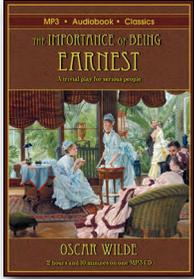


Plays



The Importance of Being Earnest

Author: Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)
 Read by: Multiple readers
 Length: 2 hours 10 minutes
 Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
 Genre: Plays

The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People was first performed on February 14, 1895 at the St. James's Theatre in London. It is a farcical comedy in which the protagonists maintain fictitious personae in order to escape burdensome social obligations. Working within the social conventions of late Victorian London, the play's major themes are the triviality with which it treats institutions as serious as marriage, and the resulting satire of Victorian ways.

Contemporary reviews all praised the play's humor, though some were cautious about its explicit lack of social messages, while others foresaw the modern consensus that it was the culmination of Wilde's artistic career so far. Its high farce and witty dialogue have helped make *The Importance of Being Earnest* Wilde's most enduringly popular play. It has been revived many times since its premiere and has been adapted for the cinema on three occasions.

Catalog: DB-1049
 UPC: 0684758936325
 MSLP: \$10.99

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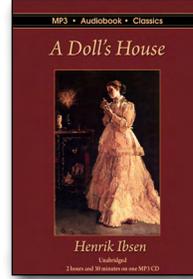
Pygmalion

Author: George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950)
 Read by: Dramatic reading by multiple readers
 Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
 Length: 2 hours and 53 minutes
 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 that he can pass her off

Catalog: DB-1182
 UPC: 0683422135033
 MSLP: \$10.99

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 musical *My Fair Lady*.



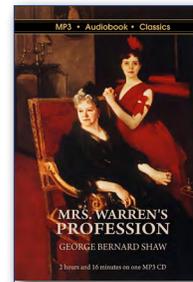
A Doll's House

Author: Henrik Ibsen (1828 - 1906)
 Read by: Multiple readers
 Length: 2 hours and 30 minutes
 Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
 Genre: Drama

A Doll's House generated a great deal of controversy and box office when it premiered in 1879. At a time when strict social conventions were sacrosanct, Ibsen dared to have Nora Helmer leave her suffocating marriage and her children to "find herself". The domestic drama takes place over several days during Christmas in which the delicate balance of the household is disrupted by the gradual exposure of secrets and lies. Nora secretly borrowed money to help her husband from a man he is about to fire, himself a forger. He black-

Catalog: DB-1157
 UPC: 0683422134722
 MSLP: \$10.99

mails Nora, but relents when he reconciles with his beloved, a former nanny to the family recently freed of a loveless marriage. Nora is exposed nonetheless and disowned by her husband. When the incriminating note is destroyed, he forgives her, thinking her mistake a product of her daffy femininity. But the damage is done. He is not the man she thought he was and she is not the doll he so often calls her. She has to go. It is no wonder *A Doll's House* is the most performed play in the world.



Mrs. Warren's Profession

Author: George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950)
 Read by: Dramatic reading by multiple readers
 Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
 Length: 2 hours and 15 minutes
 Genre: Plays

Mrs. Warren's Profession is a textbook example of the "problem play" genre, which depicts social issues through the debates between the characters, who symbolize the conflicting points of view on a particular issue. The issue here is prostitution. The problem starts when Vivie, the daughter of Mrs. Kitty Warren, graduates from Cambridge and returns home to get to know her estranged mother. The play turns on the revelation that her mother had once been a prostitute and now is an owner of a

Catalog: DB-11483
 UPC: 0683422135040
 MSLP: \$10.99

chain of brothels. Vivie is horrified at first, and further confounded to learn that the father of Frank, her love interest, has a history with her mother and may well be her father. Learning more about her mother's life journey, Vivie first comes to celebrate her as a champion of female independence, but eventually becomes disillusioned. We come away with a clear understanding of the hypocrisy of attitudes towards the "profession" and the limited employment opportunities available to women at the time.



Faust, Part I and Part II

Author: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
 Translated by Bayard Taylor
 Read by: Multiple readers
 Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
 Length: 11 hours and 37 minutes
 Genre: Poetry, Drama, Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales

The enduring theme of making a deal with the devil is derived from the German legend of Faust, the tale of a scholar who trades his soul for a life of unlimited knowledge and hedonistic pleasure. Goethe's *Faust* is considered the last word on the subject and the greatest work of German literature. *Part I*, published in 1808, hews closely to the legend and depicts the everyday "small world". Faust and the devil make a deal: the devil will serve Faust here

Catalog: DB-1194
 UPC: 0701236969122
 MSLP: \$12.99

on earth and strive to grant him a moment so sublime he will wish it to last forever, but, if Faust is ever fully satisfied, he will die and serve the devil in Hell for eternity. *Part II*, finished in 1831, is very different and by no means a sequel. Complex and full of references to mythology, it depicts the wider world in five acts with attention to larger political, historical, philosophical and mystical issues. After conflicts, struggles, and travels through space and time, Faust finds a measure of redemption and grace for his striving.

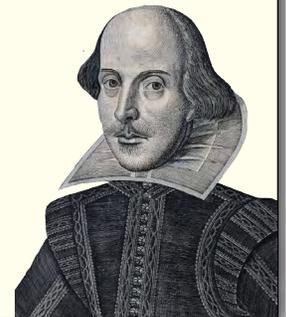
---- Coming Soon ----

Shakespeare

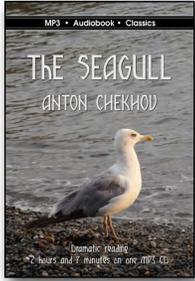
- Othello
- Julius Caesar
- The Merchant of Venice
- The Taming of the Shrew
- As You Like It
- Much Ado About Nothing

Moliere

- The Bourgeois Gentleman
- Tartuffe
- The Imaginary Invalid
- The Miser



Plays



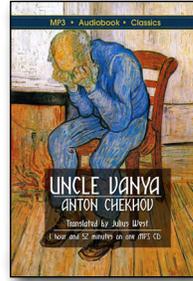
The Seagull

Author: Anton Chekhov
Read by: Dramatic reading - multiple readers
Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
Length: 2 hours and 7 minutes
Genre: Fiction, Plays

The Seagull is considered the first of Chekhov's major plays. The four act play dramatizes the romantic and artistic conflicts among the four major characters: Boris Trigorin, a famous but mediocre writer; Nina, a young ingénue; Irina Arkadina, a fading actress and Trigorin's lover; and Konstantin Treplev, a symbolist playwright and Arkadina's son. The action, which includes various romantic triangles, often proceeds by indirection and subtext and depends on

Catalog: DB-1218
UPC: 0701236969375
MSLP: \$10.99

the interaction of an ensemble cast. Key actions occur offstage. Issues are sidestepped. What is not said is as meaningful as what is said. The seagull of the title is a curious gift to Nina from the emotionally awkward Konstantin. The first performance of the play in 1896 was a famous flop in Petersburg. A subsequent production by the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 featuring famous actor Stanislavski was enthusiastically received, with the applause being described as "bursting from the audience like a dam breaking".

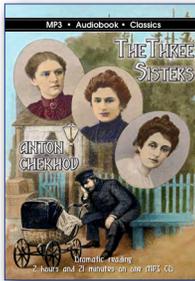


Uncle Vanya

Author: Anton Chekhov
Read by: Dramatic reading - multiple readers
Length: 1 hour and 53 minutes
Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
Genre: Fiction, Plays

Catalog: DB-1220
UPC: 0701236969399
MSLP: \$9.99

Uncle Vanya (1897) is the second of Chekhov's major plays. An elderly retired professor and his beautiful young wife Yelena pay a visit to the family estate managed by Vanya, the brother of his late first wife, and Sonya, his daughter by his first wife. Also on hand are Astrov, the local doctor; Maria, mother of Vanya and the professor's first wife; Telegin, a tenant; Marina, an old nurse; and an unnamed workman. The visit reveals long simmering resentments and discontents as well as unrequited desires that build during the play's four acts. Things come to a head when the professor proposes to sell the estate, which would dislocate the residents, prompting Vanya to pursue the professor with a pistol. The professor backs down, he and his wife pack up and leave, and life returns to its heavy humdrum patterns. The play has been a staple in the modern theatre and has been adapted for film several times, most recently by David Mamet in 1996 as *August*.



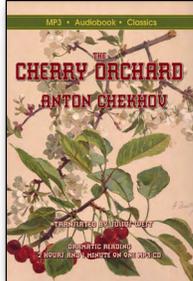
The Three Sisters

Author: Anton Chekhov
Read by: Dramatic reading - multiple readers
Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
Length: 2 hours and 23 minutes
Genre: Fiction, Plays

The Three Sisters, the third of Chekhov's four major plays, is a chronicle of the dreams, frustrations, transgressions, compromises, and disappointments in the lives of the Prozorov siblings over a span of several years in a provincial town. The eldest sister Olga, 28, is a spinster school teacher. Temperamental Masha, 23, carries on an affair with a dashing soldier, Vershinin, to assuage a disappointing marriage. Irina, 20, hopes to return to life in Moscow

Catalog: DB-1219
UPC: 0701236969382
MSLP: \$10.99

to find true love. Their brother Andrei falls off the fast track and gambles his way into debt after an ill-advised marriage to the scheming Natasha, who takes over the household and cheats on him with his boss. A number of soldiers stationed nearby become frequent visitors. Interestingly, several of the key characters are frequently mentioned but never appear on stage. A landmark of modern theatre, the play is a subtle and powerful portrayal of everyday life fenced in by the limits of character and small-town reality.



The Cherry Orchard

Author: Anton Chekhov
Read by: Dramatic reading - multiple readers
Format: MP3 CD in DVD case
Length: 2 hours and 1 minute
Genre: Fiction, Plays

Catalog: DB-1217
UPC: 0701236969368
MSLP: \$10.99

Written at a time of social upheaval, *The Cherry Orchard* concerns the fate of a family estate that contains a noted cherry orchard. Madame Lyubov Andreevna Ranevskaya is an aristocratic landowner who returns to her estate in the provinces after having fled to Paris in despair after the drowning of her son. A proud woman with a genuine love of her home, she lacks the financial acumen or practicality necessary to keep the estate from being sold to retire family debts. Of course, the estate is sold to a prosperous merchant who is the son of a former serf and the cherry orchard is at risk. Chekhov considered the play a comedy and found humor in the futility of the gentry to adapt and of the bourgeoisie to find meaning in its material prosperity. Stanislavski, who produced its premier in 1904, thought of it as a tragedy. Directors have wrestled with this duality ever since. It is considered a classic of 20th century theatre and an important influence on many playwrights.

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