *The Passionate Pilgrim*, but the remaining 152 had to wait until their publication in 1609.

Might Shakespeare have been reluctant to have the sonnets printed because they were so personal to him? Some of the poems are very open about the poet's love for another man. Did Shakespeare think they were too explicit

for public consumption? The web of autobiography that may, or may not, be threaded through the sonnets tells us nothing specific. Who, for instance, was the young man addressed in the first half of the sonnets?

One candidate may be a 'Mr. W.H.', to whom the sonnets were dedicated, but it isn't clear whether he was William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, or Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton (whose initials would have to be reversed to fit the speculation) – both of whom were patrons of Shakespeare. It is also possible that the dedicatee was not Shakespeare's choice anyway, but that of the printer, Thomas Thorpe, and thus the enigmatic 'Mr. W.H.' might have been completely unknown to Shakespeare. Similarly, the notorious dark lady alluded to in Sonnets such as 127 and 130, and the rival poet in Sonnets 80, 83 and 86, cannot be positively identified and are the subjects of endless speculation.

But rather than speculate on biographical clues that may be hidden in the text, and which are impossible ever

to prove, the sonnets might best be read as examples of Shakespeare's burgeoning poetic and dramatic skills. It is surely not beyond belief that Shakespeare merely *imagined* the situations in the sonnets, as he clearly imagined and conceived the dramatic situations in his plays. For example: how to persuade a handsome young man to settle down, get married, and pass on his good looks and virtues to his children, as is represented in Sonnets 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 17. Shakespeare in fact offers 17 different approaches to this problem, each ingeniously contrived poetic exercises, at turns brilliantly witty as well as moving. By setting himself the task of expressing emotion within a strict poetic form (a sonnet is a mere 14 lines), Shakespeare challenges his talent, and our comprehension, to the utmost.

The strong emotions expressed in the sonnets connect them with Shakespeare's dramatic works. Since it's possible that he was writing these poetic exercises throughout his working life in the theatre, it is tempting to look for connections between them and the

plays, and conjecture as to whether they were written at the same time. It is the imagery in the sonnets that so often echoes imagery found in the plays. For instance, in Sonnet 134 the poet uses money references to show the callousness of his mistress, who is having an affair with his friend. He uses the words 'usury' and 'bond', two emotive words recalling Shylock and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, and though the subject matter of the poem has no direct connection with this play, the echoes are there, particularly in the line 'Thou usurer that putt'st forth all to use, And sue a friend came debtor for my sake', which encapsulates the give/take relationship of Antonio and Bassanio. This awkward friendship in *The Merchant of Venice*, it could be argued, mirrors the poet's misapprehensions of his young friend's honesty and fidelity, expressed in Sonnets 89, 90 and 91–94. Broken friendship is a common theme throughout Shakespeare's plays.

In Sonnet 33 the imagery of a hidden sun obscured by clouds recalls Richard II's appearance on the walls of Flint Castle:

*'As doth the blushing, discontented sun
From out the fiery portal of the east
When he perceives the envious clouds
are bent
To dim his glory...'* (*Richard II Act 3 sc.3*)

In Sonnet 29 the image of the rising lark reminds us of the song in *Cymbeline*: 'Hark, hark the lark at heaven's gate sings...' And surely the image in Sonnet 27 of 'a jewel hung in ghastly night makes black night beauteous...' cannot but be associated in our minds with the line 'a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear', Romeo's description of Juliet. Were they possibly written at the same time?

The most direct association between the sonnets and the plays is found in *Edward III*, once an apocryphal play, but now included in the canon. This play has many cross-references with the sonnets, but also directly quotes a line from Sonnet 94: 'Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds...' (*Edward III Act 2 sc.1*). These parallels are infinite; but the theory of association is surely no less acceptable than uncertain biographical links.

Following this theory of the sonnets being dramatic and poetical exercises, rather than fragments of biography, we have assembled a group of actors whose approach to the sonnets is as varied as their ages and dialects. The direction was to think of the sonnets as dramatic speeches as well as exquisite poems. The poetic structure is observed, but the listener will also be aware of the emotion behind each sonnet. The aim is to give a sense of individuality to each, rather than to consider them grouped thematically. Of course the result varies, depending on how successful Shakespeare is in his efforts to balance poetic structure with dramatic content. As in his plays, Shakespeare is quite prepared to break the poetic structure if the dramatic situation demands it.

Sometimes he is showing us what a clever poet he is, whilst at other times he takes us right into the mind of his fictional lover, as in Sonnet 89: 'Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault'. The emotional response of the reader (or listener) to the immediacy of such a

sonnet is similar to that of an audience watching a play in the theatre!

Shakespeare's emotional range in the sonnets is staggering. He explores obsessive love, jealousy, mutual love, love idealised, love degraded and cheapened, the love of friends, married love, lust, deception, betrayal – the list is endless, proving himself, as Francis Meres said, 'the most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of Love'.

Notes by David Timson



Bertie Carvel has worked extensively in theatre, television and radio. His theatre credits include *Parade* at the Donmar Warehouse, *The Man of Mode*, *The Life of Galileo* and *Coram Boy*, all at the National Theatre, and *Revelations* at the Hampstead Theatre. He has appeared in *John Adams*, *Doctor Who*, *Holby City* and *Agatha Christie: A Life in Pictures* on television. His radio credits include *Rock 'n' Roll*, *Breaking Point* and *Diary of a Nobody*. He has read *The Great Poets – Percy Bysshe Shelley* and *Dragon Tales* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Gunnar Cauthery is the BBC Radio Carleton Hobbs Award Winner 2008. His radio credits include *The Cherry Orchard*, *Henry VIII*, *The Time Machine*, *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Unseen Austen*. His theatre credits include *Harvest*, *Year 10*, *Wilde Tales*, *Western* and *Assassins*. He also played the role of Tony Blair in *Newsrevue*. His television credits include the roles of Lloyd Hunter in *The Demon Headmaster* and Terry Walton in *Just William*.



A series of key roles have placed **Stella Gonet** in the forefront of young British actresses. These include Titania and Isabella for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Roxanne in *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Ophelia in *Hamlet* at the National Theatre. She has previously featured in *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Alex Jennings trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company and has played numerous leading roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure*, *Richard III*, *Peer Gynt*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. His film credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Derek Jarman's *War Requiem* and *The Wings of the Dove*.



Jonathan Keeble's theatre work includes leading roles at Manchester's Royal Exchange and West Yorkshire Playhouse. His television credits include *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 read *Black Beauty*, *Classic Chilling Tales*, *Macbeth*, *Oedipus the King*, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Stories From Shakespeare – The Plantagenets*.



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. 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 *Miss Potter*. He is a familiar voice on radio, and has become particularly associated with his award winning readings of Dickens for Naxos AudioBooks.



Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos Audiobooks he has read stories by Robert Louis Stevenson and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for Radio 3 and Radio 4.



After graduating from Webber-Douglas Academy, **Tom Mison** immediately made an impression on TV and in theatre. He has appeared in *Lost in Austen*, *Poirot* and *A Waste of Shame* – an investigation on Shakespeare's Sonnets. His theatre credits include *Hedda Gabler* (Gate Theatre) and *Hamlet* (Old Vic). He played Freddie Page in Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea* on BBC Radio.



After training at RADA, **Maxine Peake** made her mark initially in TV comedy with two key roles in *Dinner Ladies* and *Shameless*. She demonstrated her virtuosity with other varied TV roles, including a memorably disturbing performance as the child murderer Myra Hindley, and roles in *The Devil's Whore* and *Little Dorrit*. Key London theatre highlights have included *The Cherry Orchard* and *Miss Julie*. Her radio roles include Laurencia in *Fuente Ovejuna*.



Anne-Marie Piazza graduated from the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in 2008, having played Olivia in *Twelfth Night* and Doris, Diana and Isabel in *The American Clock*. Other theatre roles include Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III* (Durham Castle) and Kate in *Kiss Me Kate* (Gala Theatre). She has also appeared in the National Youth Theatre and Kneehigh's *Hanging Around*. Her work for Radio 4 includes *The Archers* and the plays *I Believe I Have Genius* and *The Day They Wouldn't Take it Anymore*.



Hugh Ross trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television. His theatre credits include *The Woman in Black*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and *Bent*. His film credits include *Charlotte Grey* and *Trainspotting*. His television credits include *Sea of Souls*, *Lovejoy* and *Absolutely Fabulous*. 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.



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 has also read *The Tale of Troy*, *The Adventures of Odysseus*, *More Tales from the Greek Legends*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Stories From Shakespeare – The Plantagenets* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Juliet Stevenson has worked extensively for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. She received an Olivier Award for her role in *Death and the Maiden* at the Royal Court, and a number of other awards for her work in the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Other film credits include *The Trial*, *Drowning by Numbers* and *Emma*. She has read *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Stories from Shakespeare*, *Mansfield Park* and *To the Lighthouse* for Naxos AudioBooks.



David Tennant achieved national and international recognition for his award-winning TV performances as *Dr Who*. The success followed extended work on film and TV, including *Einstein and Eddington* and *Learners*. But he is equally respected for his work in classical theatre. His *Hamlet* for the Royal Shakespeare Company was widely praised. Other classical work include roles in *King Lear*, *As You Like It* and *The Rivals*. He enjoys more contemporary theatre also, varying from *Look Back in Anger* and *What the Butler Saw* to *Black Comedy* and *The Real Inspector Hound*.



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 reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks.



Trevor White's recent film and television credits include: *Genova*, *Moonshot*, *Die Another Day*, *House of Saddam*, *Bonekickers*, *The Path to 9/11*, *Judge John Deed*, and *The Line of Beauty*. His voice work in audiobooks and for BBC Radio include: *A Million Little Pieces*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Azincourt*, *Bright Shiny Morning*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Catch-22*, for which he was nominated for an Audible Audiobook Award. He has also played Tullus Aufidius in *Coriolanus* for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Credits

Produced by David Timson

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Edited by Malcolm Blackmoor

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THE BEST OF THE SONNETS

Read by **David Tennant, Juliet Stevenson, Anton Lesser,
Maxine Peake, Stella Gonet** *et al.*

William Shakespeare's 'sugared sonnets' circulated privately amongst his friends and colleagues for many years, but the public had to wait until their publication in 1609 to enjoy these masterpieces on every aspect of love. Whether it's fidelity, obsession, jealousy or the love of friends, Shakespeare seems to know about it all. To celebrate the 400th anniversary of their publication, a rich variety of actors have been brought together to show the many different ways in which these sonnets can be interpreted.



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and
Nicolas Soames

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POETRY

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