

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Mikhail Bulgakov
**The Master
and Margarita**

Read by **Julian Rhind-Tutt**



NA693612D

Part 1	
1 Chapter 1: Never Talk to Strangers	5:26
2 And just as Mikhail Alexandrovich ventured further...	6:33
3 Berlioz took in the unpleasant story...	5:21
4 Chapter 2: Pontius Pilate	6:20
5 The secretary grew deathly pale...	5:47
6 After reading the text, something happened...	7:10
7 Subsequently, a slim and handsome man...	5:23
8 The Procurator met with another man...	4:38
9 Chapter 3: The Seventh Proof	7:20
10 Chapter 4: The Chase	8:20
11 Chapter 5: The Incident at Griboyedov	7:04
12 And, come midnight, hell produced a vision	6:56
13 Chapter 6: Schizophrenia, as Described	6:56
14 Chapter 7: A Fishy Apartment	5:17
15 The stranger was first to break the silence...	7:08
16 But now was no time to grieve...	7:13
17 Chapter 8: The Duel of the Professor and the Poet	5:50
18 Chapter 9: Koroviev's Capers	5:51

19	The Travellers' Bureau resolved the matter...	6:16
20	Chapter 10: News From Yalta	5:32
21	Meanwhile, Rimsky was looking out the window...	5:57
22	He went down to the first floor...	4:30
23	Chapter 11: A Rift in Ivan	4:18
24	Chapter 12: Black Magic and its Exposure	7:36
25	Perhaps it was at that time...	5:21
26	Exactly one minute later...	5:15
27	Chapter 13: Enter the Hero	6:06
28	A historian by vocation...	5:34
29	It was finished in the month of August...	5:44
30	'The newspaper articles did not stop...'	7:21
31	Chapter 14: Glory to the Rooster	6:49
32	As soon as the financial director...	7:02
33	Chapter 15: Nikanor Ivanovich's Dream	5:10
34	Chapter 16: The Execution	6:18
35	It would not be entirely correct to say...	6:38
36	Levi climbed out of the crowd and ran back...	4:41
37	Yeshua was more fortunate than either	6:25

38	Chapter 17: A Troublesome Day	6:02
39	Upon arriving at his destination...	8:45
40	Chapter 18: Unfortunate Visitors	5:33
41	Meanwhile, the cat stirred...	5:18
42	As for the little man...	10:14
43	It is well known what happened to him...	6:31

Part 2

44	Chapter 19: Margarita	7:09
45	Several minutes later...	7:56
46	Chapter 20: Azazello's Cream	8:00
47	Chapter 21: The Flight	6:12
48	Margarita put the hammer down quietly...	5:47
49	Margarita sensed she was approaching water...	4:39
50	Chapter 22: By Candlelight	5:34
51	Koroviev blew out his lamp...	5:11
52	'My entourage insists it's rheumatism...'	5:01
53	Chapter 23: Satan's Grand Ball	6:03
54	Finally they arrived on the platform...	5:38

55	A river flowed from below...	5:33
56	Escorted by Koroviev...	6:56
57	Chapter 24: The Extraction of the Master	6:27
58	Woland tore the heavy robe from Margarita's shoulders...	5:32
59	'Tell me, why does Margarita call you a Master?'	7:56
60	Nikolai Ivanovich now stood in place...	8:13
61	Chapter 25: How the Procurator tried to Save...	5:40
62	They finished their wine...	7:52
63	Chapter 26: The Burial	6:47
64	Judas stood alone for a while...	3:42
65	The palace of Herod the Great...	3:50
66	The hooded man replaced the centurion...	6:41
67	Aphraniu s was already on his way to the garden...	5:55
68	Chapter 27: The End of Apartment No. 50	5:16
69	On Friday night...	6:35
70	After her came a string of various individuals...	3:14
71	This time, the effort was met...	4:55
72	Chapter 28: The Final Adventures of Koroviev and Behemoth	6:19
73	We do know, however...	6:59

74	Chapter 29: The Fate of the Master and Margarita is Decided	6:51
75	Chapter 30: It's Time! It's Time!	6:23
76	Azazello sprang into action.	7:14
77	Chapter 31: On Sparrow Hills	4:33
78	Chapter 32: Forgiveness and Eternal Refuge	3:39
79	Woland reined in his horse...	5:41
80	Epilogue	5:20
81	Several years passed...	3:42
82	Every year on the festive springtime full moon...	7:05

Total time: 8:22:22

Mikhail Bulgakov
(1891–1940)

The Master and Margarita

The Master and Margarita is a novel that could not have been published when the author was alive; indeed it was pretty remarkable that it got published when it did, some 26 years after his death. In its energy, inventiveness, fantastic imagery, spirituality and belief in the capacity of the human spirit, it was a dangerously liberating book, and liberating books were not going to be published in the USSR of the 1920s and 30s. It was a world of overwhelming fear and suspicion, where the repressive State machinery made any opposition – real or imagined – punishable by death or imprisonment. This dark brutality infected every aspect of life; and the strict bureaucracy that enforced the State's decrees led to profound social stagnation, quite apart from numbing inefficiency in even the most straightforward of transactions. In this

world, art of any form was a dangerous currency, and the State did everything it could to ensure that only those works of which it approved were published. *The Master and Margarita* would not have been approved.

For a start, it is a satire, and people holding absolute power are rarely amused by being mocked. It pokes fun at the catastrophic absurdity of the system, uncovering the vanity and duplicity of those who operated within it. It makes a point of sending up the pompous literary establishment of the time, which would hardly endear it to publishers. More dangerously, it is also sympathetic to the figure of Christ (if not quite the orthodox one), an attitude the atheistic State would again have been ready and keen to punish. For today's readers, these satirical elements would make the book worth attention. But

what elevates it beyond its time, makes it more than a significant period-piece, is its dizzying, dazzling invention, its vivid fantasy, its complex, ambivalent morality, its humanity and its breadth of humour. It is *Solzhenitsyn* written by Lewis Carroll, *Dostoyevsky* by Vonnegut.

Mikhail Bulgakov was born in Kiev in 1891, a son of a professor at a theological academy. He went on to study medicine, but after the turmoil of the Civil War (in which he served as a doctor) he turned to the area he had always loved – theatre and literature. One day in 1919 while on a train, he had written a story and, when the train stopped, he sold it to the first paper he could find. It was never going to be that easy for him again. Over the next 10 years, he wrote sketches, stories, novellas and plays which gradually displayed a more critical attitude to the Soviet system. As a result his works began to be banned and were viciously attacked in the press. Deeply frustrated by this official interference, he wrote a letter asking for permission to go abroad. In an irony that Thomas Hardy might have enjoyed, Bulgakov was

telephoned by Stalin himself, who asked if he really wanted to go. The author, quite possibly fearing for his life, rescinded his request, claiming that a writer could not work outside his homeland; and the dictator arranged for him to work at the Moscow Art Theatre, adapting Gogol's work for the stage. But even here, his work continued to be banned, as it was later when he was at the Bolshoi Opera House as a librettist. In this atmosphere, *The Master and Margarita* had to be written in secret. He started it in 1928; it took, in its various forms, 12 years, and nearly never got written at all.

The novel contains several incidents taken from Bulgakov's life. He was married three times, and the figure of Margarita is probably based on his third wife; Pilate's faithful and brave dog is called Banga, the nickname of Bulgakov's second wife. Bulgakov knew what it was like to be rejected and publicly humiliated by the literary establishment, for example – something the Master has to endure. There are also plenty of references to real people (in disguised form) in the characters.

But in perhaps the most significant autobiographical incident, Bulgakov had been so alarmed by the potential threat if his novel was discovered that he had burned the manuscript. When he later decided to carry on, his wife asked how he would manage without all his notes. And just as the Master does, he said he could remember it all. 'Manuscripts don't burn' became something of a catchphrase in the USSR when the book was eventually published, and this personal reflection of the author was recognised as a statement just as much about the indomitable nature of human invention. This incident and its implications echo through the whole book, as does the expression 'Cowardice is the worst of sins'. It relates to Bulgakov's own fear about the novel and his own attitude to the Stalinist regime – and by extension to everyone else who suffered under it.

He had lost his faith for a while, but regained it in later life, finding comfort in his belief in God. This might also have made him a target for the authorities, since the State enforced atheism. But again,

the capacity of some humans to follow their own convictions despite the threats of the all-powerful State demonstrated the strength of individualism. And in the end, even Stalin failed to eradicate faith in the USSR, just as Caesar had failed to eliminate Christianity two thousand years before – the two periods reflected in the book.

The book weaves three separate strands together in its narrative. The first is 1920s and '30s Moscow, visited by the Devil in the form of Professor Woland and his crew of bizarre assistants (including a talking, shooting, bipedal cat). They set about destroying the comfortable pretensions of the jobsworths who superintend apartments or run theatres, and in particular the smug literary world, through displays of impossible, wild, unpredictable, cruel, bloody and sometimes fatal magic. The second is set in Jerusalem (named Yershalaim in the book), where Pontius Pilate is about to sentence a charismatic leader accused of inciting the population against their Roman overlords. Again, the name is

altered, shifted from Jesus to Yeshua; and the characters are different, too. Pilate is tortured by the problem of goodness and obedience, while Yeshua, despite dismissing some of the claims made for him by his followers, remains understatedly strong, charismatic and tender. The third of the novels' storylines binds the others together, and features the Master and Margarita themselves. The Master, living in the Moscow of the 20s and 30s, wrote the story of Yeshua and Pilate; but, dispirited by its rejection by the literary establishment, he despairs of his tale and himself, burning the manuscript and committing himself to an asylum. His lover Margarita never loses faith in the man or his work; she enters into a Faustian pact with Woland to save the book, the Master and herself.

These interweaving plot lines are told either with extraordinary brio or brilliant control. In the Moscow sequences, the appearance of supernatural characters naturally allows for fantastic imaginings and events, creating an impossible, magic world inside the repressive reality

of Moscow. Meanwhile, the discussions with Yeshua are told with a powerfully contrasting directness and simplicity. In both cases, Bulgakov examines the ideas of goodness, of obedience, of creativity, of courage and of freedom, but never reaches an easy moral conclusion. Woland may be the Devil – but his actions are sometimes beneficial. The Master has created a great work of art, but he is not granted simple or complete absolution. The system is mocked, but not directly. Pontius Pilate is made a human, sympathetic character; while innocents are sometimes punished. Margarita sides with Woland, but there is no retribution.

The Master and Margarita was eventually published in 1966. This was strange in itself – the Communist Party was still very strongly in power. The book came out in serial form, slightly censored and – equally strangely – in a rather conservative magazine. Whatever prompted the publication, it was greeted with a kind of rapturous joy. The boldness of its writing, the breadth and freshness of its imagining, the spirited and vivid characters, the

courage to refer to the dire shortcomings of the system so fearlessly and with such humour – these were all inspirational and offered moral and intellectual hope. Since then, interest has if anything increased. The novel is filled with literary and musical references, especially *Faust* and the opera *Eugene Onegin*, allowing almost infinite academic speculation about its symbolic and thematic intentions, all fully justified by the text's unobtrusive complexity. But whatever these close studies reveal, the magical depth of the book makes it as endlessly rewarding as it is immediately accessible.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Julian Rhind-Tutt is a prominent British actor, working extensively in television, film, radio and theatre. He is a familiar face on both British and American television, having had starring roles in cult comedies *Green Wing* and *Keen Eddie*, as well as appearing in *Marple*, *Black Books* and *Oliver Twist*. Film credits include *The Madness of King George* (1994), *Notting Hill* (1999), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) and *Stardust* (2007). In 1992 he received the Carleton Hobbs award, and has since featured in more than 50 radio productions.

Credits

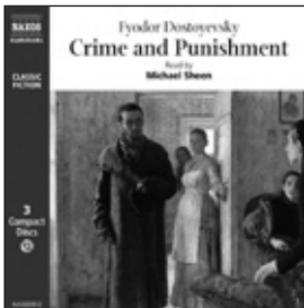
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Produced by Roy McMillan
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Edited by Sarah Butcher

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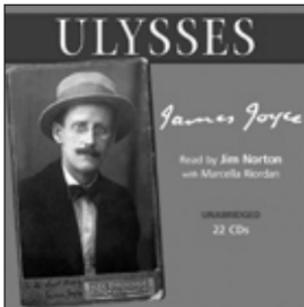
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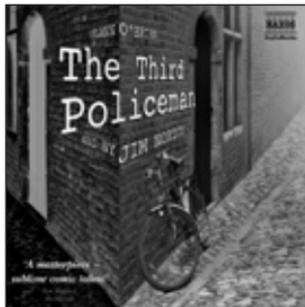
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Mikhail Bulgakov The Master and Margarita

Read by **Julian Rhind-Tutt**

The Devil comes to Moscow, but he isn't all bad; Pontius Pilate sentences a charismatic leader to his death, but yearns for redemption; and a writer tries to destroy his greatest tale, but discovers that manuscripts don't burn. Multi-layered and entrancing, blending sharp satire with glorious fantasy, *The Master and Margarita* is ceaselessly inventive and profoundly moving. In its imaginative freedom and raising of eternal human concerns, it is one of the world's great novels.



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Roy McMillan

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