

NAXOS
AudioBooks

JUNIOR
CLASSICS

Norman Hunter

The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm

Read by **Martin Jarvis**



1	Chapter 1: The Professor Invents a Machine	4:48
2	The Colonel sat down on the garden roller...	4:59
3	And before the Professor and the Colonel knew where they were...	6:13
4	Chapter 2: The Wild Waste Paper	4:33
5	The most unlikely things were going on...	5:18
6	He fumbled in his pockets...	6:17
7	Chapter 3: The Professor Borrows a Book	4:59
8	Then what must the professor go and do but lose the other book...	5:18
9	Things went on like this for days and days.	4:30
10	Chapter 4: Burglars!	6:17
11	Mrs Flittersnoop had finished all her housework...	7:22
12	Chapter 5: The Screaming Clocks	6:26
13	It didn't take the Professor so long to invent...	5:04
14	When they got back there was a letter...	4:54
15	Chapter 6: The Fair at Pagwell Green	5:32
16	So out she went.	4:07
17	Soon the Waxwork men and the ice-cream men...	4:52
18	Chapter 7: The Professor Sends an Invitation	6:16

19	The Colonel got up and dressed, still thinking hard...	5:04
20	Suddenly he picked up his hat...	5:22
21	Just then came a loud tap at the door.	5:30
22	Chapter 8: The Professor Studies Spring Cleaning	4:32
23	At last they ran into each other back to back...	6:57
24	So the Professor went home...	4:11
25	The next minute they all came out of the window together...	5:08
26	Chapter 9: The Too Many Professors	5:19
27	He filled the syringe again...	5:23
28	Just then there was a loud bang from the inventory...	6:11
29	Chapter 10: The Professor Does a Broadcast	5:26
30	A day or so later the Colonel turned up...	5:03
31	The next day the Professor put on his best suit...	5:50
32	Chapter 11: Colonel Branestawm and Professor Dedshott	6:38
33	But by this time everyone had found out...	6:22
34	So he opened his mouth and shouted...	6:29
35	Chapter 12: The Professor Moves House	7:45
36	Meanwhile the Professor was having the utmost kind of time...	5:08

37	She struck a match and turned on the gas ring.	6:12
38	Chapter 13: Pancake Day at Great Pagwell	6:55
39	Then the Professor stood up.	6:42
40	He pulled a lever, turned a handle...	5:05
41	The Professor struggled out of his pancake just in time...	5:18
42	Chapter 14: Professor Branestawm's Holiday	5:12
43	He walked both ways along three streets...	5:26
44	At last two doctors and three nurses arrived...	5:04
45	He was just getting to the end of his lecture...	5:20

Total time: 4:11:49

Norman Hunter

(1899–1995)

The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm

Professor Branestawm is one of the great characters in junior classic literature. That is, *English* junior classic literature, because he is the epitome of the English absent-minded professor. His slightly bemused expression is topped by a bald head carrying a varying number of glasses:

A pair for reading by. A pair for writing by. A pair for out of doors. A pair for looking at you over the top of and another pair to look for the others when he mislaid them, which was often.

He lives in his own world of inventions,

unexpected occurrences and plans that go very wrong indeed. He spends much of his time, when not adventuring, in his workshop, where his housekeeper Mrs Flittersnoop knows he is busy inventing. His only real friend is Colonel Dedshott of the Catapult Cavaliers, 'a very brave gentleman who never missed a train, an enemy or an opportunity of getting into danger'.

And so the scene is set for *The Incredible Adventures*, the first collection of stories, which was published in 1933; it was followed, four years later, by *Professor Branestawm's Treasure Hunt*. There was a very unusual gap of some 33

years before the Professor reappeared to delight a new generation: *The Triumph of Professor Branestawm* came in 1970, *Professor Branestawm Up the Pole* in 1972, and so on until the last volume, the 13th: *Professor Branestawm's Hair-Raising Idea* (1983).

The first volume was famously illustrated by W. Heath Robinson, who created the classic image of the Professor with his shiny bald head bedecked with glasses. He was often surrounded by inventions of all kinds made with strings and pulleys which you could see were bound to go badly wrong. And soon there were other books about the absent-minded professor: a do-it-yourself handbook, a 'compendium of conundrums, riddles, puzzles, brain twiddlers and dotty descriptions'; there was even a television series. In fact, Professor Branestawm first appeared in the world (even before the books) on the 'wireless', as radio was called in the 1930s, with the stories read and transmitted over the airwaves in the early days of radio.

Norman Hunter, the creator of Professor Branestawm, was an advertising

copywriter by profession, but he was always drawn to the world of entertainment. He was a stage magician and he drew on his skills as a prestidigitator for his first book: *Simplified conjuring for all: a collection of new tricks needing no special skill or apparatus for their performance with suitable patter* was published in 1923. A second book of tricks came out two years later, and more followed: conjuring was a very important part of his life.

During World War Two he lived on a boat on the Thames, and after the war, in 1949, he went to live in South Africa where he continued to work in advertising. His retirement in 1970 prompted a move back to London and he returned to his beloved character of Professor Branestawm, who was enjoying renewed popularity through a television series. Hunter picked up his pen with fresh energy (though he was now in his 70s): he produced one and sometimes even two new collections a year for an eager public. He was 83 when his last book, *Professor Branestawm's Hair-Raising Idea*, was published by Bodley Head. He died in 1995, at the age of 95.

It was particularly appropriate that

The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm should be read by Martin Jarvis. The distinguished English actor is particularly known for his inimitable portrayal of English characters, from *Just William* to P.G. Wodehouse's novels of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster. He jumped at the chance to read *The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm*, not only because he loves the books and knows them from childhood, but also because he had a personal link with Norman Hunter, as he explains:

It was a privilege to be invited to record this book. I grew up with the idea of Norman Hunter in my mind because he published a lot of books on magic and like many boys aged nine and ten I had a collection of conjuring books, including Successful Conjuring for Amateurs (1951). It was a fantastic book with all kinds of secrets such as slate magic and cabinet magic, the Chinese linking rings, close-up magic and card magic. Actually, you could imagine that some of the

explanations for these tricks were written not by Norman but by his alter ego Professor Branestawm.

I had no idea that when I was pioneering some of the Jackanory stories on television I would have the chance to meet Norman Hunter, but I did. I met him and his wife Sylvia in the late 1960s or early 1970s, when a number of contributors to Jackanory were having lunch together and I was fortunate to sit next to Norman. I was able to tell him how I enjoyed those conjuring books of his and how much they meant to me.

I then met him one more time, when he invited me to lunch – just him and me – and he said an extraordinary thing. He said, 'I am not doing any more conjuring, I am not doing any more tricks. Would you like my tricks?' He was offering me his whole collection!

It was a wonderful thing for him to say, but I had to admit that I didn't do conjuring anymore. It would have been extremely

interesting to have seen some of his tricks which weren't in his books, such as how the Indian Moon actually worked; but I didn't think it was fair to take on this wonderful collection, and that it was better to find someone who would carry on the tradition of performing with these amazing magic tricks. So I didn't take them, but I do remember his generosity.

When Naxos AudioBooks approached Norman Hunter's daughter, Mary Grosch, for permission to record *The Incredible Adventures*, she particularly asked for Martin to read them. The resultant recording, we hope, will become as much a classic as Professor Branestawm himself.

Notes by Nicolas Soames



Martin Jarvis is consistently described in the press as 'King of Audio' and 'Genius of Spoken Word'. TV series include classic dramas and popular British and US series *Taking the Flak*, *Stargate*, *Marple*, *Morse* and *Murder She Wrote*. Films include *Titanic*, *Framed* and *Buster*. Martin has starred in many West End and RNT productions and won the Theatre World Award for his performance as Jeeves on Broadway. His BBC *Just William* recordings are international bestsellers. He was invested with the OBE for his services to the arts. Titles he has read for Naxos AudioBooks include *Metamorphosis* and *The Wind in the Willows*.

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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Claudio Gonella, bassoon;

Orchestra Internazionale d'Italia; Diego Dini-Ciacci, conductor

8.554280

HUMMEL FLUTE SONATAS

Lise Daoust, flute; Carmen Picard, piano

8.553473

Music programming by Sarah Butcher

Credits

Produced by Clive Stanhope
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Edited by Malcolm Blackmoor
Mastered by Sarah Butcher

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Norman Hunter

The Incredible Adventures of
Professor Branestawm

Read by **Martin Jarvis**

Eccentric, absent-minded inventor Professor Branestawm embarks on a series of adventures with his friend Colonel Dedshott. Various machines are invented: a time travel-machine, a device to capture and tie up burglars, and a spring-cleaning machine. Inevitably, something goes wrong and Professor Branestawm is again in a pickle, exasperating his housekeeper Mrs Flittersnoop and delighting us.



Martin Jarvis is consistently described in the press as 'King of Audio' and 'Genius of Spoken Word'. His BBC *Just William* recordings are international bestsellers and other titles he has read for Naxos AudioBooks include *Metamorphosis* and *The Wind in the Willows*.

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