

Tales from Shakespeare

Male narrator total: 48,696 words (10 tales)

Female narrator total: 52,272 words (10 tales)

CASTING BRIEF:

Seeking: Two narrators (one male, one female) to split the book.

- Neutral British accent preferred, 30s–50s, with audiobook experience. Must have own studio for self-recording.
- Able to hold the warm, direct voice of an adult telling stories to a child, and to distinguish a very large cast of characters across twenty plays: kings and clowns, lovers and murderers, men and women, young and old. Much of Shakespeare's own language survives intact inside the Lambs' prose, so the actor must be comfortable landing verse rhythm and Elizabethan syntax.

Celebrity comps (male): Colin Firth, Kenneth Branagh, Adrian Lester, Ben Whishaw

Celebrity comps (female): Rosamund Pike, Juliet Stevenson, Jennifer Ehle, Josette Simon

Genre: Classic Literature, Children's Literature, Shakespeare Adaptation

Contract: SAG-AFTRA independent publisher contract, scale (with P&H) +10% agency fee if applicable

Publisher: The Merry Beggars

Producer: Common Mode

Record and deliver by: 01/15/27

Synopsis:

Twenty of Shakespeare's plays retold as prose stories for young readers — the shipwreck and sorcery of *The Tempest*, the tangled lovers of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the witches on the blasted heath in *Macbeth*, the feuding houses of *Romeo and Juliet*, the ghost on the battlements in *Hamlet*... The Lambs keep Shakespeare's own words wherever they can, weaving the dialogue of the plays into a narrative a child can follow. The result is neither summary nor paraphrase but a genuine introduction — a first meeting with the plays that has served as exactly that for more than two centuries.

The full contents: For this audiobook, we will be casting a Male reader and a Female reader. They will divide the stories between them (note the M or F beside each play title).

THE TEMPEST - M

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM - F

THE WINTER'S TALE - M

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING - F

AS YOU LIKE IT - F

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA - M
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE - F
CYMBELINE - F
KING LEAR - M
MACBETH - M
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL - M
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW - F
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS - M
MEASURE FOR MEASURE - F
TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL - F
TIMON OF ATHENS - M
ROMEO AND JULIET - F
HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK - M
OTHELLO - M
PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE - F

About the Authors:

Charles Lamb (1775–1834) and Mary Lamb (1764–1847) were a brother and sister who lived and wrote together in London. Charles was an essayist and critic, celebrated for the *Essays of Elia*, and a friend to Coleridge and Wordsworth. Mary, ten years his senior, suffered from a mental illness. Charles took custody of her care - the two lived and worked side by side for nearly forty years. *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) was their first collaboration and remains their most widely read: Mary wrote the fourteen comedies, Charles the six tragedies.

**Excerpt for Audition — Male Narrator
from Macbeth, by Charles Lamb**

Now was the middle of night, when over half the world nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse men's minds asleep, and none but the wolf and the murderer are abroad. This was the time when Lady Macbeth waked to plot the murder of the king. She would not have undertaken a deed so abhorrent to her sex, but that she feared her husband's nature, that it was too full of the milk of human kindness, to do a contrived murder. She knew him to be ambitious, but withal to be scrupulous, and not yet prepared for that height of crime which commonly in the end accompanies inordinate ambition. She had won him to consent to the murder, but she doubted his resolution; and she feared that the natural tenderness of his disposition (more humane than her own) would come between, and defeat the purpose. So with her own hands armed with a dagger, she approached the king's bed; having taken care to ply the grooms of his chamber so with wine, that they slept intoxicated, and careless of their charge. There lay Duncan in a sound sleep after the fatigues of his journey, and as she viewed him earnestly there was something in his face, as he slept, which resembled her own father; and she had not the courage to proceed.

She returned to confer with her husband. His resolution had begun to stagger. He considered that there were strong reasons against the deed. In the first place, he was not only a subject, but a

near kinsman to the king; and he had been his host and entertainer that day, whose duty, by the laws of hospitality, it was to shut the door against his murderers, not bear the knife himself. Then he considered how just and merciful a king this Duncan had been, how clear of offense to his subjects, how loving to his nobility, and in particular to him; that such kings are the peculiar care of Heaven, and their subjects doubly bound to revenge their deaths. Besides, by the favours of the king, Macbeth stood high in the opinion of all sorts of men, and how would those honours be stained by the reputation of so foul a murder!

In these conflicts of the mind lady Macbeth found her husband inclining to the better part, and resolving to proceed no further. But she being a woman not easily shaken from her evil purpose, began to pour in at his ears words which infused a portion of her own spirit into his mind, assigning reason upon reason why he should not shrink from what he had undertaken; how easy the deed was; how soon it would be over; and how the action of one short night would give to all their nights and days to come sovereign sway and royalty! Then she threw contempt on his change of purpose, and accused him of fickleness and cowardice; and declared that she had given suck, and knew how tender it was to love the babe that milked her, but she would, while it was smiling in her face, have plucked it from her breast and dashed its brains out, if she had so sworn to do it as he had sworn to perform that murder. Then she added, how practicable it was to lay the guilt of the deed upon the drunken sleepy grooms. And with the valour of her

tongue she so chastised his sluggish resolutions, that he once more summoned up courage to the bloody business.

So, taking the dagger in his hand, he softly stole in the dark to the room where Duncan lay; and as he went, he thought he saw another dagger in the air, with the handle toward him, and on the blade and at the point of it drops of blood; but when he tried to grasp at it, it was nothing but air, a mere phantasm proceeding from his own hot and oppressed brain and the business he had in hand.

Getting rid of this fear, he entered the king's room, whom he despatched with one stroke of his dagger. Just as he had done the murder, one of the grooms, who slept in the chamber laughed in his sleep, and the other cried, "Murder," which woke them both; but they said a short prayer; one of them said, "God bless us!" and the other answered, "Amen"; and addressed themselves to sleep again. Macbeth, who stood listening to them, tried to say "Amen" when the fellow said "God bless us!" but, though he had most need of a blessing, the word stuck in his throat, and he could not pronounce it.

Again he thought he heard a voice which cried: "Sleep no more! Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep, that nourishes life." Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house. "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more."

**Excerpt for Audition — Female Narrator
from Much Ado About Nothing, by Mary Lamb**

There lived in the palace at Messina two ladies, whose names were Hero and Beatrice. Hero was the daughter, and Beatrice the niece, of Leonato, the governor of Messina.

Beatrice was of a lively temper, and loved to divert her cousin Hero, who was of a more serious disposition, with her sprightly sallies. Whatever was going forward was sure to make matter of mirth for the light-hearted Beatrice.

At the time the history of these ladies commences some young men of high rank in the army, as they were passing through Messina on their return from a war that was just ended, in which they had distinguished themselves by their great bravery, came to visit Leonato. Among these were Don Pedro, the prince of Aragon, and his friend Claudio, who was a lord of Florence; and with them came the wild and witty Benedick, and he was a lord of Padua.

These strangers had been at Messina before, and the hospitable governor introduced them to his daughter and his niece as their old friends and acquaintance.

Benedick, the moment he entered the room, began a lively conversation with Leonato and the prince. Beatrice, who liked not to be left out of any discourse, interrupted Benedick with saying: “I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick. Nobody marks you.” Benedick was just such another rattle-brain as Beatrice, yet he

was not pleased at this free salutation; he thought it did not become a well-bred lady to be so flippant with her tongue; and he remembered, when he was last at Messina, that Beatrice used to select him to make her merry jests upon. And as there is no one who so little likes to be made a jest of as those who are apt to take the same liberty themselves, so it was with Benedick and Beatrice; these two sharp wits never met in former times but a perfect war of raillery was kept up between them, and they always parted mutually displeased with each other. Therefore, when Beatrice stopped him in the middle of his discourse with telling him nobody marked what he was saying, Benedick, affecting not to have observed before that she was present, said: "What, my dear lady Disdain, are you yet living?" And now war broke out afresh between them, and a long jangling argument ensued, during which Beatrice, although she knew he had so well approved his valor in the late war, said that she would eat all he had killed there: and observing the prince take delight in Benedick's conversation, she called him "the prince's jester." This sarcasm sank deeper into the mind of Benedick than all Beatrice had said before. The hint she gave him that he was a coward, by saying she would eat all he had killed, he did not regard, knowing himself to be a brave man; but there is nothing that great wits so much dread as the imputation of buffoonery, because the charge comes sometimes a little too near the truth: therefore Benedick perfectly hated Beatrice when she called him "the prince's jester."

The modest lady Hero was silent before the noble guests; and while Claudio was attentively observing the improvement which time had made in her beauty, and was contemplating the exquisite graces of her fine figure (for she was an admirable young lady), the prince was highly amused with listening to the humorous dialogue between Benedick and Beatrice; and he said in a whisper to Leonato: "This is a pleasant-spirited young lady. She were an excellent wife for Benedick." Leonato replied to this suggestion: "O my lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad." But though Leonato thought they would make a discordant pair, the prince did not give up the idea of matching these two keen wits together.

When the prince returned with Claudio from the palace he found that the marriage he had devised between Benedick and Beatrice was not the only one projected in that good company, for Claudio spoke in such terms of Hero, as made the prince guess at what was passing in his heart; and he liked it well, and he said to Claudio: "Do you affect Hero?" To this question Claudio replied, "O my lord, when I was last at Messina I looked upon her with a soldier's eye, that liked, but had no leisure for loving; but now, in this happy time of peace, thoughts of war have left their places vacant in my mind, and in their room come thronging soft and delicate thoughts, all prompting me how fair young Hero is, reminding me that I liked her before I went to the wars."