

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Alexandre Dumas

The Lady of the Camellias

(La Dame aux Camélias)

Performed by **Laura Paton • Daniel Philpott • Nigel Anthony
Heather Bell and Bill Homewood**



NA236912D

1	The lady of the camellias	9:56
2	The auction and a book	11:10
3	At the cemetery	7:33
4	Armand begins his story	7:00
5	The Rue d'Antin	9:33
6	Love's passions	8:31
7	At the Vaudeville	10:02
8	Repentance and reconciliation	5:24
9	A wild life	9:47
10	Alone at last	7:32
11	Debts take their toll	7:52
12	Armand's father appears	5:03
13	The family – and revenge	6:17
14	Marguerite again	9:03
15	The truth revealed	8:33
16	Marguerite's last days	6:17

Total time: 2:09:50

Alexandre Dumas
The Lady of Camellias

The Cast

Marguerite Gautier	Laura Paton
Armand Duval	Daniel Philpott
Narrator	Nigel Anthony
Prudence Duvernoy	Heather Bell
Armand's father	Bill Homewood
Julie Duprat/Olympe	Polly Hayes

Naxos Repertory: Anna Britten, Chris Larkin,
Edward Rawle-Hicks, Benjamin Soames

Alexandre Dumas

The Lady of Camellias

Alexandre Dumas was born in 1824, the illegitimate son of Catherine Lebay, a dressmaker, and Alexandre Dumas, the author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His parents lived together for only a short time after his birth, but his mother gave him a loving and secure home. Later his father sent him to boarding school; Dumas *fils* was very unhappy there and described his experiences in *L’Affaire Clemenceau* (1866).

Dumas *fils* left school in 1840 and went to live with his father, who was then at the height of his fame. He treated his son as a contemporary and together they threw themselves into the delights of bohemian society.

It was during this time that Dumas *fils* became the lover of Marie Dupleissis, a well-known courtesan who always wore white camellias. She had come to Paris as an uneducated, penniless country girl and had become the mistress of a string of men ascending from restaurateur to duke. She was swept off her feet by the refreshing youthfulness of Dumas’ passion but their

liaison finished in 1846 just six months before Marie died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-three.

Dumas had written *Les Aventures de Quatre Femmes et d’un Perroquet* in 1847, but it might as well have concerned a dead parrot for all the interest it aroused. The success of his second novel, *La Dame aux Camélias*, however, was immediate and sensational. In the book – written in three weeks – Dumas romanticized his love for Marie, and Paris society, which had followed her career with interest, was keen to read what was clearly a fictionalized account by her young lover.

Dumas adapted the novel for the stage the following year, but he had to wait three years before the censors allowed its performance. During the wait, Dumas wrote a clutch of novels with little success, but the production of *La Dame aux Camélias* at the Vaudeville in 1852 made his reputation. The play was a smash hit, and the next year Verdi was inspired to capture the passion of Armand and Marguerite, renamed Violetta, in his opera, *La Traviata*.

In 1855 Dumas' *Le Demi-Monde* was the first play to tackle a social problem – in this case, the effects of prostitution on marriage. Dumas married Princess Narishkine, a Russian, and had two daughters, but later lived apart from his wife. In 1857 Dumas was made a member of the Académie Française. He published pamphlets on divorce and prostitution, which were influential in the revision of the French marriage laws.

In 1895 Dumas' wife died and he married Mme. Regnier de la Brise, whom he had

loved for many years. But in November of the same year Dumas died of meningitis. Although his output of plays and essays was prolific, it is for *La Dame aux Camélias* that Dumas is remembered. He was so moved by Sarah Bernhardt's performance in the title role in 1884 that he gave her an early edition of the book and a letter he had written to Marie Dupleissis expressing regret that their love affair was doomed. He had ended the letter, 'Mille souvenirs. A.D.'

Notes by Lesley Young

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

FRANCK VIOLIN SONATA IN A Takako Nishizaki, violin; Jenő Jandó, piano	8.550417
FAURE NOCTURNES Jean Martin, piano	8.550794
VERDI LA TRAVIATA Krause/Ramiro/Tichy, Czecho-Slovak RSO/Alexander Rahbari	8.660011-12

Cover picture: A loge at the Théâtre des Italiens, Eva Gonzalèz c1874.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Laura Paton trained at LAMDA where she won the St. Phillip's Prize for Poetry and the Michael Warre Award. She has toured the UK extensively in productions as varied as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Among her other recordings for Naxos AudioBooks are Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Grimm's *Fairy Tales*.



Daniel Philpott trained at LAMDA and after success in the prestigious Carleton-Hobbs Award for Radio Drama he recorded for BBC Radio 4 as well as undertaking other broadcasting work. His theatre work includes productions on the London fringe. He has also read *Frankenstein* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Nigel Anthony has worked in television (Coronation St, Spender, Casualty etc) and in theatre, with the RSC and with Alan Ayckbourn at Scarborough. He is, however, best known for his numerous broadcasts on BBC Radio. For many years he has been one of the leading actors in that medium and as a master of vocal disguise has played countless different character roles. He has twice won awards for best actor. His recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *The Alexandria Quartet* and *Robinson Crusoe*.



Heather Bell has worked in repertory companies all over Great Britain and has toured as far afield as Kenya. Regularly seen in London's West End and on British TV, she is also known for her many leading parts in BBC Radio Drama – notably for creating the role of Clarrie Grundy in 'The Archers' and playing her for five years. She has also recorded Defoe's *Moll Flanders* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Bill Homewood's record of leading classical roles with major repertoire companies includes Feste and Orsino in *Twelfth Night* (RSC), Oberon, Banquo and the joint lead in *The Boys from Syracuse* at the Open Air Theatre. A guitarist and singer, he has also appeared in numerous musicals, among them *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He is regularly seen on TV. A writer and director, he also compiled *Shakespeare's Lovers* which he presents with Estelle Kohler for Naxos AudioBooks; and has also read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.



Polly Hayes trained at LAMDA. She has been active in British theatre and TV ever since. She also takes the role of Madame de Tourvel in *Dangerous Liaisons* on Naxos AudioBooks.

Alexandre Dumas

The Lady of the Camellias

(*La Dame aux Camélias*)

Performed by **Laura Paton, Daniel Philpott, Nigel Anthony, Heather Bell,** and **Bill Homewood**

The tragic but doomed love of Marguerite and Armand, recounted so passionately in *La Dame aux Camélias*, became one of the great love stories from its first publication in 1848. The title role of the consumptive heroine and her ultimate sacrifice inspired actresses from Sarah Bernhardt to Greta Garbo – and Giuseppe Verdi to write *La Traviata*. In this sound dramatisation, the story of passion and conflict is as fresh and compelling as when it was first written.

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www.naxosaudiobooks.com



Produced by Nicolas Soames. Abridged by Lesley Young
Sound dramatisation by Simon Weir
Post production: The Classical Recording Company
Engineer (speech) Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Cassettes

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Total time
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