

THE DECAMERON BOCCACCIO

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**Full cast recording with
Simon Russell Beale as Boccaccio**

The Decameron is one of the greatest literary works of the Middle Ages. Ten young people have fled the terrible effects of the Black Death in Florence and, in an idyllic setting, tell a series of brilliant stories, by turns humorous, bawdy, tragic and provocative. This celebration of physical and sexual vitality is Boccaccio's answer to the sublime other-worldliness of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Cast

Simon Russell Beale Boccaccio

Daisy Badger Neiphile

Carly Bawden Philomena

Lucy Briggs-Owen Elissa

Gunnar Cauthery Pamphilo

Alison Pettitt Emilia/Licisca

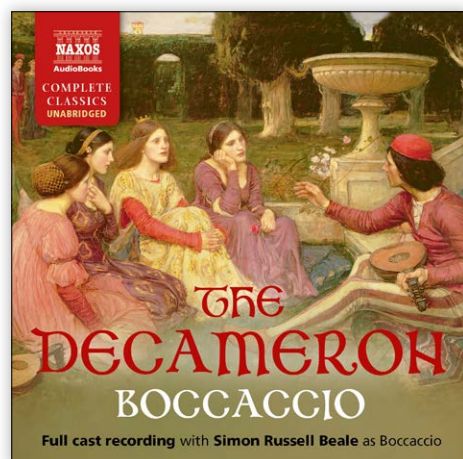
Nigel Pilkington Dioneo

Katie Scarfe Pampinea

Natalie Simpson Fiammetta

Flora Spencer-Longhurst Lauretta



David Sturzaker Philostrato



































































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		The Decameron	8:45		
		1 1-1			
		2 1-2	The era of the fruitful Incarnation of the Son...		
		3 1-3	It had been the custom...		
		4 1-4	There is no offence in putting one's brain...		
		5 1-5	Pampinea is absolutely right in what she says...		
		6 1-6	Thus dismissed by their new queen...		
		7 1-7	Finding himself without employment...		
		8 2-1	'Then tell me, my son...'		
		9 2-2	With this he fell silent.		
		10 2-3	When Philomena left off speaking...		
		11 2-4	The ladies listened with a tinge...		
		12 2-5	The queen and all the company...		
		13 2-6	Next to Philostrato sat Lauretta.		
		14 3-1	The sun was beginning to set...		
		15 3-2	How often has it happened that those...		
		16 3-3	Neiphile's account of the misfortunes...		
		17 3-4	The perils encountered by Rinaldo d'Este...		
		18 3-5	Seeing that this could be done without...		
			10:01		



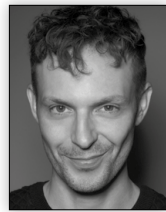
37	7-1	There are scores of men, and women too...	15:17
38	7-2	Philostrato's story made the ladies laugh...	12:18
39	7-3	When Pampinea finished speaking...	10:49
40	7-4	This said, she drew out from beneath her long...	9:47
41	7-5	When Philomena fell silent on finishing her tale...	11:48
42	7-6	Pamphilo concluded his tale of Brother Puccio...	11:46
43	8-1	Elissa had nothing left to say...	9:04
44	8-2	Having given Ricciardo's words more credence...	9:49
45	8-3	Fiammetta fell silent amid a chorus of praise...	12:49
46	8-4	'Now I'll have you know that I am a friar...'	12:50
47	8-5	He put on his hat and pilgrim's smock again...	12:53
48	8-6	Emilia's story reached its conclusion.	13:31
49	9-1	When he had finished eating...	6:51
50	9-2	If she was not to infringe Dioneo's privilege...	10:03
51	9-3	She bade them goodbye...	10:11
52	9-4	Dioneo had closely followed the queen's narrative.	12:15
53	9-5	Time and again the good ladies...	15:32
54	9-6	But that's as far as I want to take this story...	17:51
55	10-1	As she listened to her father...	14:34
56	10-2	Fiammetta's story had several times...	13:33
57	10-3	After lunch Lisetta, with a companion...	9:56
58	10-4	Hearing the end of Pampinea's story...	13:37
59	10-5	Lauretta concluded her story and fell silent...	10:59
60	10-6	Elissa finished her tale.	8:40
61	11-1	The ladies found Philomena's tale enormously...	15:48
62	11-2	When Pamphilo had delivered himself of his story...	9:01
63	11-3	Emilia's story reached its conclusion...	12:16
64	11-4	So ended Neiphile's story...	7:39
65	11-5	As the king had completed his tale...	14:25
66	11-6	Shortly afterwards the maid...	14:14
67	12-1	Here ends the fourth day of the Decameron...	13:49
68	12-2	So Cimone returned to his shipmates...	13:35
69	12-3	The queen spoke highly of Pamphilo's story...	14:12
70	12-4	Emilia's story was unanimously approved.	14:32
71	12-5	Elissa finished her tale and listened...	12:48
72	13-1	The story of the nightingale had sent...	12:11
73	13-2	The ladies had so much enjoyed Neiphile's story...	13:46
74	13-3	The ladies were all on tenterhooks...	14:49
75	13-4	As Lauretta finished, Philomena, at the queen's...	12:47
76	13-5	When Philomena finished speaking...	14:35
77	14-1	The queen concluded her tale...	8:27
78	14-2	The young wife, therefore, reached an...	12:33
79	14-3	Amused though they were by Dioneo's tale...	9:01
80	14-4	While Liscia was talking the women...	12:40
81	14-5	When Pampinea finished her tale...	12:47
82	14-6	The ladies were still chuckling over Giotto's...	11:04
83	14-7	Philostrato's story made the ladies...	7:23
84	15-1	Each one of the party had told a story...	10:46
85	15-2	Those simple folk, men and women...	12:38
86	15-3	Now certain of the ladies felt that this topic...	14:35
87	15-4	Had it been your pleasure, my lord...	10:00
88	15-5	Emilia's tale was greeted with boisterous...	8:57
89	15-6	Philostrato could not disguise his allusion...	10:37



90	16-1	When he heard the end of Elissa's story...	7:45
91	16-2	Lauretta ended her tale...	13:17
92	16-3	Well, what am I to say?	12:09
93	16-4	The entire company agreed that Isabella's...	12:33
94	16-5	It was generally agreed that Beatrice...	8:07
95	16-6	Arriguccio left his house and went as fast...	9:18
96	17-1	The ladies had so much enjoyed Neiphile's story...	11:29
97	17-2	Now a few days after killing the hawk...	10:58
98	17-3	Only the king was left to tell a tale...	9:02
99	17-4	Zephyr, the West Wind, got up as the afternoon...	13:32
100	17-5	Everyone, lads and lasses alike...	12:11
101	17-6	The ladies laughed so much at Pamphilo's tale...	16:35
102	18-1	When Elissa reached the end of her story...	11:24
103	18-2	Emilia came to the end of her story...	6:44
104	18-3	No sooner was Philostrato's tale finished...	12:11
105	18-4	Poor Calandrino, how the ladies laughed at him!	13:52
106	18-5	After a long, long time the night gave place...	13:50
107	18-6	After sunrise, Elena approached the wall...	13:59
108	19-1	Seeing that his drift tended entirely towards...	15:39
109	19-2	The ladies found it painful to listen...	9:56
110	19-3	The pooling of wives, as practised by the two...	15:07
111	19-4	'Speak freely: I see you still don't know me all...'	16:05
112	19-5	There is no need to ask how much laughter...	16:10
113	20-1	Once Jancofiore was in possession of the money...	12:32
114	20-2	When Dioneo concluded his tale...	8:34
115	20-3	How pleased I am, my lady...	12:03
116	20-4	Philomena fell silent.	15:42
117	20-5	The things Calandrino said about his wife...	9:50
118	20-6	Neiphile finished her tale...	11:03
119	21-1	Calandrino spent the entire evening...	6:41
120	21-2	The party had derived amusement...	10:32
121	21-3	When Pamphilo's story was ended...	11:59
122	21-4	It remained only for the queen to tell a story...	11:22
123	21-5	The tale of the queen's had the ladies...	8:40
124	21-6	Dioneo wished that the ladies in his audience...	13:55
125	22-1	Everyone applauded the generosity...	10:30
126	22-2	Great, indeed, was the liberality of the King...	16:02
127	22-3	To be generous with one's own blood...	14:28
128	22-4	The entire merry throng, one and all...	10:49
129	22-5	Who could give a full account of the debate...	14:48
130	22-6	Fiammetta came to the end of her story...	7:42
131	23-1	These words Minuccio soon set to the soft...	9:39
132	23-2	When Pampinea finished...	14:13
133	23-3	Though Titus was embarrassed to accept...	11:14
134	23-4	'And so, looking at the matter reasonably...'	16:29
135	23-5	At the conclusion of Philomena's narrative...	11:37
136	23-6	The gentlemen were astounded...	9:24
137	24-1	Torello was over the moon when he heard this...	10:36
138	24-2	In accordance with his request...	9:32
139	24-3	It seems to me, my gentle ladies...	15:58
140	24-4	It took her a supreme effort...	12:02
141	24-5	Dioneo's story was ended...	5:55
142	24-6	They sang many more songs after that...	13:05



Simon Russell Beale is one of Britain's leading actors. He is an Associate Artist of the National Theatre and RSC, and has played starring roles for both companies, most recently *King Lear* at the National. Other theatre work includes plays at the Donmar and Almeida Theatres, and many West End productions, including *Humble Boy*, *Privates on Parade* and Harold Pinter's *The Hothouse*. For the BBC, he has presented *Sacred Music*, *Symphony* and *Monteverdi in Mantua*, and performed in *Legacy*, *Spooks* and *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, which won him a BAFTA for Best Supporting Actor. Simon has also filmed two series of *Penny Dreadful* for PD Film Productions. His films include *My Week with Marilyn*, and *The Deep Blue Sea* directed by Terence Davies.



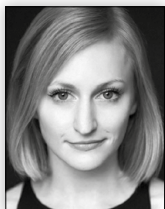
Nigel Pilkington's film credits include *The Brothers Grimm*, *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* and *Thomas & Friends: The Great Race*. His television credits include the animations *Peter Rabbit* (CBeebies), *The Jungle Book* (CBBC), *The Ha Ha Hairies* (Cartoonito), *Bottle Top Bill* (Channel 5), and *Teenage Fairytale Dropouts* (Telegael). He has also provided character voices for computer games, including *Final Fantasy XIV: Heavensward*, and is a regular on the London and Edinburgh comedy improvisation circuits.



Daisy Badger plays Pip in the British Institution that is Radio 4's *The Archers*. She played Claire Hillman in two series of ITV's *Home Fires* directed by Bruce Goodison. Daisy was nominated for Best Actress at the 2017 Manchester Theatre Awards for her performance as Alison in Sarah Bringham's version of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger* which began at Derby Playhouse and then went on to the Bolton Octagon. She graduated from LAMDA having played some fantastic roles such as Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Yelena in *Uncle Vanya* and The Duchess in *The Duchess Of Malfi* at LAMDA.



Katie Scarfe trained at LAMDA. Her theatre credits include *The Gathered Leaves* (Park Theatre), *Mercury Fur* (Trafalgar Studios) and *Season's Greetings* (Royal National Theatre). Television credits include *Emmerdale* (ITV) and *Holby City* (BBC). Radio credits include *A Little Twist of Dahl* and *Someone Like You* (BBC Radio 4). She has read over thirty audiobooks, including *Revelations of Divine Love* (Naxos AudioBooks), *Black Rabbit Hall* (Penguin Random House), *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (Faber) and *The Summer Queen* (Hachette).



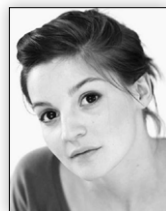
Carly Bawden's theatre credits include *wonder.land* (National Theatre), *McQueen* (Haymarket Theatre), *Assassins* (Menier Chocolate Factory), *My Fair Lady* (Sheffield Crucible), *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* (360 Theatre, Kensington), and various productions for Kneehigh Theatre. Her television work includes *Close to the Enemy* and *Doctors*, and her radio credits include *Journey in Red Shoes*, *The Colour of Milk*, *The Verb*, *Black Dirt*, *The House in the Trees* and *Glass Eels*.



Natalie Simpson is an Ian Charleson Award nominated actress. On stage she received rave reviews for her performance in the lead role in *The Cardinal* at The Southwark Playhouse. In 2016 she made her RSC debut as Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Guiderius in *Cymbeline* and Cordelia to Anthony Sher's Lear in *King Lear*. She graduated from LAMDA in July 2015 and went straight into playing Juliet in Joe Hill-Gibbons *Measure For Measure* at the Young Vic. Before going to drama school she filmed a lead role in feature film *Tula: The Revolt*.



Lucy Briggs-Owen is from Bristol and trained at the Drama Centre. Her stage work includes performances at the Old Vic, Menier Chocolate Factory and West End. For her performance in *The Night Watch* at Manchester Royal Exchange, the *Guardian* singled out Lucy's performance as 'suave, sexually confident' and the *Independent* said Lucy has 'a fiery flamboyance'. Her screen credits include *Doc Martin*, *Siblings* and *Midsomer Murders*.



Flora Spencer-Longhurst's television credits include *Wallander*, *The Bastard Executioner*, *Inspector Lewis* and the CBBC series *Leonardo*. She won Best Supporting Actress at the Fort Lauderdale Film Festival for her motion picture debut *Walking with the Enemy*, which saw her work alongside Ben Kingsley. She has many stage credits to her name, including *Once* (Phoenix Theatre), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Theatre Royal, Windsor) and *Love's Labour's Won* (Royal Shakespeare Theatre).



Gunnar Cauthery trained at RADA. His recent theatre work includes *Little Shop of Horrors* at the Royal Exchange Theatre, *Wonderland* and *The Empty Quarter* at Hampstead Theatre and *Privacy* at the Donmar Warehouse. He has also appeared in *This House* and *The White Guard* at the National Theatre, and in Shakespeare productions with Propeller and Shakespeare's Globe. His television work includes *The Tudors*, *The Demon Headmaster* and *Just William*. Films include *War Horse* and *Benjamin Dove*.



David Sturzaker played Charles II opposite Gemma Arterton in *Nell Gwynn* in the West End. Prior to this he was in Jonathan Mumby's *The Merchant of Venice* at the Globe, opposite Jonathan Pryce, and Simon Godwins *Richard II*. He played Bracciano, the lead in Maria Aberg's *The White Devil* at the RSC, and Givola in Jonathan Church's *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* in the West End. David is currently a member of the BBC Radio Rep Company.



Alison Pettitt studied Biochemistry at University College London, and, after a spell of TIE (Theatre in Education), turned her attention towards acting. She has performed with the Radio Drama Company and has worked extensively in theatre and television. Her theatre performances include *The Glass Slipper* (Southwark), *As You Like It* (Creation Theatre), *The Nutcracker* (West Yorkshire Playhouse) and *Taking Steps* (Windsor and Sonning). Television includes *Threesome* for Big Talk Productions, *Poems from Other Cultures* for the BBC and *AS Guru* for BBC Education. Radio includes *Birdsong*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Smiley's People*, *I Claudius*, *Trilby* and *The Archers*.

THE DECAMERON BOCCACCIO

The Decameron is one of the greatest literary works of the late Middle Ages, and perhaps of all time. Its influence even within Boccaccio's own lifetime was immense, extending (for example) as far as Chaucer in England, and it was not long before his reputation rivalled that of his sublime predecessor in Italian vernacular writing, Dante himself: indeed, it is a critical commonplace to regard the *Decameron* as a kind of prose secular equivalent of the *Divina Commedia* – where Dante chose to set human life in the context of eternity, Boccaccio sought to celebrate the pleasures of this world.

The Decameron, as its name suggests, is a collection of one hundred prose tales, many of them only a few pages long but including a small number of more substantial and sometimes serious narratives. Boccaccio provides a framework for the telling of these tales by imagining a situation in which ten young people find themselves together for a period of ten days, and agree to pass the time by each recounting one story on each day. What lends this simple framing device such extraordinary power, however, is the context out of which this situation arises: Boccaccio had himself witnessed the terrifying effects of the Black Death on Florence, which it visited in 1348, and he begins *The Decameron* with a justly famous description of his city withering under the onslaught of the disease. The details are spelt out with a masterly blend of objective reportage and restrained compassion, and at the end of this introduction he brings in his seven young ladies. They meet in the church of Santa Maria Novella and agree to leave Florence for a stay in the countryside – itself not spared by the plague, but at least offering a change of air and a respite from the claustrophobic terrors of the city. By chance, three young men with whom the women are acquainted enter the church, and the women propose to them that they should join them on their rural sojourn. The plan meets with general approval, and so the mechanism of the narrative(s) is set in motion. One might note at this juncture the scrupulous care with which Boccaccio insists on the propriety of relations between the young people: this is particularly amusing when one considers the extreme, even obscene, directness of many of the tales told by these impeccably brought-up young people. This tension between seemliness and bawdiness creates a delightful *frisson* as the work unfolds.

When the young people arrive at the first of the idyllic places in which they stay – they move their residence twice more during the ten days – they agree to the story-telling scheme, and appoint a Queen or

King to direct them on each day. Each day, too, will have a theme to which the tellers must adhere – the theme for Day Three, for example, concerns 'people who, by virtue of their own efforts, have achieved an object they greatly desired, or have recovered a thing previously lost'.

Listeners will probably discover here tales that they are already familiar with in another form – lovers of Keats' work, for instance, will know the story of Isabella, or the Pot of Basil, and will find it here as the Fifth Tale of the Fourth Day. Chaucer uses in *The Canterbury Tales* the last story of *The Decameron* as The Clerk's Tale, while The Reeve's Tale is very similar to the Sixth Tale of the Ninth Day. We should not be surprised by this: throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance, writers were accustomed to reshaping other writers' material, or borrowing from the rich tradition of folk tales.

What Boccaccio's stories have in common is an extraordinary zest for life as it is lived on the physical level: morality is not exactly absent, but it almost always plays second fiddle to a joyous acceptance of life and appetite. Life is transitory and fragile, and had best be seized upon with gusto, ingenuity and humour. Boccaccio is also splendidly on the side of inherent quality rather than snobbish regard for class and 'breeding': one has only to listen to the First Tale of the Fourth Day, in which an incestuously jealous father has his daughter's supposedly 'inferior' lover put to death, to realise the energy with which Boccaccio exposes the cruel folly of judging our fellows by caste. Feminists will also be delighted by the feisty Madonna Filippa's brilliant and successful defence of a woman's sexual rights in the Seventh Tale of the Sixth Day. There is, then, something startlingly modern about *The Decameron*, even as it also paints a brilliantly vivid picture of late medieval life in Italy.

Giovanni Boccaccio was born in Florence in 1313. Well educated, he worked for a time for his father, a successful merchant, but his real love was literature. This he developed during his time in Naples. He returned to Florence in 1340, where he witnessed the horrors of the Black Death in 1348. He first met Petrarch in 1350, and became both his friend and, by his own admission, his disciple. Among his works other than *The Decameron* are: *Filostrato*, a treatment of the story of Troilus and Cressida; *Teseida*, a poem on the story of Theseus, Palamon and Arcite (see Chaucer's Knight's Tale); and the *Amorosa Visione*, an unfinished allegory. Boccaccio died in 1375.

Original Songs by Steven Edis

Additional music was taken from the NAXOS catalogue

Chominciamento di gioia: Virtuoso Dance-Music from the Time of Boccaccio's Decamerone
Ensemble Unicorn

8.553131

Total running time: 28:05:31 • 24 CDs

Translated by Guido Waldman

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios

Directed by John Foley

Song recordings produced by Michael Ponder

Edited and mastered by Andrew Riches

Executive Producer: Anthony Anderson

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Booklet and cover design: Hannah Whale, Fruition – Creative Concepts, using the image *The Decameron*, 1916 (oil on canvas), by John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), courtesy of AKG Images.

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CD catalogue no.: NA0278

CD ISBN: 978-1-78198-070-5

Digital catalogue no.: NA0278D

Digital ISBN: 978-1-78198-071-2

AMD120118