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The Castle of Otranto

Horace Walpole

Read by
Neville Jason



1	Preface to the First Edition	9:47
2	Chapter 1	7:47
3	While the ladies were conveying the wretched mother...	9:33
4	As it was now evening, the servant who conducted Isabella...	7:48
5	The lady, whose resolution had given way to terror...	9:10
6	The stranger was interrupted by a sudden noise...	7:26
7	While the Prince was in this suspense...	8:31
8	Manfred, when he first followed Isabella from the gallery...	6:37
9	Chapter 2	9:48
10	The noise the Princess made was, however, heard...	9:15
11	After continuing silent for some time...	10:45
12	Manfred, accompanied by the Friar, passed...	9:13
13	The Friar, who knew nothing of the youth...	8:54
14	'Oh wretched youth!' said Jerome...	8:42
15	Chapter 3	8:04
16	During this interview Jerome's mind was agitated...	7:42
17	The Knight made no reply...	10:12

18	'No! Thus, then, Sirs, it is.'	6:40
19	The company had no sooner quitted the castle...	7:48
20	Theodore flung himself at her feet...	7:07
21	At the mouth of the cavern...	8:00
22	Chapter 4	10:12
23	Jerome, amazed to hear himself in a manner accused...	9:36
24	In this frame of mind, and determined to open her heart...	9:23
25	Hippolita was silent. Grief choked her speech...	9:10
26	Hippolita's real purpose was to demand of Jerome...	7:36
27	Manfred, in the meantime, had broken his purpose...	6:09
28	Chapter 5	8:46
29	Manfred, after some general conversation...	8:02
30	As they were thus discoursing...	7:43
31	Quitting the Princess thus abruptly...	7:49
32	Ordering the litter to stop...	8:14
33	The beholders fell prostrate on their faces...	8:12

Total time: 4:40:02

Horace Walpole

(1717–1797)

The Castle of Otranto

Horace Walpole was born in 1717, four years before his father, Sir Robert Walpole, became Prime Minister. He himself was an M.P. from 1741 to 1768. He died in 1797. In 1747, Walpole leased a small house he called Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, near London. Two years later he bought it and began remodelling it as a 'little Gothic castle', later adding a cloister, gallery and tower.

In 1757, Walpole set up a printing press at Strawberry Hill, publishing his own *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors* (1758) and *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762–1771) as well as a dramatic tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*, in 1768. In 1785, Walpole published *Hieroglyphic Tales*.

Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* between June and August of 1764. He tried to pass it off as an actual translation,

from the original Italian, of a medieval text written by 'Onuphrio Muralto'. The first edition of five hundred copies soon sold out, and Walpole admitted, in the second edition published the following year, that the work was his own. The book has rarely, if ever, been out of print since.

The Castle of Otranto is often called the first Gothic novel. It contains almost all the classic elements: a foreign setting, walking skeleton, haunted castle, long-lost child identified by his birthmark, ominous threats and events leading to a dénouement that seems unavoidable because it is the logical conclusion of all the converging, providential actions in the plot.

The Castle of Otranto wonderfully combines the inner turmoils of a most demonic villain – one can almost see the toasting-fork tail under his fine clothes –

a valiant hero, whose strength lies in his innocent willingness to go along with his fate; ineffectual, well-meaning friars, a psychic hermit and virtuous maidens.

All the internal struggles are played out against the most dramatic landscape of snaking dungeon passages, lightning-struck battlements, thick woods and huge supernatural coats of armour waving giant black plumes at castle windows.

The inner and outer aspects of the story are so perfectly matched that it is hard to know which is having most effect and driving the plot. There is, for the listener, a satisfying inevitability that gathers force as the story unrolls, that comes from being caught up in something much larger than the mere mortal. This illuminates the action as dramatically as lightning hits the castle, and makes it as fresh and thrilling today as when it was first devised.

The Gothic novel has been extensively parodied. Here is the real thing: larger-than-life emotions that have a power and intensity overwhelmingly their own.

Notes by Lesley Young



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the diction prize by Sir John Gielgud. His first appearance in the theatre was in Peter Brook's production of *Titus Andronicus* starring Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. He is a former member of the Old Vic Company, the English Stage Company, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Birmingham Repertory Company. Roles include John Worthing in *The Importance of Being Ernest*, Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Christian in *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Robert Browning in *Robert and Elizabeth*. He is a trained singer and has

appeared in numerous musicals including *The Great Waltz*, *1776*, *Ambassador*, *Lock Up Your Daughters*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Irma La Douce*, *Robert and Elizabeth* and *Mutiny*.

Television appearances include *Maigret*, *Dr Who* (The Androids of Tara), *Hamlet* (Horatio), *Crime and Punishment* (Zamyatov), *Emergency Ward Ten*, *Dixon of Dock Green*, *When the Boat Comes In*, *Angels*, *Minder*, *Dempsey and Makepeace*, *The Richest Woman in the World*, *The Dancing Years*, *The Magic Barrel* and *Windmill Near a Frontier*. Films include *From Russia with Love* and *The Message*. He has been a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company three times, and may be heard in radio plays, documentaries and arts programmes. For Naxos AudioBooks his readings include Vasari's *Lives of the Great Artists*, *Freud*, *War and Peace*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Favourite Essays*, *The Once and Future King*, *Evgenii Onegin*, *Wessex Tales* and *Remembrance of Things Past*, both unabridged and abridged. He plays Antonio in *The Tempest*, and has directed productions of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As a director he was awarded Talkies awards for *Great Expectations* and *Poets of the Great War*. As a reader he won AudioFile Earphone awards for *The Captive*, *Time Regained*, *The Once and Future King* and *War and Peace* (Best Audiobooks of the Year 2007 and 2009).

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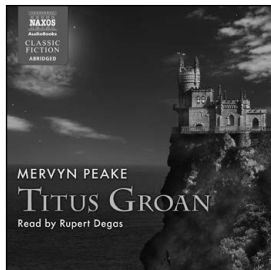
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Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Produced by Nicolas Soames
Edited by Pete Smith and Sarah Butcher
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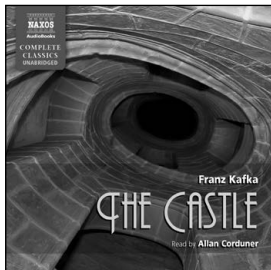
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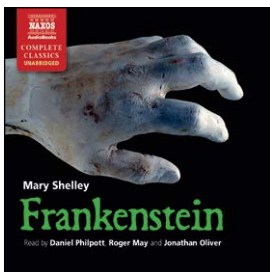
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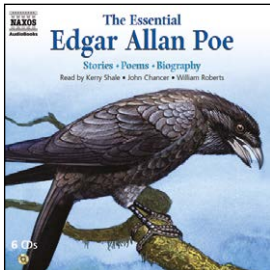
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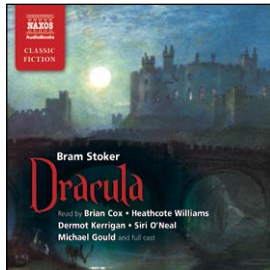
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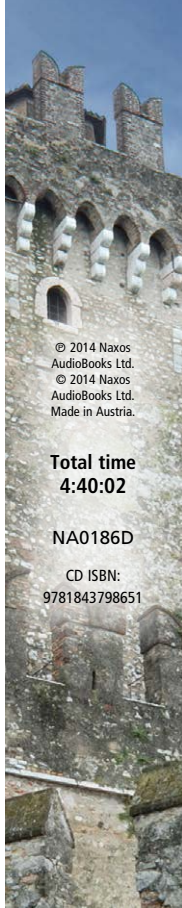
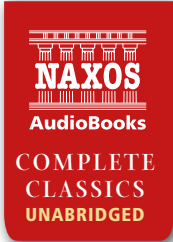
The Castle of Otranto

Read by **Neville Jason**

The Castle of Otranto is regarded as the first Gothic novel. The son of Manfred, Prince of Otranto, is mysteriously killed on his wedding day by a huge helmet. The event leads to a fast-paced story of jealous passion, intrigue, murder and supernatural phenomena unfolding in an atmosphere of thunderclaps, moonlight and dark castle walls – mirroring the inner turmoils of the characters themselves. Horace Walpole's tale, an immediate success when it first appeared in 1764, is a classic of its genre.



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NA0186D

CD ISBN:
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