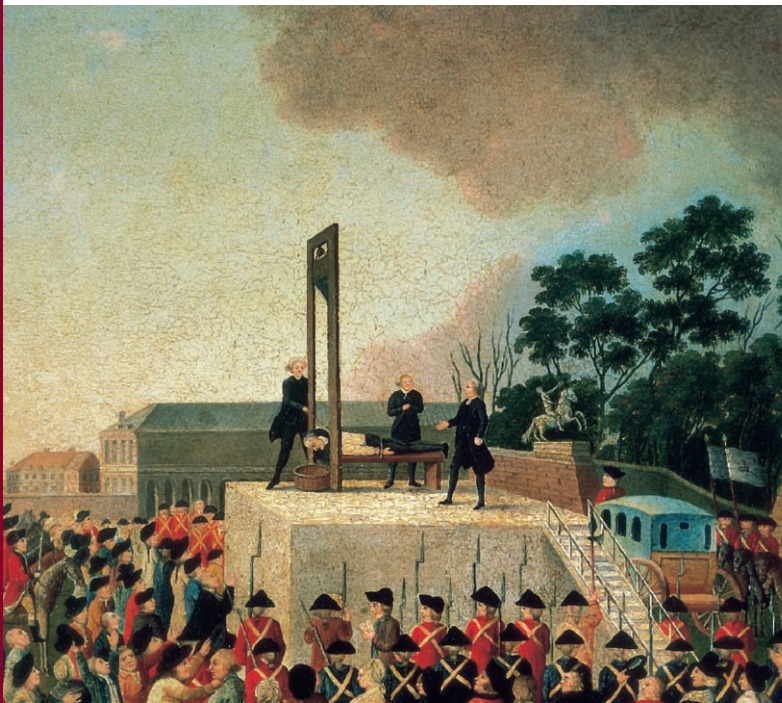


NAXOS
AudioBooks

Charles Dickens
A Tale of Two Cities

Read by **Anton Lesser**

CLASSIC
FICTION



NA305712D

BOOK THE FIRST – Recalled to Life

1	The Period	4:07
2	The Mail	4:28
3	The Grave	2:18
4	The Preparation	10:48
5	The Wine-shop	9:06
6	The Shoemaker	11:18

BOOK THE SECOND – The Golden Thread

7	Five Years Later	3:57
8	A Sight	4:14
9	A Disappointment	9:00
10	Congratulatory	5:13
11	The Jackal	5:49
12	Monseigneur in Town	8:12
13	Monseigneur in the Country	3:47
14	The Gorgon's Head	5:35
15	A Visit and a Declaration	4:27
16	A Fishing Trip	6:06
17	Resurrection – Man	1:22
18	Knitting	7:29
19	Nine Days	6:48
20	An Opinion	5:17
21	Echoing Footsteps	6:12
22	Fire Rises	4:34
23	Drawn to the Loadstone Rock	9:44

BOOK THE THIRD – The Track of a Storm

24	In Secret	5:48
25	The Grindstone	5:35
26	Calm in Storm	4:41
27	One Year and Three Months Later	3:59
28	Triumph	6:13
29	A Knock at the Door	2:45
30	A Hand at Cards	10:39
31	The Game Begun	5:37
32	The Game Made	2:38
33	The Denouncement	3:13
34	The Substance of the Shadow	7:26
35	Farewell	1:44
36	Darkness	7:59
37	Fifty-two	9:39
38	The Knitting Done	7:41
39	The Footsteps Die Out for Ever	6:06

Total time: 3:51:48

Charles Dickens

A Tale of Two Cities

A Tale of Two Cities, first published in 1859, is one of Dickens' later novels and has always been amongst his best-known and best-loved.

A highly dramatic setting switches between London and Paris as the French Revolution looms and finally breaks out. Each of the three 'books' into which the novel is divided is precisely located in time – 1775, 1780 and 1792.

Dickens is interested in the effect of great historical events on private lives. Charles Darnay, however liberal himself, cannot escape the consequences of his aristocratic French family's cruel oppression: he marries Lucie Manette, whose father, the Doctor, had been unjustly imprisoned in the Bastille by Charles' own father and uncle. Sydney Carton finds in the terrors of revolution his great opportunity for personal redemption: and even Jerry Cruncher (Dickens' only concession to popular humour in the novel) is given the chance to throw over his old grave-robbing trade and turn honest grave-digger.

Dickens is, of course, also interested in

the historical drama itself and had conscientiously prepared by reading Carlyle on the Revolution – but his attitude to it is interestingly ambivalent. On the one hand, his generously humane instincts lead him repeatedly to express his loathing for the tyranny of the *ancien regime*, and to show how the aristocrats reap as they have sown – yet, equally, he describes with fascinated revulsion the Parisian mob in full cry. Both philosophies horrify him: he acknowledges the grim inevitability of the Revolution, but by showing its effects on his characters he is able to pull the reader's emotions this way and that, to powerful effect. This 'doubleness' is perhaps best expressed in Carton and Darnay, the lookalikes; both love Lucie Manette, yet Carton is cynically self-loathing while Darnay is upright and noble. What is important for Dickens is the possibility of self-redemption: Carton wins from the tragic impact of the Revolution on the Darnays the chance to give meaning to his life – he is, in a sense, reborn.

This idea of rebirth of resurrection is the central idea of the novel. It resounds with

related images: at a simple level, Jerry Cruncher is a 'resurrection man', a grave-robbler who is himself reformed by the end; Dr Manette is 'recalled to life' by his daughter's selfless care, in an interesting role-reversal; while Sydney Carton, as he paces the dark streets of Paris and plans his last, great act, repeats to himself the haunting words, ' I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.'

We know Dickens as a reforming novelist, the scourge of Victorian humbug and materialism, but he has no blueprint for revolution: as underdog or victim, yet for Dickens 'revolution is a monster'. What he really demands from us is a simple increase in our capacity for plain loving kindness. At the end of this novel, he is able to reconcile the opposing forces – revolution and civilization – through the redemptive power of personal love, the 'holiness of the heart's affections'.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth. His father was imprisoned for debt and the twelve-year-old Charles sent to work in a blacking factory; these experiences influenced (for instance) **Little Dorrit** and **David Copperfield**. Having

learnt shorthand, he became a parliamentary reporter and began to submit magazine pieces. In 1837 **The Pickwick Papers** brought Dickens fame, and the rest of his literary career was almost uninterruptedly successful. His personal life was less happy; eventually he separated from his wife, Catherine, partly as a result of his growing intimacy with Ellen Ternan, the actress, and he died relatively young in 1870, his last novel, **The Mystery of Edwin Drood**, unfinished.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

FRANCK SYMPHONY IN D MINOR Royal Flanders Philharmonic/Günter Neuhold	8.550155
BERLIOZ OVERTURES – WAVERLEY etc. San Diego Symphony Orchestra, Yoav Talmi	8.550999

Cover picture: *Execution of Louis XVI, 21st January 1793*, by The Danish School
Courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library, London.

Charles Dickens

A Tale of Two Cities

Read by **Anton Lesser**

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'

A Tale of Two Cities, Dickens' only historical novel, sets personal happiness against the terrors of the French Revolution where the search for social justice sacrifices individual rights. Dr Manette has emerged from eighteen years' unjust imprisonment in the Bastille: by an ironic twist of fate, his daughter Lucie's marriage draws the family into a terrifying web of circumstance which, it seems, can only end in death by the guillotine...



Anton Lesser is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including *Petruchio*, *Romeo* and *Richard III*. His career has also encompassed contemporary drama, notably *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Oresteia*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Mill on the Floss*. He also reads Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* for Naxos AudioBooks.

*"It is hard to praise this production highly enough;
all the essence and atmosphere are here."*

THE GOOD BOOK GUIDE

CD ISBN:

978-962-634-057-8

View our catalogue online at
www.naxosaudiobooks.com



Abridged by Perry Keenlyside. Produced by Nicolas Soames
Post-production: Simon Weir. The Classical Recording
Company
Engineer (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Cassettes

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE,
BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THESE COMPACT DISCS PROHIBITED.
© 1995 NAXOS Audiobooks Ltd. © 1995 NAXOS Audiobooks Ltd.
Made in Germany.

Total time
3:51:48