

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Marcel Proust
Swann's Way

Read by **Neville Jason**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

**MODERN
CLASSICS**



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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • I

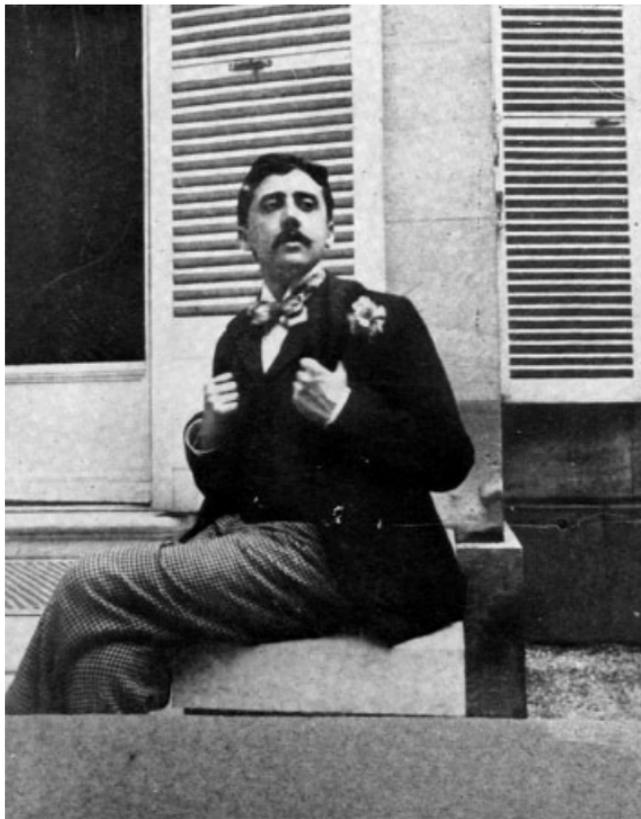
Overture

1	For a long time I used to go to bed early.	8:34
2	The ritual of the 'good night' kiss	4:23
3	Swann and the middle class caste	7:31
4	Our social personality is created...	9:30
5	My foreboding – the evening ritual in danger	9:30
6	I never took my eyes off my mother.	2:29
7	A desperate stratagem	4:33
8	Agitation and desperate measures	7:46
9	Caught in the light of my father's candle	3:20
10	'Many years have passed...'	9:25
11	<i>The petites madeleines...</i>	4:27
12	And suddenly the memory returns	6:10

Combray

13	Decked in long shadows of memory	6:43
14	Françoise and Aunt Léonie	5:37
15	M. Legrandin, the engineer	2:48
16	Eulalie, the 'energetic, deaf spinster'	6:15
17	My last visit to Uncle Adolphe	11:53
18	Reading in the sulight	4:47
19	My friend Bloch and literary conversation	11:22
20	Aunt Léonie with Françoise and Eulalie	12:19
21	The kitchen maid's confinement and a waking dream	4:09
22	M. Vinteuil, the music master	12:41
23	Françoise – 'A colonel in the kitchen'	7:34
24	'Alas – we have had to alter our opinion...'	15:32
25	The two ways	5:42
26	'The whole path throbbing...'	9:20
27	Mlle Vinteuil and her friend	8:40
28	My aunt's last illness	3:19
29	Watching from the bushes	10:01
30	The Guermentes Way	3:54
31	The zone of melancholy	9:56

Total time: 3:50:10



Marcel Proust at Illiers

Marcel Proust

Swann's Way

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871, the son of a prosperous Parisian professor of medicine and a Jewish mother.

Although convinced from an early age of his calling as a writer, Proust was riddled with self-doubt and wrote relatively little at the beginning of his career. For a time he was associated with a group of intellectuals who produced the cultural review *La Revue Blanche*. His life was that of a dilettante, his *milieu* the fashionable Paris drawing room, and it was against this background that he set a number of stories. He was a great admirer of John Ruskin and translated several of his works into French. It was not until Proust's health began to fail around 1902, forcing him to lead a retired and solitary life, that he embarked on his great work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*) of which *Swann's Way* forms the first part.

This long cycle of autobiographical novels was published in eight sections: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*) in 1913; *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within A Budding Grove*) in 1918; *Le Côté de*

Guermites I (*The Guermantes Way I*) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (*Cities of the Plain I*) in 1921; *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (*The Captive*) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*) in 1925; *Le Temps Retrouvé* (*Time Regained*) in 1927.

Proust was obliged to publish *Swann's Way* at his own expense, and even after it had appeared he had trouble finding a publisher for the next volume *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*. However, when it appeared in 1918 it received considerable acclaim, and was awarded the Prix Goncourt the following year.

By the time Proust died, on November 18, 1922, the first four parts of the cycle had been published, leaving the others to appear posthumously. The English translations by C.K. Scott Moncrieff, from which this abridged version has been prepared, were published between 1922 and 1930.

In *Remembrance of Things Past*, the minuteness of Proust's observation, the depth of his psychological understanding and the vividness of his descriptive powers

have combined to create one of the most poetic and magical works in all literature.

In *Swann's Way* the narrator, in the person of the author, introduces us to the highly sensitive and imaginative child he was; to the mother he loved so passionately, and from whom to be parted was such agony; and to his father who, although loving in his way, was incapable of understanding the emotional behaviour of his nervous and delicate child.

The little village of Combray, to which Marcel's family travelled regularly from Paris to spend their holidays at his great aunt's house, is the setting for these childhood memories. Here we meet his other relatives in a succession of richly-drawn portraits; his grandmother whose passion for nature drives her to run up and down the garden paths in the pouring rain; his somewhat 'common' great-aunt who takes every opportunity of putting down her more refined sister-in-law; his two spinster aunts, grown deaf through lack of interest in the dinner table conversations; and Aunt Leonie, who has retired permanently to her bed, from whence she learns, by observing through her window the comings and goings in the street below, every detail of the lives of the village's inhabitants.

The family's neighbours also attract the interest of the precocious Marcel, whose highly developed powers of observation pierce through their urbane exteriors to the pretensions and hypocrisy beneath – M. Legrandin, declared arch-enemy of snobbery, who cuts off Marcel and his family when he is in the company of grander folk; M. Vinteuil, who condemns Swann's 'unfortunate' marriage, while turning a blind eye to his daughter's love affair with an older woman; and Swann himself, who disparages the emptiness of high society while devoting his life to parties and balls.

Proust presents these characters with a depth of understanding of the human psyche which links him to another great figure of his time, Sigmund Freud. Proust, like Freud, understood the power of the past to influence the present. His search for his former self is part of the process of understanding the person he has become.

For Proust, the two 'Ways', Swann's 'Way' and the Guermantes 'Way', different directions taken by the family for their regular country walks, are more than mere geographical designations. Through the thoughts, sensations and memories they invoke, each comes to represent a different aspect of his life, another 'way' of being.

But no less memorable than the philosophical and social observations to be found in *Remembrance of Things Past* are the rhapsodic and minutely observed descriptions of nature, in particular the hawthorn and lilac trees which filled the writer's youthful soul with such passionate love.

Like all great works, *Swann's Way* is capable of many interpretations, and for this abridged version it has been necessary to curtail some of the more discursive passages. However, the complete text is always available for the interested reader, and a spoken version has the advantage that the listener may be able to detect an echo, however faint, of the author's own unique voice, travelling towards him across the years. For as Marcel Proust knew, art has the power to conquer time.

Notes by Neville Jason

The Author

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871. His father, a distinguished professor of medicine, was from a Catholic family, while his mother was Jewish. Although intent on becoming a writer from an early age, Proust was riddled with self-doubt.

During his twenties he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*, contributed to *La Revue Blanche* and had his first book published in 1896, a collection of essays entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*.

He became an enthusiastic admirer of Ruskin and translated his *Bible of Amiens* and *Sesame and Lilies* into French. A novel, *Jean Santeuil*, which was the precursor of *Remembrance of Things Past*, was abandoned, and eventually published long after Proust's death, in 1954.

For much of his youth Proust led the life of a man about town, frequenting fashionable Paris drawing rooms and literary salons, which were to form the background of a number of his early stories and sketches, and subsequently of *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in a nervous collapse and aggravated his chronic asthma and insomnia. But despite his grief and the sense of loss from which he never recovered, his mother's death freed him with regard to his homosexual emotional life, and allowed him

to address homosexuality in his writing, albeit in a manner which treated such experiences as happening to others rather than to himself.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann where, in the bedroom which he had had lined with cork to keep out noise, he embarked upon his great work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*).

This long autobiographical cycle was originally published in eight sections: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*) in 1913; *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within a Budding Grove*) in 1918; *Le Côté de Guermantes I* (*The Guermantes Way I*) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodom et Gomorrhe I* (*Cities of the Plain I*) in 1921; *Sodom et Gomorrhe II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (*The Captive*) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*) in 1925; *Le Temps Retrouvé* (*Time Regained*) in 1927.

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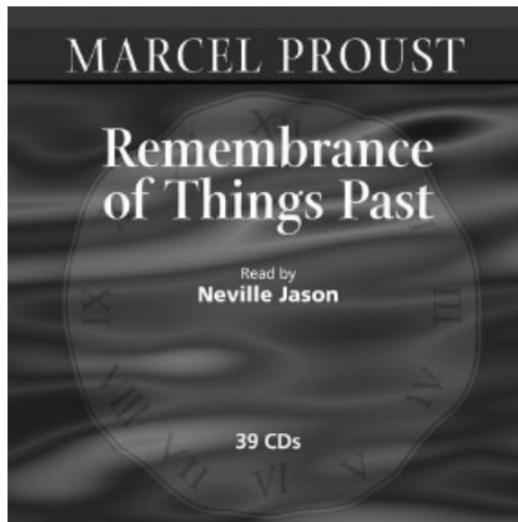
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Remembrance of Things Past – Box Set (Proust) 39CD
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Marcel Proust Swann's Way

Read by **Neville Jason**

Swann's Way forms the first part of Marcel Proust's magnificent autobiographical cycle *Remembrance of Things Past*. Here, Proust's vision, psychological understanding and vivid powers of description combine to create one of the most poetic and magical works in all literature. For lovers of the original text there are new delights to be found in this audiobook version, while those discovering the work for the first time may be surprised to find it so accessible.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films and musicals. In television he has appeared in popular serials such as *Maigret*, *Emergency Ward 10* and *Dr Who*, as well as playing classical roles such as Orestes and Horatio. Formerly a member of the BBC Radio Drama Co., he is frequently to be heard on radio.

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