

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Oscar Wilde
Lord Arthur Savile's Crime
and Other Stories

Read by **Rupert Degas, David Timson** and **Anthony Donovan**



NA488312D

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime read by Rupert Degas

1	Chapter 1	6:39
2	'Dear Gladys, I really don't think...'	8:14
3	Suddenly Mr Podgers dropped Lord Arthur's right hand...	7:45
4	Chapter 2	6:35
5	Chapter 3	7:26
6	On his way to the Buckingham...	8:40
7	Chapter 4	6:06
8	Chapter 5	6:56
9	Lord Arthur's face brightened up...	8:20
10	When he got upstairs...	7:10
11	Chapter 6	3:28

The Canterville Ghost read by Rupert Degas

12	Chapter 1	5:06
13	As Canterville Chase is seven miles...	5:01
14	Chapter 2	7:42
15	Chapter 3	7:49
16	At half-past ten...	6:41
17	Chapter 4	4:56
18	He now gave up all hope...	5:34
19	Chapter 5	6:16
20	Virginia grew quite grave...	5:36
21	Chapter 6	8:48
22	Chapter 7	4:25
23	Lord Canterville listened...	5:44

	The Portrait of Mr W. H. read by David Timson	
24	Chapter 1	6:35
25	'Well,' said Erskine, lighting a cigarette...	5:39
26	'He began by pointing out that the young man...'	5:42
27	'Having in this manner cleared the way...'	6:01
28	'It was a wonderful evening...'	7:09
29	'High words passed between us...'	5:35
30	Chapter 2	5:45
31	Some scholars have supposed...	6:34
32	For two weeks I worked hard at the Sonnets...	7:17
33	Once I thought that I had really found Willie Hughes...	6:17
34	Chapter 3	5:10
35	We argued the matter over for hours...	5:53

	The Model Millionaire read by Rupert Degas	
36	Unless one is wealthy...	6:26
37	That night he strolled into the Palette Club...	6:27
	The Sphinx Without a Secret – An Etching read by Rupert Degas	
38	One afternoon I was sitting outside the Café de la Paix...	6:52
39	'All through the season I saw a great deal of her...'	6:41
	The Birthday of the Infanta read by Anthony Donovan	
40	It was the birthday of the Infanta.	10:58
41	It certainly was a marvellous bull-fight...	8:22
42	But the funniest part...	9:05
43	The flowers, however...	7:51
44	It was a throne-room...	11:14

Total time: 4:58:57

Oscar Wilde

(1854–1900)

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories

Oscar Wilde was a multi-faceted writer, one who could compose poems, essays, short fiction, novels and plays with equal skill. He turned to journalism in the mid-1880s to support his young family, but published his first collection of short stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, in 1888. It was received fairly well, despite Wilde's difficulty in placing it with a publisher. A reader at Macmillan had described the stories as 'pretty' but lacking 'any striking imaginative brilliance'. The collection was in the end published by a minor and less reputable firm.

Wilde – financially insecure – had previously built up his reputation and image by making himself known to the rich and powerful in London Society, becoming a 'media personality'. After much time and effort, however, he began

to be taken seriously as a writer, and in 1891 he achieved literary success when four of his books (all collections of revised, earlier material) were published in the same year. These included *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* (the title story of which had first been published in 1887) and *A House of Pomegranates*. Wilde nonetheless would become better known as a dramatist, and in 1892, with the first production of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, he achieved true fame.

Drama was a natural medium through which Wilde could express his ideas and opinions due to its direct and immediate form. He enjoyed getting reactions from the public – and what better way than through theatre? Audiences responded well to his distinctive and parodic style, which contained echoes of 17th- and 18th-

century English comedy. His unique voice, present in all his plays, only increased his popularity – there was nothing else like it.

However, as befalls many celebrities today, Wilde's success came to a sudden and shocking end following scandal. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was halted during its run as a result of Wilde's trials and imprisonment on charges of homosexual conduct. With his fame having been transformed into notoriety, Wilde died in 1900, poor and secluded.

It is a sad end considering how highly Wilde is regarded today. The Macmillan reader's view is typical of the reception given to Wilde's short fiction work during his lifetime, and yet these works are now considered some of the most popular of late 19th-century fiction. There is much more to them stylistically and psychologically than Wilde was given credit for. Within this collection of stories he experiments with various genres and forms, as well as the use of parody, paradox and melodrama. These devices can amuse or shock, depending on the manner of their use and the response Wilde sought. And time and again he

revisits themes such as art versus life, innocence versus sin, truth versus lies and love versus desire. Raising these universal questions with regard to life, society and morality makes these stories widely accessible and appealing, while adding to them layers and depth.

The title story of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* parodies detective and sensation fiction. Lord Arthur is told by a palmist that he will commit a murder. After his initial shock, Lord Arthur decides that he will fulfil his destiny – but before he is due to be married. Humorously, he fails in various attempts, and the conclusion is rather ironic. *The Sphinx without a Secret* concerns the enemy of all relationships: mistrust. The main character discovers that the object of his desire visits a room regularly, and naturally assumes that she is having an affair. But things are not as they seem, and the story comes to a melancholy end. *The Canterville Ghost* is more light-hearted. In several comic incidents, a ghost tries (but fails) to frighten the new tenants of Canterville Chase. The tale becomes poignant, however, as the ghost finds himself without a reason for being.

The Portrait of Mr W.H. is an intriguing tale in which a man called Cyril Graham believes that he has discovered the true identity of the individual to whom Shakespeare's Sonnets were dedicated. His friend Erskine gets drawn into this convincing theory, especially when a third man to whom he has told the story finds more evidence to back it up. It is an obsessive passion, to the detriment of both Cyril and Erskine. Beneath this story there lie coded hints to Wilde's representation of male homosexual desire.

The main theme in *The Portrait of Mr W.H.* is deception and forgery. The ability to sustain falsehoods is also represented in *The Sphinx without a Secret*, in which a woman only appears to live a double-life, as well as in *The Model Millionaire*, which concerns a millionaire wishing to be painted as a pauper. All three stories are reminders of Wilde's own need to lead a double-life.

The final story, *The Birthday of the Infanta*, comes from *A House of Pomegranates*. Including it in this audiobook is appropriate, however, since its contrasting of an ugly dwarf with a

beautiful princess illustrates another of Wilde's common themes – of aesthetics, of the nature of beauty and of beauty's relationship to life and its morals. The dwarf's love for the Infanta can never be realised within the society in which he finds himself; Wilde shows how this would have been seen as quite ridiculous. The court's ignorance that the dwarf is also a human possessing feelings ominously foretells Wilde's ultimate rejection by society for his (then) unacceptable inclinations.

Wilde's works of fiction are not merely trifling stories, comedies or simple fairy tales. They are enticing and enigmatic, with a subversive edge. As well as having the distinctive voice of his plays, the stories reveal the development of Wilde's literary style. Further, they give insight into Wilde's personality, his opinions about society, and his handling of his feelings. His fiction works may not have had the intended impact at the time, but today their importance is understood and they are as important a part of Wilde's output as his inspiring novels and famous plays.

Notes by Chloé Harmsworth



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed four Shakespeare plays for Naxos AudioBooks, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon.



Rupert Degas, a versatile and charismatic audiobook reader, has read a substantial list of books for Naxos AudioBooks, notably Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* and *Dance Dance Dance*, Kafka's *The Trial*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Rose Tremain's *Restoration*. He is in considerable demand as a voice for cartoons, and is the voice of Pantalaimon in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, but is also regularly seen in London's West End in plays as varied as *Stones in his Pockets* and *The 39 Steps*.



Anthony Donovan has toured the UK extensively, appearing in works by playwrights as varied as Marlowe, Pinter and Willy Russell. He has been heard as the voice of Joseph Conrad in the BBC Radio production of *The Black Heart* and his film credits include *Keeper* and *Utz*.

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue:

ROSSINI SONATAS FOR STRINGS NOS. 4–6 Hungarian Virtuosi; Tamas Benedek, conductor	8.554419
DELIBES COPPELIA (COMPLETE BALLET) / LA SOURCE SUITES Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra; Andrew Mogrelia, conductor	8.553357
BUSONI PIANO MUSIC, VOL. 3 Wolf Harden, piano	8.570249
BUSONI PIANO MUSIC, VOL. 2 Wolf Harden, piano	8.555699
MUSIC OF THE SPANISH RENAISSANCE Shirley Rumsey, lute	8.550614

Music programming by Mike Shah

Credits

**Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, The Portrait of Mr W. H., The Model Millionaire
and The Sphinx Without a Secret – An Etching:**

Produced by David Timson

Edited by Mike Shah

The Canterville Ghost:

Produced by Roy McMillan

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited by Mike Shah

The Birthday of the Infanta:

Produced by Andrew Lyle

Post production: Simon Weir, The Classical Recording Company

Engineer (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Cassettes

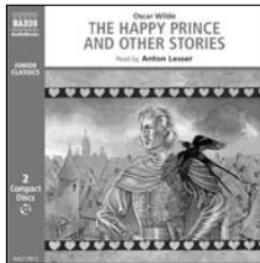
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(Wilde) ISBN: 9789626349915
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(Wilde) ISBN: 9789626341391
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Oscar Wilde

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories

The Canterville Ghost • The Portrait of Mr W. H. • The Model Millionaire
The Sphinx Without a Secret • The Birthday of the Infanta

Read by **Rupert Degas, David Timson** and **Anthony Donovan**

A palmist's prediction leads to murder; an enigmatic woman's lifestyle is a mystery to be solved; a ghost tries to frighten the new tenants of his home; a man has discovered the dedicatee of Shakespeare's Sonnets; a millionaire wants to be painted as a pauper.

This is a collection of fascinating short stories which are subversive as well as entertaining. Also included in this audiobook is *The Birthday of the Infanta* from *A House of Pomegranates*. An ugly dwarf loves a beautiful princess, but how will his feelings fare in a cruel society?

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Produced by
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Andrew Lyle

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FICTION
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Total time
4:58:57