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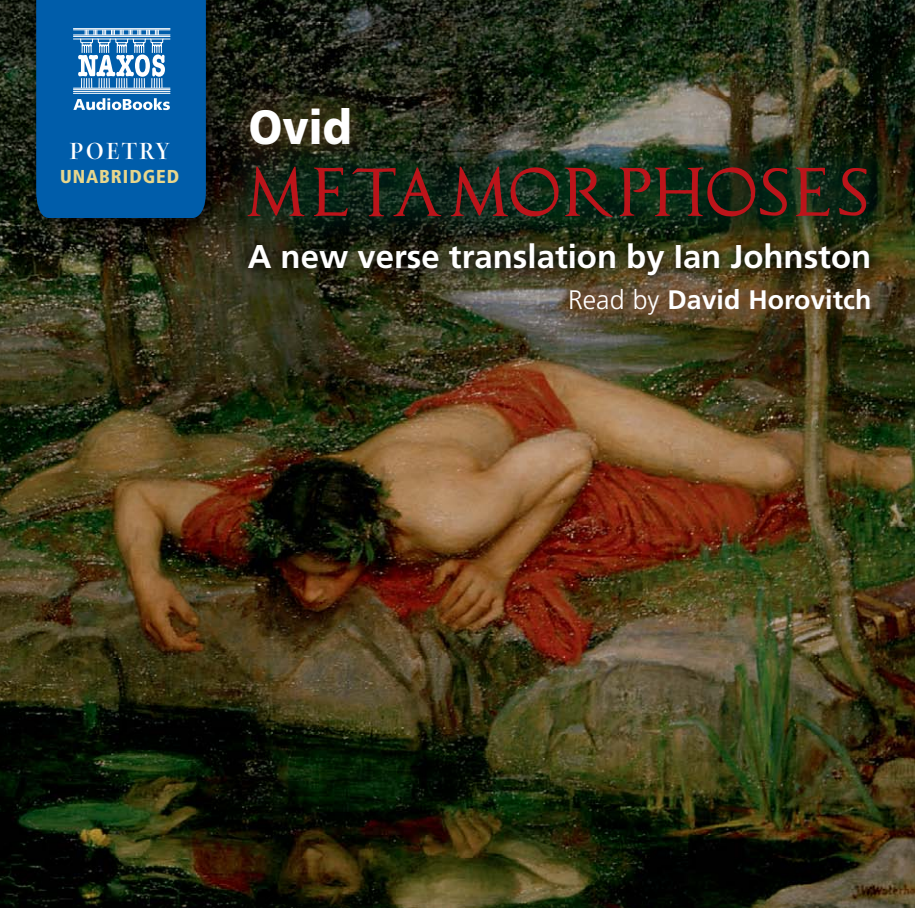
POETRY
UNABRIDGED

Ovid

METAMORPHOSES

A new verse translation by Ian Johnston

Read by David Horovitch



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3	Formation of the Earth	0:54
4	Regions of Earth	0:57
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16	Triton	1:02
17	Creation of New Human Life	6:04
18	Creation of Other Life	1:47
19	Apollo and Pytho	1:15
20	Apollo and Daphne	10:58

21	Inachus and Io	1:51
22	Jupiter and Io	1:11
23	Juno, Jupiter and Io	2:01
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36	Daughters of the Sun	2:08
37	Cycnus	1:17
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40	Diana and Callisto	2:13

41	Juno and Callisto	2:47
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44	The Raven and the Crow	1:34
45	The Crow and Minerva	4:24
46	Apollo and Coronis	3:17
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49	Mercury and Herse	4:26
50	Minerva and Envy	4:45
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103	Ceres and Cyane	1:09
104	Ceres and Sicily	0:54
105	Ceres and Arethusa	2:14
106	Ceres and Jupiter	2:32
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109	Arethusa and Alpheus	6:21
110	Triptolemus and Lyncus	3:13
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113	Arachne's Weaving	3:58
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130	Medea's Incantation	5:12
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144	The Myrmidons	3:44
145	Cephalus and Procris	3:12
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148	Cephalus, Aura and Procris	6:27
149	Book 8: Nisus and Scylla	1:45
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151	Scylla and Nisus's Hair	1:10
152	Minos and Scylla	5:07
153	Minos and the Minotaur	0:35
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155	Theseus and Ariadne	1:05
156	Daedalus and Icarus	4:37
157	Daedalus and Perdix	2:05
158	Theseus	0:31
159	The Calydonian Boar	2:32
160	The Boar Hunt	11:12

161	Plexippus and Toxeus	1:08
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163	Sisters of Meleager	1:08
164	Theseus and Achelous	2:18
165	The Echinades	1:22
166	Achelous and Perimele	2:36
167	Philemon and Baucis	9:46
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183	Themis's Prophecy	1:32
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185	Byblis and Caunus	10:13
186	Her hand wrote out these ineffectual words...	8:24
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188	Io and Telethusa	1:52
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190	Iphis and Ianthe	8:02
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198	Apollo and Hyacinthus	4:58
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201	Pygmalion	5:03
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218	Peleus and Ceyx	2:05
219	Daedalion	2:39
220	Diana and Chione	1:05

221	Daedalion and Apollo	1:57
222	Peleus and Psamathe	5:00
223	Ceyx and Alcyone	5:27
224	Storm at Sea	8:17
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229	Morpheus and Alcyone	10:04
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236	Cycnus and Achilles	8:25
237	Caeneus and Caenis	1:35
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245	Hercules and Nestor	1:39
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247	Neptune and Apollo	1:32
248	Apollo and Achilles	2:22
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251	Ulysses Makes his Case	13:32
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253	Ajax Kills Himself	1:29
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255	Troy is Destroyed	0:33
256	Astyanax	0:34
257	Hecuba	0:37
258	Polydorus and Polymestor	0:53
259	Achilles and Polyxena	4:21
260	Hecuba Laments	2:47

261	Book 13 ctd	2:06
262	Hecuba and Polymestor	3:34
263	Aurora and Memnon	2:05
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265	The Voyages of Aeneas	1:52
266	The Daughters of Anius	2:55
267	Anius's Wine Bowl	2:19
268	Aeneas's Voyage Continues	1:40
269	Aeneas Reaches Sicily	1:14
270	Acis and Galatea	0:55
271	Polyphemus in Love	1:37
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273	Polyphemus's Love Song	10:53
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275	Book 14: Glaucus and Circe	6:13
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279	Aeneas in the Underworld	1:21
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286	Circe and Picus	6:04
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320	Numa As King	0:40

321	Egeria	0:26
322	Hippolytus	3:27
323	Hippolytus and Diana	1:44
324	Tages	0:38
325	Romulus's Spear	0:26
326	Cipus	4:55
327	Aesculapius	10:17
328	Julius Caesar	2:58
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330	Jupiter and Venus	1:18
331	Achievements of Augustus	2:09
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Total time: 17:32:07

Ovid

(43 BC–AD 17)

METAMORPHOSES

The *Metamorphoses* by Publius Ovidius Naso has, over the centuries, been one of the most accessible and influential works from our classical past. This extraordinary collection of Greek and Roman myths and folk tales has always been a popular favourite and has decisively shaped Western art and literature from the moment it was completed in AD 8.

Ovid's stories, about 250 in all, begin with the creation of the world and end with a tribute to Augustus Caesar, the poet's contemporary, moving from famous early myths to fabulous divine or semi-divine heroic characters and well known figures from traditional tales, then to the great historical saga of Troy, the wanderings of Aeneas and Ulysses, up to the recent history of Rome. Most of the stories involve miraculous and dramatically arresting transformations, in which a living being is changed into something

else or is physically altered in some way, often as a result of intense suffering, or in which inanimate objects become living creatures.

The work has always been one of our principal sources of classical stories and hence an invaluable resource for later poets, painters, playwrights and storytellers, from countless medieval and renaissance artists (including Shakespeare) to modern Broadway producers. But the popularity and influence of the poem rest on a great deal more than the outlines of the tales. For Ovid has a brilliant style, which transforms what might otherwise be a mere catalogue of stories into a seamless, forward-driving, and endlessly diverting totality.

Ovid is famous for his skill in creating transitions from one story to the next, often by having a character in one story move onto something new in the next,

or by following someone's reaction to a story. He will frequently arrange stories in groups as part of an ongoing conversation or contest, or a series of stories within a story. As a result, the poem never flags or develops a stop-start rhythm but is always urging the reader or listener forward in one continuous narrative.

Ovid also likes to anchor his stories in the passionate emotions of the gods or of human individuals, so that the actions arise out of familiar and powerful feelings. The poem is justly famous for its set speeches, especially those of a young girl in love for the first time and caught up in passions which she knows she should resist but cannot, invariably with disastrous results. The psychological complexities many of the characters reveal in their self-examinations are fascinating. The formal speeches, too, like those between Ajax and Ulysses and the long speech of Pythagoras, or Medea's famous incantation, bring these characters to life and have helped to define them for hundreds of years. This intensely dramatic quality allows us to feel the stories much more immediately, so that

we can make up our own minds, rather than having to listen to the judgment of the narrator. The speeches also bring out evocatively the harsh cruelty of many of the transformations, which are usually the final stage of intense suffering.

Ovid is famous, too, for his visual imagination, which ranges from cosily erotic and often humorous details, to graphic depictions of natural disasters, like storms at sea, catastrophic floods or plagues, to an almost grotesque treatment of battle wounds and mutilations. Given the imaginative quality of these images, it is no accident that the poem has had such a major influence on the history of Western art.

But the most famous, complex, and contested aspect of Ovid's poem is the narrator's attitude to his own stories. The speaker (who clearly identifies himself as the poet) repeatedly calls attention to the absurdity of the fictions he is creating and mocks the credulity of people who believe them. In many places Ovid pushes the descriptive details to such an extreme that one gets a sense he may be satirising his own stories and also earlier works

which have dealt with similar events, simultaneously paying a tribute to a famous predecessor and gently satirising him. It is as if he is inviting us to enjoy the poem but not to take it all that seriously.

Now, this is a risky business. After all, if the narrator is constantly threatening to pull the carpet out from under his own fiction, there is a real danger that the reader might simply lose interest or get confused. But Ovid negotiates this difficulty with consummate skill: he delights us with his stories and, at the same time, constantly mocks the notion, directly and indirectly, that they offer a significant insight into anything. The technique has the effect of driving something of a wedge between the style and the content and invites us to admire the amazing skill with which the poet can create such a remarkable work, so much so that, in a very real sense, the poet's skill, his extraordinary verbal 'wit', is one of the central attractions of the poem, constantly on display.

Unlike the works of the great epic poets he is drawing on, Ovid's poem does not invite us to treat the stories, individually or collectively, as presenting

anything we might consider a vision of life. They matter as stories, for they provide him with an opportunity to display his poetical skill, but they do not put pressure on us to think about anything beyond this literary concern. That, indeed, may be one key to his popularity, for Ovid's attitude to his myths neutralises any threat they might pose to a rival system of belief. Some of those who demand that a poet should strive for a high moral seriousness have deplored this aspect of Ovid's style, citing his inappropriately sly tone or the pleasure he takes in rhetorical excess. Others, more sensitive to the delights of poetry, have always considered Ovid a poet's poet, someone we read in order to surrender ourselves to the sheer pleasures of delightful fiction for its own sake. That, as Ovid seems to have sensed, is the key to his enduring popularity: in a world of constant change, his closing lines proclaim, emperors may come and go, but his brilliant work will always remain.

Notes by Ian Johnston



David Horovitch has had a long and distinguished career. His appearances in the theatre include many in the West End, the National Theatre and the RSC. Most recently he has appeared in Mike Leigh's *Grief* at the National Theatre. On television he is best remembered for his performance as Inspector Slack in *Miss Marple* and his films include *Max* and the Oscar nominated *Solomon and Gaenor*. For Naxos AudioBooks his readings include *The Leopard*, *The Good Soldier Švejk* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Credits

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited and mastered by Sarah Butcher

A new verse translation by Ian Johnston

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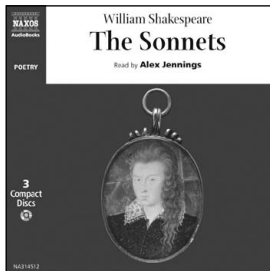
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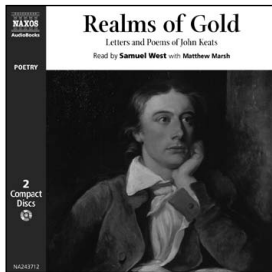
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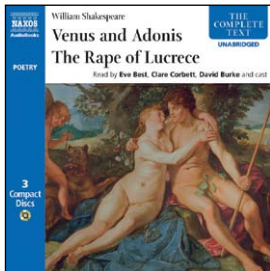
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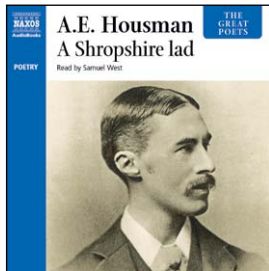
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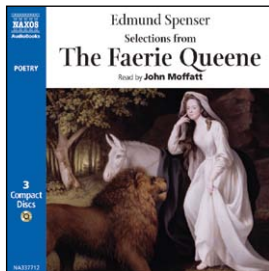
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Ovid

METAMORPHOSES

A new verse translation by Ian Johnston

Read by **David Horovitch**

The *Metamorphoses*, by Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC–AD 17) has, over the centuries, been the most popular and influential work from our classical tradition. This extraordinary collection of some 250 Greek and Roman myths and folk tales has always been a popular favourite and has decisively shaped western art and literature from the moment it was completed in AD 8. The stories are particularly vivid when read by David Horovitch in this new lively verse translation by Ian Johnston.



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