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**NON-
FICTION**

BIOGRAPHY



Neville Jason
The Life
and Work of
**Marcel
Proust**

Read by
Neville Jason

NA325212D

1	Reynaldo Hahn sings Offrande, 1909	8:00
2	Three fictional creative artists:	6:52
3	Proust's episodes of 'involuntary memory'	3:53
4	The Franco-Prussian War	2:06
5	The birth of Marcel Proust, 10 January 1871	6:30
6	The goodnight kiss	11:47
7	Military service	5:50
8	The first short story	4:30
9	Influential drawing rooms	3:49
10	Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac	8:08
11	Reynaldo Hahn	13:43
12	Lucien Daudet	2:05
13	The Dreyfus Case	2:16
14	The Dreyfus Case (cont.)	3:53
15	Pleasures and Days	6:31
16	Jean Santeuil, the early, autobiographical novel	6:34
17	Anna de Noailles	3:30
18	Marcel Proust and John Ruskin	7:55
19	More work: Ruskin's The Bible of Amiens	5:01
20	The move to 102 Boulevard Haussmann	5:12

21	Time Lost, Time Regained, involuntary memory	5:35
22	Alfred Agostinelli	7:36
23	Sergei Diaghilev, Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso	9:20
24	Looking for a publisher	8:23
25	The manuscript is delivered to Grasset	4:47
26	Proust and Agostinelli	4:47
27	Proust and Agostinelli (cont.)	1:27
28	The publication of Swann's Way	9:57
29	The First World War begins, 3 August 1914	7:50
30	The year of 1915	7:56
31	The poet Paul Morand	3:07
32	Proust begins to go out again into the world	4:58
33	Proust changes publishers	6:00
34	The Armistice	2:34
35	Within a Budding Grove published in 1919,	6:22
36	The meeting with James Joyce	2:15
37	Proust and Music	6:30
38	The Guermantes Way Part II	4:09
39	Colette remembers	1:22
40	People and characters	7:47
41	Worsening health and death	7:07

Total time: 3:58:18

Neville Jason

The Life and Work of Marcel Proust

Few authors have attracted as many biographers as Marcel Proust. And yet, to the best of my knowledge, *The Life and Work of Marcel Proust* has the distinction of being the first audio-biography.

To avoid any confusion, it may be wise to point out that Proust's great work, *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, was originally translated into English by Charles K. Scott-Moncrieff and published in 1922 under the title, *Remembrance of Things Past*. It has subsequently been retranslated by Terence Kilmartin and appeared in 1981 as *In Search of Lost Time*. Naxos AudioBooks' abridged version has been prepared from the Scott-Moncrieff text (except for *Time Regained*, which was translated by myself), and references to the work in this audio-biography use the original English title.

My own contact with Proust began when as a seventeen-year-old schoolboy I first read *Swann's Way*. I could not have guessed then that many years into the future Proust would take over my life for a period of some six years, during which time I would abridge and record his three-thousand-page

masterpiece, *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Having once embarked on this daunting but exciting task, it occurred to me that although the people on whom Proust based his characters were no longer living, the places he wrote about were still there, and so I set off to see them.

I was delighted to discover that Illiers, where Marcel Proust spent his holidays as a child, and which figures in the book as Combray, is now marked on the maps as Illiers-Combray, in official recognition of the reason for this sleepy village's wider fame.

In a narrow street just off the market square is the house in which Proust's father, Adrien Proust, was born, and further along is the house of his aunt Elisabeth, now a Proust museum, where Elisabeth's fictional counterpart, the bedridden Aunt Léonie, watched the world from her bedroom window. Around the corner from the house is a little boulangerie with a sign in the window announcing proudly that 'This is where Aunt Léonie bought her madeleines'. It only occurs to me as I buy a packet of the scallop-shaped cakes, that Aunt Léonie is a

creature of fiction. Never mind, Aunt Elisabeth might well have patronised the establishment, or one very like it. Up the hill there a real house called Tansonville, the name of the house occupied by Charles Swann, and later by his daughter Gilberte and her husband Robert de Saint-Loup, and further on there is a real village called Méréglise, a name almost identical to the fictional Méséglise.

Water lilies are still reflected in the glassy surface of the river Loir, which in the book bears the more poetic name the Vivonne, and beyond the stream lies the Pré Catalan, the enchanting park created by Proust's horticulturally-minded Uncle Jules.

Each spring a group of members of The Society of Friends of Marcel Proust gather in Illiers on a Proustian pilgrimage, following a tradition originated by Marcel Proust's brother Robert who, during the 1930s, started bringing friends here every May to enjoy the hawthorn blossom. I join them as they climb the gently sloping hawthorn path which borders the Pré Catalan. In the book this is the route to Charles Swann's estate – *Swann's Way*. From time to time the little group comes to a halt while someone reads out loud an excerpt from the text which describes the scene before us.

My own pilgrimage has an additional aim – to record a radio programme on Proust for the BBC, and so having said goodbye to my fellow pilgrims, I travel on to Cabourg, a seaside resort on the Normandy coast, and the original of the fictional Balbec. Here the Grand Hotel in all its Edwardian splendour has remained much as Proust describes it as the setting for his summer holidays with his grandmother. The great glass windows of the restaurant look out over the promenade to the beach below, and with a little imagination that group of budding young girls in bikinis is transformed into the little band of 'jeunes filles en fleurs' outlined against the sea.

On to Paris, and 102 Boulevard Haussmann, Proust's home for many years, where he wrote so much of *Remembrance of Things Past*. The building is still owned by the same bank that purchased it from Proust's aunt, when her inconsiderate decision to sell it forced him to move. His bedroom is still there, but unfurnished, and to see the room as it was, I visit the Musée Carnavalet, where his bed, chaise-longue and other effects are displayed in a reconstruction of the famous cork-lined room.

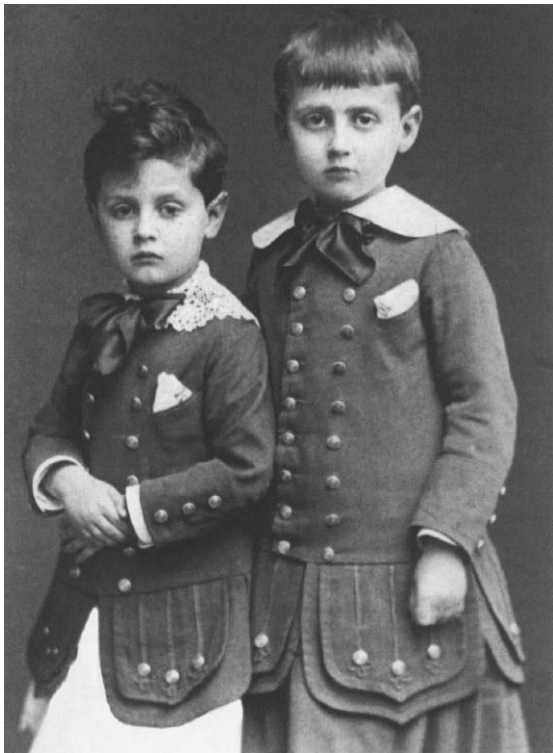
A walk to the gardens of the Champs

Elysées brings me to an area with a sign which tells me I am in the Allée Marcel Proust. Children chase each other – perhaps playing the modern equivalent of ‘prisoner’s base’, the game played by Gilberte and her friends. This is where the real Marcel played as a child with the real Marie de Benardaky, with whom he fell in love, just as the fictional Marcel falls in love with the fictional Gilberte Swann.

In the real world the same spaces are occupied now by different people. Time has moved on, but places remain, and we have the privilege of entering, not only the imaginary world Proust created, but that portion of the real world which had a part

in its creation. His presence in the places he passed through left behind a trace of magic, and we see them differently, because we see them through his eyes. One day those places, too, will have crumbled into dust, as will we ourselves, and the space we now consider ours will be occupied by others. But as long as civilization remains, those who come after will be able to share Proust’s vision and enter into his world. Proust was aware that art is the only true reality, and that through his creations the artist continues to live after his death, beyond space and beyond time.

Notes by Neville Jason



Marcel Proust (right) and his younger brother Robert, c. 1877

A Proust Chronology

1871, July 10	Marcel Proust born
1873, May 24	Robert Proust born
1878-1886	holiday visits to Illiers (now Illiers-Combray)
1880, spring	Marcel's first attack of asthma
1882-1888	attends the Lycée Condorcet
1888	contributes to <i>La Revue Lilas</i> and <i>La Revue Verte</i>
1889-1890	military service at Orléans
1890, January 3	death of maternal grandmother, Adèle Weil
1890, August	holiday at Cabourg
1890, November	enrols as a student in the Faculty of Law and at the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques
1890, November-	
1891, September	contributes to <i>Le Mensuel</i>
1892, March	first edition of <i>Le Banquet</i>
1893, March	last edition of <i>Le Banquet</i>
1893, April 13	meets Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac
1893	contributes to <i>La Revue Blanche</i> , degree in law
1894, May 22	meets Reynaldo Hahn
1894, December	trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus
1895, March	degree in philosophy
1895, summer	holiday in Brittany with Reynaldo Hahn
1896	publication of <i>Les Plaisirs et Les Jours</i> , writing <i>Jean Santeuil</i>
1897, February 6	duel with Jean Lorrain
1898, January 13	Emile Zola's article <i>J'Accuse</i> published
1899	begins translation of Ruskin's <i>Our Fathers Have Told Us</i> (<i>La Bible d'Amiens</i>)

1899, summer	holiday at Evian-les-Bains, visits the Brancovan family at Amphion
1900, June and October	visits Venice
1902	abandons work on <i>Jean Santeuil</i>
1903, November 26	death of Adrien Proust
1904	publication of <i>La Bible d'Amiens</i>
1905, September 26	death of Jeanne Proust
1906, June	publication of <i>Sesame and Lilies (Sésame et les Lys)</i>
1906, July	Dreyfus declared innocent
1906, December	moves to 102 Boulevard Haussmann
1907, summer	holiday at Cabourg, where he will spend the next seven summers. Meets Alfred Agostinelli
1908-09	begins writing <i>A la Recherche du Temps Perdu</i>
1913	Agostinelli re-enters Proust's life. Employs Celeste Albaret
1913, November	<i>Du Côté de Chez Swann (Swann's Way)</i> published
1914, May 30	Alfred Agostinelli dies in an aircraft accident
1918, June	publication of <i>A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs (Within a Budding Grove)</i> , <i>Pastiches et Melanges</i> and new edition of <i>Swann's Way</i>
1919, June	moves to 8, rue Laurent-Pichat
1919, December	<i>Within a Budding Grove</i> awarded the Prix Goncourt
1920, October	moves to 44, rue Hamelin
1920, October	<i>Le Côté de Guermantes I (The Guermantes Way I)</i> published
1920, April	<i>Le Côté de Guermantes II</i> and <i>Sodom et Gomorrhe I (Cities of the Plain I)</i> published
1921, December 11	death of Montesquiou
1922, April	<i>Sodom et Gomorrhe II</i> published

1922, October	awarded the Légion d'Honneur
1922, November 18	death of Marcel Proust
1923	<i>La Prisonnière</i> (The Captive) published
1925	<i>Albertine Disparue</i> (<i>The Fugitive/The Sweet Cheat Gone</i>) published
1927	<i>Le Temps Retrouvé</i> (Time Regained) published
1952	<i>Jean Santeuil</i> published
1954	<i>Contre Sainte-Beuve</i> (Against Sainte-Beuve) published

Some further biographical reading available in English:

Marcel Proust, A Life by Jean-Yves Tadié, Viking Penguin 2000

Marcel Proust, A Life by William C. Carter, Yale University Press 2000

Marcel Proust by George D. Painter, Chatto & Windus 1959, 1965, revised Chatto & Windus Pimlico 1996

Proust by Edmund White, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1999

Proust by Samuel Beckett, Grove Press Inc./Chatto & Windus 1931

Proust: A Biography by Ronald Hayman, Heinemann 1990

Monsieur Proust by Céleste Albaret, Collins/McGraw-Hill 1976

The Quest for Proust by André Maurois, Jonathan Cape 1950

The Translation of Memories by P.F. Prestwich, Peter Owen 1999

Proust by William Sansom, Thames and Hudson 1973



Reynaldo Hahn, 1898

Proust during military service at Orléans,
1889-90



Acknowledgements

Just as the abridged readings of *Remembrance of Things Past* may lead some listeners to read the original novel in its entirety, it may be that this spoken word overview of Proust's life and work will encourage some to turn to the more comprehensive works which are available. The most important of these are *Marcel Proust, A Life*, by Jean-Yves Tadié and *Marcel Proust, A Life*, by William Carter. Both are works of enormous diligence and scholarship, and I freely admit my indebtedness to them in the preparation of this spoken word biography. I should also like to acknowledge my debt to George D. Painter's *Marcel Proust*, which I found deeply moving, and which has waited thirty-five years before being surpassed in scope and accuracy by the works of Tadié and Carter. Other works on Proust I have consulted for the purpose of this work are included in the brief bibliography.

My gratitude is also due to those who have helped, directly or indirectly, towards the completion of this project; to Nicolas Soames who commissioned it, and who has led me patiently and skilfully not only through this recording, but through twelve studio sessions of *Remembrance of Things Past*; to Dr. Cynthia Gamble, who has been

immensely helpful in providing texts, checking the accuracy of certain facts, and in advising me in the translation of Proust's poetry; to Dr. Hugh Griffiths for reading the text and making useful suggestions, to John Theocharis for making the BBC programme *Proust's Way* such a memorable event, to Anne Borrell and Mireille Naturel of *Les Amis de Marcel Proust* for showing me around Illiers-Combray, to Barbara Bray and Emily Eels for introducing me to Proust's Paris. Finally, my most important 'thank you' is to my wife Gillian for her support and encouragement throughout this project, as in all my endeavours.

Notes by Neville Jason



Comte Robert de Montesquiou, 1885

The music was programmed by Neville Jason

HAHN Offrande, Paris, 1919

Reynaldo Hahn, baryton

HAHN La barchèta from Venezia – in Venetian dialect by Pietro Buratti

Reynaldo Hahn, Paris circa 1911

DEBUSSY Voici ce qu'il écrit à son frère Pelléas

(Act 1 Sc 2)

Maggie Teyte (soprano); Gerald Moore, piano

London, 5 October 1947

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Other music on this CD taken from the NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues

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FRANCK Violin Sonata in A Major

Takako Nishizaki, Violin, Jenő Jandó, Piano

8.550417

SAINT-SAËNS French Violin Sonatas

Dong-Suk Kang, Violin; Pascal Devoyon, Piano

8.550276



Le Grand Hôtel, Cabourg in Proust's day



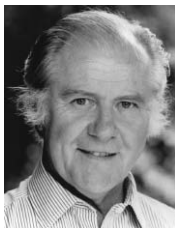
Céleste Albaret, 1914



Elaine Claxton has worked extensively in the theatre, including London's Royal National Theatre where she appeared in *The Children's Hour*, *The Machine Wreckers* and *Richard II*. She has twice been a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company during which time she participated in over 200 broadcasts. She also appears on Naxos AudioBooks' *Lady Windermere's Fan*.



Gordon Griffin has recorded over 220 audiobooks. His vast range includes nine Catherine Cookson novels, books by Melvyn Bragg, David Lodge, and the entire Wycliffe series by W J Burley. Gordon also appears regularly on television and in films. He was dialogue coach (Geordie) on *Byker Grove* and *Kavanagh QC*.



Denys Hawthorne's long and distinguished career has encompassed extensive work in theatre, television and film both in England and Ireland. Drama has included Shakespeare and Chekhov, as well as many contemporary plays, while he has appeared in popular TV series including *Inspector Morse* and *Father Ted*, and *The Russia House* and *Emma* on the wide screen. Throughout, radio performance has been a constant theme, notably in drama and poetry.

Neville Jason

The Life and Work of Marcel Proust

Read by **Neville Jason**

This first audio-biography of Marcel Proust tells the story of one of the world's most original and admired literary geniuses. From his youth in the salons of Belle Époque Paris, we follow his progress through to his later years when, as a near recluse, he writes through the nights in his cork-lined bedroom. In his great autobiographical novel *Remembrance of Things Past*, separating fact from fiction becomes a fascinating game of literary detection.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films, TV and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he also reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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