

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Horace Walpole
The Castle of Otranto

Read by **Neville Jason**



NA237912D

1	A Mysterious Death	6:22
2	Matilda rejected by her father	8:58
3	Isabella's desperate search for the secret passage	6:17
4	Manfred interrogates the young peasant	11:04
5	Manfred plots his freedom	8:12
6	Matilda and the young peasant converse	4:50
7	Father Jerome intervenes	8:05
8	A family resemblance?	8:01
9	A worried Manfred exercises his power	7:01
10	The strange knight arrives	6:59
11	Manfred entertains his visitors	7:41
12	Matilda goes to the black tower	5:25
13	Isabella and Theodore meet again	8:46
14	Frederic tells his story	8:13
15	Theodore tells his story	9:25
16	Manfred's plans revealed	9:47
17	Hippolita agrees	8:15
18	Frederic, following his passion, receives a shock	13:17
19	A warning to future tyrants	6:32

Total time: 2:33:31

Horace Walpole

The Castle of Otranto

Horace Walpole was born in 1717, four years before his father, Sir Robert Walpole, became Prime Minister. He himself was an M.P. from 1741 to 1768. He died in 1797.

In 1747, Walpole leased a small house he called Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, near London. Two years later he bought it and began remodelling it as a 'little Gothic castle,' later adding a cloister, gallery and tower.

In 1757, Walpole set up a printing press at Strawberry Hill, publishing his own *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors* (1758) and *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-1771) as well as a dramatic tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*, in 1768. In 1785, Walpole published *Hieroglyphic Tales*.

Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* between June and August of 1764. He tried to pass it off as an actual translation, from the original Italian, of a medieval text written by 'Onuphrio Muralto'. The first edition of five hundred copies soon sold out, and Walpole admitted, in the second edition published the following year, that the work

was his own. The book has rarely, if ever, been out of print since.

The Castle of Otranto is often called the first Gothic novel. It contains almost all the classic elements: a foreign setting, walking skeleton, haunted castle, long-lost child identified by his birthmark, ominous threats and events leading to a dénouement that seems unavoidable because it is the logical conclusion of all the converging, providential actions in the plot.

The Castle of Otranto wonderfully combines the inner turmoils of a most demonic villain – one can almost see the toasting-fork tail under his fine clothes – a valiant hero, whose strength lies in his innocent willingness to go along with his fate; ineffectual, well-meaning friars, a psychic hermit and virtuous maidens.

All the internal struggles are played out against the most dramatic landscape of snaking dungeon passages, lightning-struck battlements, thick woods and huge supernatural coats of armour waving giant black plumes at castle windows.

The inner and outer aspects of the story are so perfectly matched that it is hard to know which is having most effect and driving the plot. There is, for the listener, a satisfying inevitability that gathers force as the story unrolls, that comes from being caught up in something much larger than the mere mortal. This illuminates the action as dramatically as lightning hits the castle, and makes it as fresh and thrilling today as when it was first devised.

The Gothic novel has been extensively parodied. Here is the real thing – larger-than-life emotions that have a power and intensity overwhelmingly their own.

Notes by Lesley Young

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

TANEYEV SYMPHONIES NOS 2 & 4 Polish State Philharmonic Orchestra (Katowice)/Stephen Gunzenhauser	8.223196
BERLIOZ SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE CSR Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)/Pinchas Steinberg	8.550093
TCHAIKOVSKY THE TEMPEST (FANTASIAS AFTER SHAKESPEARE) Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice)/Antoni Wit	8.553017
TCHAIKOVSKY MANFRED SYMPHONY CSR Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)/Ondrej Lenard	8.550224

Music Programming by Sarah Butcher

Cover picture: *Emblems of Death*, German School (16th Century).
By courtesy Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library

Horace Walpole The Castle of Otranto

Read by **Neville Jason**

The Castle of Otranto is regarded as the first Gothic novel. The son of Manfred, Prince of Otranto, is mysteriously killed on his wedding day by a huge helmet. The event leads to a fast-paced story of jealous passion, intrigue, murder and supernatural phenomena unfolding in an atmosphere of thunderclaps, moonlight, and dark castle walls – mirroring the inner turmoils of the characters themselves. Horace Walpole's tale, an immediate success when it first appeared in 1764, is a classic of its genre.



Neville Jason trained at RADA and has appeared with the English Stage Company, the Old Vic Company and the RSC, as well as with repertory theatres and in West End musicals. His many television roles include Lapointe in *Maigret*, Horatio in *Hamlet* and Prince Reynart in *Dr. Who*. Formerly a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he is frequently to be heard in radio plays and readings. Neville Jason also reads *War and Peace* for Naxos AudioBooks.

CD ISBN:
978-962-634-379-1

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