



Pygmalion

George Bernard Shaw (1881 - 1950)

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	3 hours 16 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1182
Language:	English	UPC:	0683422135033
Style:	Dramatic Reading	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Plays		

Pygmalion (1913) is the most popular and best known of Bernard Shaw's plays. It tells the story of the transformation of Eliza Doolittle, a coarse Cockney flower-girl with an accent, vocabulary and grammar unfettered by education, into a facsimile of a proper Victorian lady through the tutelage of Professor Henry Higgins. Higgins, a phoneticist who believes that correct speech is the key to gentility, takes her in and drills her on proper speech so that he can win a bet with a colleague, Colonel Pickering, that he can pass her off as a duchess at an ambassador's ball. The circumstances are ripe for misunderstandings and the clash of the classes, which unspool over the course of the play's five acts.

The play takes its name from the character Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, a sculptor who falls in love with a statue he has carved, which is then brought to life by the goddess Aphrodite. The play, in turn, became the inspiration for the 1956 musical and the 1964 film *My Fair Lady*. Shaw turns it on its side to satirize the rigid British class system and comment on the issue of women's independence. A goodly number of versions have been spawned from its different productions. The initial London production featuring the famed Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree made changes to the ending, which Tree defended by saying "My ending makes money; you ought to be grateful", to which Shaw replied "Your ending is damnable; you ought to be shot."

George Bernard Shaw (July 26, 1856 – November 2, 1950), who went by Bernard Shaw, was an Irish playwright and critic who was the leading dramatist of his era and is considered by many to rank second only to Shakespeare in the roster of English-language dramatists. He was born in Dublin to a Protestant family of English descent and moved to London in 1876 with the ambition to become a writer. Within ten years he had undertaken an extensive self-education and established himself as a theatre and music critic. He first achieved success with *Arms and the Man* in 1894 after many years of writing plays. He went on to produce over sixty plays, including *Pygmalion* (1912), *Man and Superman* (1902), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1902), and *Saint Joan* (1923). While his style ranges from contemporary satire to historical allegory, he consistently used his plays to promote his often controversial political and social thinking. He was an outspoken proponent of reform along Democratic socialist lines, promoted alphabet reform and eugenics, and opposed organized religion and vaccination. In 1898 Shaw married Charlotte Payne-Townsend, a wealthy Anglo-Irish woman who nursed him back to health after an illness. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925 and an Academy Award for his screenplay for *Pygmalion* in 1938, the only writer to have won both awards. The word "Shavian" has entered the language as a term used to describe his ideas and manner of communicating them.