

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Nikolai Gogol
Dead Souls

Read by **Gordon Griffin**



NA428412D

1	To the door of an inn...	8:57
2	The following day he devoted...	5:56
3	This category represented...	6:55
4	For more than two weeks...	5:48
5	Only God can say what Manilov's...	5:30
6	'How like you our town?'	7:37
7	At length the company rose from the table.	5:13
8	'For what purpose do you want it?'	5:52
9	As soon as Manilov had pronounced...	6:16
10	Meanwhile, Chichikov, seated...	6:30
11	Fortunately, fate had decided...	7:08
12	Next day it was late in the morning...	4:45
13	We have seen that...	5:22
14	However the old lady still...	7:21
15	So she departed...	5:50
16	On reaching the tavern...	4:20
17	'Ha, ha, ha!' he cried.	8:03
18	At thirty five Nozdrev...	6:11
19	The guests returned...	5:54
20	Chichikov himself perceived...	8:29
21	On rising, he made it...	5:43
22	Nozdrev approached Chichikov...	4:40
23	Certainly Chichikov was...	6:10
24	Sobakevitch's country house...	7:38
25	'My dear,' said Sobakevitch...	4:19

26	Our hero began in a sort of...	7:13
27	For a while Sobakevitch...	5:42
28	Chichikov's amusement...	4:18
29	For several minutes...	8:00
30	With that, Plushkin donned...	8:20
31	When Chichikov awoke...	5:11
32	Approaching the first desk...	6:03
33	As soon as the two friends...	8:01
34	Whilst the foregoing conversation...	5:33
35	It was not long before...	7:25
36	But an even more unpleasant...	6:55
37	Next morning, before the usual hour...	8:28
38	The men's party declared...	5:30
39	On assembling at the residence...	4:51
40	Meanwhile, Chichikov knew nothing...	8:47
41	Nevertheless events did not turn out...	5:13
42	Presently on turning a corner...	6:06
43	Whether the character whom I...	6:22
44	Before long he had grown...	6:25
45	The foregoing constituted...	9:14
46	Such phenomenally zealous...	6:51
47	But here we are talking...	4:16

Total time: 5:01:42

Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol (1809–1852)

Dead Souls

Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol was born in the Ukraine on March 31, 1809. After leaving school, where he edited a manuscript periodical, he went to St. Petersburg with the intention of becoming an actor. But his voice was not sufficiently strong and he was obliged to give up this ambition. He worked briefly as a clerk in a government department but soon resigned the position. His first published work was a poem written under a pseudonym, but it was so ridiculed by the reviewers that he bought up all the copies he could find and burned them. He decided to go to America, and started out on his journey, but only got as far as Lübeck before returning to St. Petersburg, where he joined the Civil Service.

In 1831 Gogol published *Evenings at the Farm of Dikanka*, a collection of stories of Ukrainian rural life which was well received. At this time he met Pushkin, who admired his talent and encouraged his literary ambitions. His plan (never carried through) to write a history of the Ukraine won him a Chair of History at St. Petersburg University,

but it was an absurd appointment. He was entirely unsuited to an academic life and soon resigned. In the meantime he had published a new series of stories including *Taras Bulba*, a Homeric prose poem, and his famous story *The Cloak*, which has been recognised as the starting point for the Russian novel.

In 1835 came his stage play, *The Revizor*, known in English as *The Inspector General* or *The Government Inspector*. The play's great success was remarkable, in that it presented a biting satirical view of Russian provincial bureaucracy and small-town life. The Tsar, Nicolas I, not only gave his permission for the piece to be acted, but roared with laughter and led the applause. He sent Gogol a gift of money, insisting he was not to be told where it came from in case he should feel obliged to adopt a more respectful point of view in future.

After the production of *The Revizor*, Gogol went travelling abroad, and spent most of the rest of his life away from Russia. He was often in Rome, but never stayed long in any one place – a restlessness he

attributed to his Cossack blood. His *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends*, published in 1847, provoked considerable debate. He was bitterly attacked by the radicals who felt betrayed by him.

In 1848 he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of peace for his tortured spirit, but failed to find the comfort for which he yearned and returned to Russia. In Moscow he fell under the influence of a fanatical priest who persuaded him that his fictional writing was sinful. He gave away everything he owned of value and went about with his few possessions, including his hostile newspaper reviews, in a small bag. He became depressed and destroyed a great deal of his work, including much of the second part of *Dead Souls*. He spent his last days praying and fasting, and died on February 21, 1852.

DEAD SOULS:

The Editions of 1842 and 1846

This Naxos AudioBooks recording comprises the first version of *Dead Souls*, published in 1842. Part Two, published in 1846, continues the story of Chichikov's travels in search of 'dead souls', and a life of wealth and ease.

Sadly, the second part is far from complete. At the end of his life, suffering from mental anguish and religious fervour,

Gogol came to repent what he had written and burned several chapters of Part Two. Although what is left is a substantial book, the narrative is broken and discontinuous. References are made to plots and characters whose origins have disappeared, and the results are confusing. The ending is abruptly curtailed and we are left dangling in mid-sentence.

However, there are compensations to be had for those who wish to continue to accompany Chichikov on his bumpy journey. Lyrical descriptive passages of the Russian landscape and of peasant life are outstandingly beautiful, and Gogol introduces yet more vividly-drawn characters.

There is always an undertow of seriousness underlying Gogol's humour, and this is nearer the surface in Part Two. Possibly as a result of negative criticism from some quarters when *Dead Souls* first appeared, Gogol seems to have been at pains to assure his readers of his patriotism, and to emphasise that his satirical depiction of Russian life was motivated by love of his motherland and not by disloyalty. Unlike Part One, where we find many amusing characters but would be hard put to find a sympathetic one, Part Two contains several admirable figures who are energetic, capable and idealistic, and one who is virtually saintly.

But they are all seen against the background of a system which is decadent and corrupt.

In the final chapters, when his hero has finally been found out and flung in jail, Gogol introduces an almost saintly character in the person of the landowner Murazov, who struggles with Chichikov for his soul. Murazov almost persuades him that it is his duty to repent and take his punishment, but as soon as he leaves, and Chichikov is offered the opportunity to bribe his way out of trouble, he succumbs, and sets off once again on his travels.

It is as if Gogol is struggling to reform Russia by reforming the character of his hero but, not surprisingly, the task was beyond him. Russia was to undergo a seismic upheaval caused by the faults in its society so vividly depicted by Gogol, and is still to

arrive at the golden age he envisaged. As for reforming Chichikov, an author who creates a character so vivid and alive may find himself at the mercy of his own creation. Despite Gogol's attempts to make Chichikov repent, it would seem that the personality with which he had endowed his hero was too powerful to be changed, and the amiable reprobate stubbornly reverts to his old ways. And for all Gogol's despair at seeing the dishonesty and chicanery of the Chichikovs of this world winning, we sense that there is something in the author's Cossack soul that rejoices in his hero's freedom as he breaks out of captivity, and sets off once again, galloping down the road in search of further adventures.

Notes by Neville Jason

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

RUBINSTEIN , Anton SYMPHONY NO. 5 George Enescu State PO / Horia Andreescu	8.223320
TCHAIKOVSKY SUITES NOS 3 & 4 NSO of Ireland / Stefan Sanderling	8.550728
TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 2 & NO. 4 Polish NRSO / Adrian Leaper	8.550488

Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Cover picture: Policeman Singing Carols 1867 by
Leonid Ivanovich Solomatkin (1837-83) courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library

Nikolai Gogol

Dead Souls

Read by **Gordon Griffin**

Gogol's great comic masterpiece paints an hilariously satirical picture of provincial life in nineteenth-century Russia. Its publication in 1847 not only provided inspiration for succeeding generations of Russian writers, but fanned the already flickering flames of social discontent which were eventually to flare up and consume Russia in the revolution of 1917.



Gordon Griffin has recorded over 220 audiobooks. For Naxos AudioBooks he has also recorded *The Trial and the Death of Socrates*. Gordon also appears regularly on television and in films. He was dialogue coach (Geordie) on *Byker Grove* and *Kavanagh QC*.

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