

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Charles Dickens
Great Expectations

Read by **Anton Lesser**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



NA408212D

1	An encounter in the churchyard	7:39
2	Pip's theft	6:42
3	The convict	6:09
4	Mrs. Joe gives a supper party	5:56
5	The runaways apprehended	8:52
6	Pip is apprenticed to Joe	10:44
7	A visit to Miss Havisham	15:35
8	"A bright new shilling"	7:04
9	The pale young gentleman	10:04
10	The pale young gentleman (cont.)	4:18
11	Twenty-five guineas	8:38
12	A half-holiday and a brutal attack	12:34
13	Mrs. Joe's communication	5:41
14	Pip confides in Biddy	9:17
15	"A young fellow of great expectations"	11:18
16	Preparation and parting	6:55
17	Mr. Jaggers' instructions	4:01
18	Re-appearance of a former adversary	3:20
19	Miss Havisham's story	11:34
20	Pip settles in	5:12

21	Mr. Wemmick at home	8:07
22	Dinner with Mr. Jaggers	4:10
23	Joe brings a message	7:13
24	“Love her, love her, love her”	7:54
25	Pip and Herbert exchange confidences	3:52
26	A kiss and a warning	4:15
27	Debts, death and a funeral	7:23
28	Pip comes of age	4:15
29	Mr. Wemmick’s Walworth sentiments	4:53
30	Pip discovers his benefactor	12:03
31	Introducing Mr. Provis	10:10
32	Magwitch’s story	7:19
33	Bentley Drummle	2:30
34	Estella’s unwelcome news	4:51
35	“Don’t go home!”	5:03
36	Herbert’s plan	2:05
37	Mr. Wopsle’s curious observation and Mr. Jaggers’ housekeeper	6:42
38	Remorse and an accident at Miss Havisham’s	8:25
39	Estella’s parentage discovered	3:01

40	Pip accepts a dangerous invitation	4:51
41	An old enemy attacks again	2:26
42	“Hunted, wounded and shackled”	8:59
43	“Hollo! Here’s a wedding!”	1:41
44	Magwitch cheats the hangman	3:34
45	Illness and a faithful friend	3:42
46	Pip’s debts paid	2:27
47	Joe and Biddy’s surprise	2:45
48	Pip gains a position and Herbert learns a secret	1:15
49	Pip and Estella	6:43

Total time: 5:14:27

Cover picture: *Scene from The Forge* by Peter Severin Kroyer (1851-1909)
Courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library, London.

Charles Dickens

Great Expectations

Great Expectations, first published in 1861, is the product of Dickens' mature period and one of his finest novels. Although the outline of the story bears little direct relation to Dickens' own life, it is in the deepest sense autobiographical: set in the period of the author's own childhood and told in the first person, **Great Expectations** is a 'Bildungsroman', in other words a novel about the education and development of a personality.

The hero, Philip Pirrip ('Pip') finds himself split by divided loyalties: to his old homelife, epitomised by the loving simplicity of Joe the blacksmith, and to the false idea of gentility which his mysteriously inherited fortune draws him towards. The novel, then, is in part about class and snobbery, and Dickens (as Chesterton pointed out long ago) here resembles his great contemporary Thackeray in providing an utterly convincing, concrete realisation of different strata of society, ranging from provincial pretension to the idle self-indulgence of a London life lived without purpose.

Pip's sentimental education is brilliantly developed when he is faced by the appalling discovery that his fortune (and hence his status as a gentleman) derive from Magwitch, the convict whom he had helped many years earlier. Pip learns (painfully) to forgive and to love: he must learn not to judge by appearances or by the norms of society, but to read the language of the heart instead. Joe and Magwitch in their different ways both contribute to this process: both are in a sense father figures to him (he is an orphan), as also is the initially frightening figure of Jaggers, the lawyer who transcends the business-like limitations of his profession. The absurd Wemmick perhaps offers a paternal model, too: his kindness and integrity are soon discovered beneath the 'post-office of a mouth' which reflects the impersonal role society demands of him. With the help of these men and of Biddy, whose affection and fidelity survive Pip's patronising superiority, Pip is able at last to achieve integrity, to find himself.

But the story is more than a realistic tale of individuals and society. Dickens deepens

his novel by incorporating elements of the fairy tale and of his characteristic humour, yet he does so without ever sacrificing psychological truth. Pip's pursuit of the apparently cold and unattainable 'princess' Estella is part of his yearning for a 'better' life, coming as he does from the humble background of the village forge, and later he will battle against the 'witch' Miss Havisham, whose own disappointed life has led her to make of Estella an 'ice queen'. If victory ultimately goes to Pip, then it is a victory which costs him dear, both financially and (more importantly) spiritually.

The humour is also absolutely of a piece with the serious themes: the scenes between Joe and Pip ('ever the best of friends') at the forge are both endearing and comic, forming as they do the emotional bedrock on which Pip's later 'rescue' from his corrupted self is based.

It would surely be difficult for any listener not to respond to the imaginative power and extraordinary insight into human nature which Dickens offers: in this novel we find not only Pip and the characters who surround him, but also ourselves.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth. His father was imprisoned for

debt and the twelve-year-old Charles sent to work in a blacking-factory; these experiences influenced (for instance) **Little Dorrit** and **David Copperfield**. Having learnt shorthand, he became a parliamentary reporter and began to submit magazine pieces. In 1837 **The Pickwick Papers** brought Dickens fame, and the rest of his literary career was almost uninterruptedly successful. His personal life was less happy: eventually he separated from his wife Catherine, partly as a result of his growing intimacy with Ellen Ternan, the actress, and he died relatively young in 1870, his last novel, **The Mystery of Edwin Drood**, unfinished.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

**The music on this recording is taken from the
NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues**

MENDELSSOHN RUY BLAS OVERTURE, MEERESTILLE Slovak Philharmonic/Oliver Dohnányi	8.550222
GRIEG LYRIC PIECES OP. 68, WEDDING DAY AT TROLDHAUGEN, OP. 65 NO. 6 INTERMEZZO – BORGHILD'S DREAM BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Jerzy Maksymiuk	8.550864
LIADOV EIGHT RUSSIAN FOLKSONGS Slovak Philharmonic/Kenneth Jean	8.550328
LISZT TASSO Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice)/Michael Halász	8.550487
CUI SUITE OP. 43, SUITE MINIATURE OP. 20 Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra/Kenneth Schermerhorn	8.220308
SULLIVAN L'ILE ENCHANTEE RTE Concert Orchestra/Andrew Penny	8.223460

Music programming by Neville Jason

Charles Dickens

Great Expectations

Read by **Anton Lesser**

In this, perhaps Dickens' most profound and personal novel, we are invited to share in the sentimental education of Pip, the poor boy from the village forge who risks losing himself in snobbery and selfishness when he mysteriously inherits a fortune. The story moves from the bleak Kentish marshes of Pip's childhood to a thrilling climax which mingles tragedy and triumph.



Anton Lesser is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company, including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. He also starred in the acclaimed Royal National Theatre production of *Wild Oats*. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Politician's Wife*. He also reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* for Naxos AudioBooks.

"A magnificent reading... Lesser is Miss Havisham, and indeed every other character, from the growling Magwitch to the clear, haughty tones of Estella...It's profoundly felt, while the accompanying music matches every twist of the plot."

THE SCOTSMAN

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Total time
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