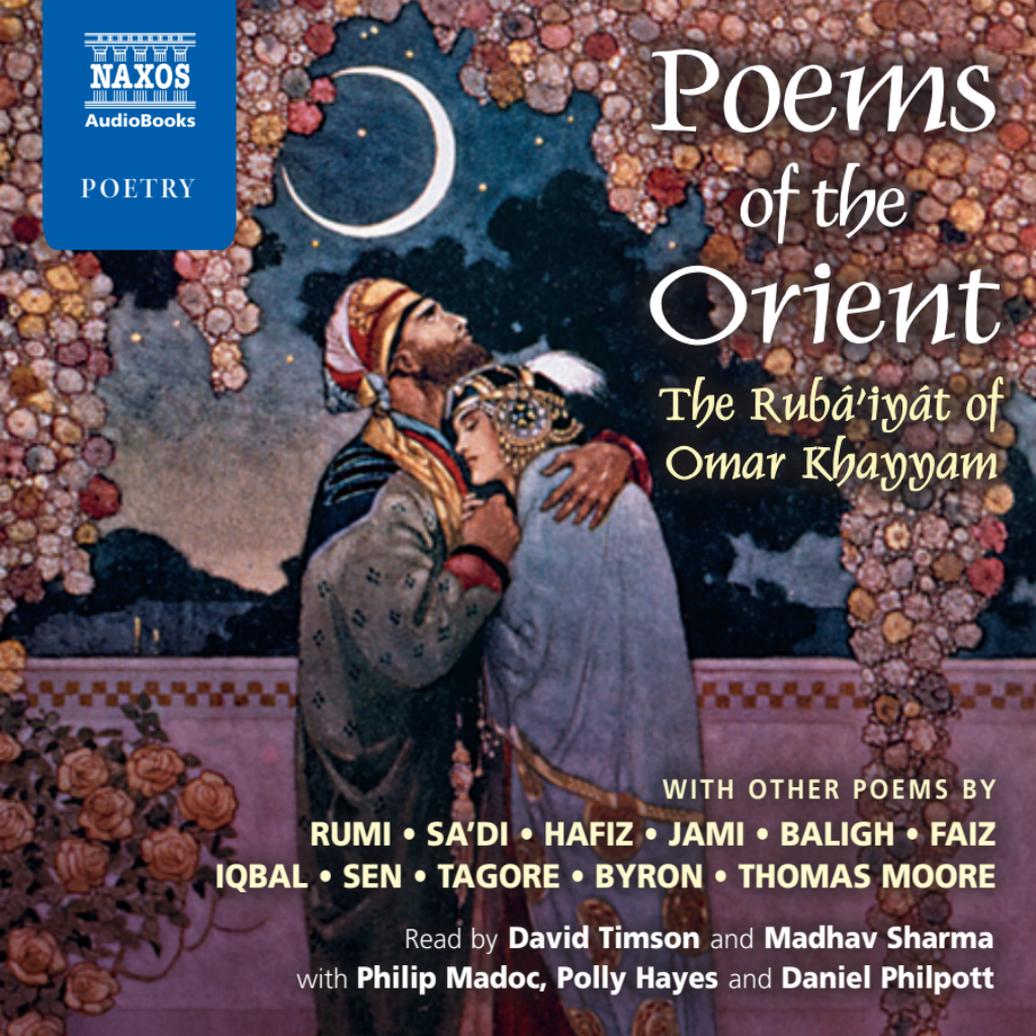




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POETRY



# Poems of the Orient

*The Rubá'iyât of  
Omar Khayyam*

WITH OTHER POEMS BY  
**RUMI • SA'DI • HAFIZ • JAMI • BALIGH • FAIZ  
IQBAL • SEN • TAGORE • BYRON • THOMAS MOORE**

Read by **David Timson** and **Madhav Sharma**  
with **Philip Madoc, Polly Hayes** and **Daniel Philpott**

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POEMS OF THE ORIENT  
Poems from the East

PERSIA, TURKEY AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

**The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyam**

(b May 18, 1048, Nishapur, Persia d Dec 4 1131, Nishapur)

- |   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | <b>Verse I</b> – Wake! For the Sun, who scatter'd into flight     | 3:13 |
| 2 | <b>Verse XII</b> – A Book of Verses underneath the Bough          | 3:10 |
| 3 | <b>Verse XXV</b> – Alike for those who for To-day prepare         | 6:05 |
| 4 | <b>Verse L</b> – A Hair perhaps divides the False and True        | 6:11 |
| 5 | <b>Verse LXXV</b> – I tell you this – When, started from the Goal | 7:03 |

**Ferdowsi** (Abu-Ol-Quasem Mansu) (c. 935–1026)

From The Oriental Caravan

From the Shahnameh – (Epic classical)

- |   |                                    |      |
|---|------------------------------------|------|
| 6 | The Vision <sup>#</sup>            | 1:48 |
| 7 | Jamshid's Love-making <sup>#</sup> | 6:59 |

**Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi** (1207–1273)

(Sufi Mystic)

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 8  | Happy the moment <sup>#</sup>                    | 2:00 |
| 9  | What is to be done, O Muslims <sup>#</sup>       | 2:14 |
| 10 | I died a mineral and became a plant <sup>#</sup> | 1:07 |

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**Sa'di – Musharrif Od-din Musligh Od-din** (c. 1213–1291)

Classical

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 11 | I questioned once a ball of scented clay# | 0:38 |
| 12 | The Dervish cloak admits not to heaven#   | 1:06 |
| 13 | Dear to me this lamentation#              | 2:05 |

**Hafiz – Mohammed Shams Od-din Hafiz** (1325–1389)

Sufi lyric poet

- |    |                            |      |
|----|----------------------------|------|
| 14 | Earthly and Heavenly Love# | 3:19 |
|----|----------------------------|------|

**Jami – Mowlana Nur Od-din' Abu Or-Rahman Ebn Ahmad**

(1414–1492)

(Last major poet of the 'golden age')

- |    |                       |       |
|----|-----------------------|-------|
| 15 | The Women of Memphis# | 12:31 |
|----|-----------------------|-------|

**Baligh**

- |    |                  |      |
|----|------------------|------|
| 16 | The Hammam Name# | 4:08 |
|----|------------------|------|

---

PAKISTAN

**Faiz Ahmed Faiz** (1911–1984)

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 17 | Last night your faded memory filled my heart# | 0:52 |
| 18 | My fellow man, my friend†                     | 2:39 |
| 19 | Love, do not ask#                             | 1:07 |

**Mohammed Iqbal** (1873–1938)

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 20 | Solitude#                                    | 2:00 |
| 21 | Ghazal No 14 – Beyond the stars more worlds# | 1:01 |

INDIA

**Devendranath Sen, translated by Rabindranath Tagore**

- |    |             |      |
|----|-------------|------|
| 22 | My Offence# | 1:00 |
|----|-------------|------|

**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941)

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 23 | Geetanjali 83 – We agreed we will sail together#  | 1:29 |
| 24 | Prantik I – The messenger of death came silently# | 2:52 |

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POEMS OF THE ORIENT  
Poems from the West

**Lord Byron** (1788–1824)

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 25 | The Destruction of Sennacherib <sup>†</sup>       | 2:17 |
| 26 | Hebrew Melodies: She walks in Beauty <sup>†</sup> | 1:17 |

**Thomas Moore** (1779–1852)

- |    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 27 | The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan from <i>Lalla Rookh</i> | 5:35  |
| 28 | 'But there was one among the chosen maids'              | 7:45  |
| 29 | 'And such was now young Zelica'                         | 13:54 |
| 30 | 'Prepare they soul, young Azim!'                        | 9:46  |
| 31 | 'The song is hush'd, the laughing nymphs are flown'     | 7:30  |
| 32 | 'Whose are the gilded tents that crowd the way'         | 13:16 |
| 33 | 'Again, as in Merou, he had her deck'd'                 | 10:22 |
| 34 | 'But morn is up, and a fresh warfare stirs'             | 5:58  |

† David Timson # Madhav Sharma

Narrator: David Timson Mokana: Philip Madoc  
Zelica: Polly Hayes Azim: Daniel Philpott

**Total time: 2:35:15**

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# Poems of the Orient

A gleam of all Bokhara's vaunted gold, of all the gems of Samarkand, this selection offers a taster of the poetry, vast in extent, inspired by, or from the Orient. But where is the Orient? Where does it begin and end? Hunt in vain for a map; at one moment it might be mysterious Cathay, at another enchanted Persia, or a Persia which extends beyond Araby, beyond Abyssinia, even to India.

Its frontiers are the veil of the hareem, the walls of sunlit and jasmine-scented gardens where the nightingale eternally warbles to the rose. The Beloved guards its boundaries, she of ruby lips, of teeth like pearls, and ringlets like hyacinths. Her brows are an archer's bow, her arrows the glances that speed from it. She watches over hooris who weave their dancing way through innumerable courtyards, adorned with diamonds nourished by the dew of heaven. And always the pomegranates are melting with sweetness.

This empire of the imagination is the

Orient inhabited by Lalla Rookh. In her world imposter prophets hide their dazzling countenance or disfigured hideousness behind veils of silver tissue, and ravish grieving hearts with false oaths and falser doctrine. It is a world where true love and salvation return with warriors long thought dead, doom and tragedy ever at their heels.

But it is the fate of all empires to become decadent and fall, even imaginary ones. From its origins in travellers tales of the 13th century to its apogee in the early years of the 19th, when *Lalla Rookh* was published, conceptions of the Orient remained essentially unchanged. From its first publication in 1817, *Lalla Rookh* sold in immense numbers, and popularised oriental romanticism. **Byron**, Shelley, Tennyson, also all draw on the same charming, exotic, escapist myth. After them, greater contact with the East reduced the marvels and legends to explicable social customs. Fable became fact.

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The quatrains of **Omar Khayyam**, (1048–1131) translated by **Edward Fitzgerald** stand on the edge of this change. They look to both a future of genuine interest in the poetry of Persia and the East, and to its bogus sweetmeat past. Fitzgerald's imitation recommended the original; with time, cultivation of the original produced better imitations and greater interest.

Probably the best known Persian poet in the West, Omar Khayyam is not considered the best poet among the Persians. Despite the apparently hedonistic attitude to life expressed in his *Rubá'iyát* he was one of the most learned mathematicians of his day; certainly the most celebrated astrologer. The astronomical tables he compiled enabled a new calendar to be introduced in AD 1079, the most accurate yet devised.

**Ferdowsi** (935–1026) is more often regarded as the greatest of the Persian poets. His master work *Shahnameh*, the *Song of Kings*, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form, is still read and listened to. Though written about 1,000 years ago, the

language of the 60,000 couplets is as intelligible to the average modern Iranian as the *King James Bible* to a modern English speaker.

Of the Sufi mystics **Rumi** (1207–1273) is the foremost poet, famous for his lyrics and for his didactic epic *Masnavi*, a collection of mystical tales and discourse considered second only to *Shahnameh*. Rumi lived in the Seldjuk capital Konya, and his influence on literature, carried by his Sufism, spread with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and lasted centuries. Sufism's central idea is of the soul's exile from its Maker and its longing to return. This is the cause of love. To the Sufi, God is the Beloved, the Friend. He is also the Lover and we the Beloved; a not dissimilar idea is expressed in the biblical *Song of Songs*.

In Sufi poetry the nightingale singing to the rose goes beyond being a poem about nature. God is the Silent Rose, the singing Nightingale and the longing Soul. When the poet exclaims he would 'Sell this world and the next for a cup of pure wine', the pure wine is faith, rather than a good red. On the other hand, it might

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just be real wine: it is this ambiguity which makes classical Islamic poetry what it is.

The decisive moment in Rumi's life occurred when the divine mysteries were revealed to him by a wandering holy man, Shams-ad-Din. Most of his lyrical poems, in *Diwan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz*, have Shams name inserted instead of Rumi's own pen name, in an expression of his complete identification with his beloved. After his death, Rumi's disciples were organised into the sect known by the West as 'the Whirling Dervishes'.

*Bustan (The Orchard)* and *Gulistan (Rose Garden)* by **Sa'di** (1213–1291) have always been popular in the West. *Bustan* consists of stories entirely in verse, illustrating the Muslim virtues of justice, liberality, modesty and contentment. *Gulistan* is a register of aphorisms, advice and anecdotes in a mixture of prose and poems for every taste. The easy acceptability of his moralising, and the elegance of Sa'di's style, though he learnt Persian at the age of 40 after a life of wandering, has made it the most famous book in the language.

Sa'di is buried close by one of the

finest lyric poets in Persian, **Hafiz**, (1325–1389) in a town called Shiraz. Hafiz's poetry is most often written in the ghazal, a verse form traditionally dealing with love and wine, motifs of ecstasy and freedom from restraint natural to expressing Sufi mysticism. Hafiz's capacity for linking the simple or everyday image with the Sufi search for God, in an unaffected musical style, guaranteed his appeal wherever the influence of Persian extended.

**Jami** (1414–1492) who spent most of his life in the fabled Samarkand, is considered the last great classical Persian writer in the tradition that links all these poets. His most famous collection of poetry is a seven part compendium, *Haft Awrang* modelled on the work of a 13th century poet, Nezami. The famous poem *Yusuf and Zuleika* (Potiphar's wife), from which *Women of Memphis* is an extract, forms part of the collection. His prose and verse work *Baharistan* is based on Sa'di's *Rose Garden*. Nevertheless his work is very much his own, especially his exposition of Sufi doctrine, for which he was renowned from the Bosphorus to East Bengal.

Jami's death marks the conclusion of

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a golden age, although Persian poetry enjoyed an Indian summer in the Moghul dominions, a silver age in the second home of the Persian language. Yet the tradition is not yet exhausted. Even in our own century the school of Persian poetry in northern India has been active enough to produce a poet of the stature of **Sir Muhammed Iqbal** (1873–1938). In his *Asrar-i-Khudi* (*Secrets of the Self*) an ethical and moralising poem descended from Sa'di's *Bustan*, the great inheritance of Persian imagery and form can be clearly heard. **Faiz Ahmed Faiz**, one of the foremost Urdu poets, takes, like Iqbal, the heritage of old motifs and gives them a new dimension. This was always the task of the true poet, to fill the patterns and forms of traditional images and symbols, and to make them a part of his own life.

**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861–1941) is known primarily in the West for his Nobel prize winning translations and versions of mystical verse such as *Geetanjali*, brought to European attention by W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound. In India, especially Bengal, he is also noted for his vast output of plays, novels, and volumes of short stories, not

to mention his painting and music. Tagore drew on both classical Persian poetry, as well as the Sanskrit influenced literature of Bengal which tends to avoid words of Persian or Arabic origin. In the 1930s he was reborn as a modern poet, freeing himself from the lyrical and the romantic and independently bringing similar qualities to Bengali as T. S. Eliot brought to English poetry.

### **Notes by Benedict Flynn**

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## Lalla Rookh – Thomas Moore

Born in Dublin, the son of a grocer, **Thomas Moore** is infamous today for being responsible for the destruction of the memoirs of his friend, **Byron**, entrusted to him after the poet's death.

But his greatest literary and musical contribution was his colossal ten-volume edition of Irish melodies produced between 1807 and 1835. A mixture of nationalist and sentimental songs, so familiar even today that they are often considered to be folksongs. *The Minstrel Boy*, *Oft in the Stilly Night*, *Believe Me if all those Endearing Young Charms* and *The Last Rose of Summer* are just some of the irresistible titles that have endured. Despite its popular success, there were critics, however. William Hazlitt wrote 'Mr Moore converts the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box.'

Less well-known now, but an international success at the time of its publication in 1817, was *Lalla Rookh* – a series of Oriental tales in

verse (which owed its style to Byron) connected by a story in prose. Having no personal experience of the East, Moore immersed himself in libraries to research an authentic background for his tale – an intensive and detailed study which lasted six years!

It paid off with a welcome and much needed fee of £3,000 from the publisher. Furthermore, the work proved a runaway success. It was published all over the world. There were stage adaptations and even an East India Company ship was named after the Princess Lalla Rookh. The exotic and erotic tone just hit the taste of the day, and within a year of its publication it was into its seventh edition. There were unfounded rumours that it had been translated into Persian. Reviews were almost universally rapturous though Byron had his criticisms.

But Moore's East is a mystical, fanciful creation of the early 19th century imagination. It was culled from travel-guides and Oriental histories to feed the passing fad and fashion for

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narrative verse with a romantic setting begun by Byron but soon to be the prerogative of the novelist. As the 19th century progressed, and England's expanding empire began to reveal true life in the East, *Lalla Rookh's* popularity declined and was overshadowed by the continuing success of Moore's *Irish Melodies*, that staple diet of many a Victorian and Musical at-home. Indeed, Moore himself had prophesied: 'I am strongly inclined to think that in a race into future times these little ponies, the melodies, will beat the mare, *Lalla Rookh* hollow'.

However, in the late 20th century, Moore's fresh and energetic narrative drive in **The Veiled Prophet**, with its sensual and erotic glimpses of the world of the harem, can still give much enjoyment.

**David Timson.**



**David Timson** has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode*, and *The Seagull*. He has been seen on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*. He also reads *The Life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, *The Christmas Collection* and *The Story of Buddhism* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Madhav Sharma** made his professional acting debut with the Shakespearean International Company touring such places as India, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. He works extensively on stage, screen and radio in the UK, where he now resides. He was recently seen in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*. He also reads *Kim*, *The Jungle Books* and *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Philip Madoc's** extensive theatre work includes the roles of Othello and Iago, Faust and Macbeth and recently, with the RSC, the Duke in *Measure for Measure* and Professor Raat in *The Blue Angel*. TV roles include Lloyd George, Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Brookside* and *A Mind to Kill*. He reads *The Death of Arthur*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Arabian Nights*, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *The Old Testament* and *Romeo and Juliet* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Polly Hayes** trained at LAMDA. Since then she has been active in theatre (from Molière to Chekhov) and appeared both on radio and TV in the UK. Her readings for Naxos AudioBooks include *The Lady of the Camellias*, *Dangerous Liaisons* and *Dracula*.



**Daniel Philpott** trained at LAMDA and, after success in the prestigious Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio Drama, recorded for BBC Radio 4. His theatre work includes various London fringe productions. He reads *Frankenstein*, *The Lady of the Camellias*, *Composers' Letters*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *Dracula* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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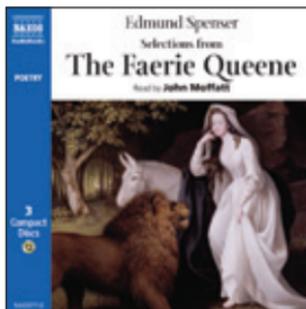
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# Poems of the Orient

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*The Rubá'iyát of Omar Khayyam*, in the famous translation by Edward FitzGerald, remains one of the most popular poems.

It expressed the fascination of Victorian England with the Orient. Here, it forms the main work on the first CD, along with other shorter poems by other leading Persian and Indian figures, including Rumi, Sa'di and Rabindranath Tagore.

The second CD is devoted to works written by Western poets on the theme of the East with *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*, an excerpt from Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* – one of the best-sellers of the early 19th century.

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