

NAXOS  
AudioBooks

NON-  
FICTION



Plato  
**The Trial  
and  
The Death  
of  
Socrates**

Read by  
**Bruce Alexander  
Jamie Glover**

with  
**Neville Jason  
Gordon Griffin  
David Timson**

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## **APOLOGY**

1	Introduction	4:05
2	I don't know what effect...	8:44
3	No, there's no truth...	9:50
4	Finally I went to the craftsmen...	8:39
5	Answer me this, though...	8:44
6	In that case, if I accept supernatural beings...	8:44
7	Don't interrupt, Athenians...	10:09
8	Do you think I would have survived...	8:14
9	The jury finds Socrates guilty...	0:29
10	If I am not upset, Athenians...	7:48
11	The majority verdict is for the death penalty	0:32
12	For just a small gain in time, Athenians...	6:59
13	And there's another reason for being confident...	5:38

## **PHAEDO**

14	Introduction to Phaedo	3:02
15	Were you there yourself, Phaedo...	5:14
16	I'll try and give you a full account...	7:30
17	Cebes laughed quietly in agreement	7:38
18	In that case, my friend, see if perhaps you agree...	8:15
19	In which case, my friend, if that is true...	7:39

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20	Well, Simmias and Cebes, that's my defence...	6:10
21	Now it's your turn to give me the same description...	4:32
22	At this point Simmias intervened...	2:38
23	So are things like that some kind of recollection?	6:39
24	The other possibility, I imagine...	6:35
25	Cebes laughed. Take it we are afraid, Socrates...	6:47
26	And here's another way of looking at it...	7:23
27	But to join the company of the gods...	7:36
28	This brought a chuckle from Socrates...	7:57
29	But the truth is otherwise, I think, Simmias...	7:46
30	Can you explain that?	6:55
31	Well, this theory of yours is not in harmony...	6:20
32	So what are we to make of the fact that the soul...	4:19
33	Socrates paused for a considerable time...	3:27
34	And now? Cebes asked. How do you feel...	7:56
35	My next decision, after I'd abandoned...	7:13
36	Heavens, yes, Phaedo, I should think so too...	6:12
37	And of the things that are, is it the only one...	6:49
38	How about this, Cebes? he asked...	6:22
39	The well-ordered, wise soul follows its guide...	7:57
40	There are all sorts of living things on the earth...	7:54
41	Those found guilty of crimes which, though great...	6:41
42	It was now close to sunset...	7:40

**Total time on CDs 1-4: 4:39:22**

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## CAST

Socrates	Bruce Alexander
Meletus	David Timson
Phaedo	Jamie Glover
Echecrates	Gordon Griffin
Introduction	Neville Jason

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# Plato The Trial and The Death of Socrates

'Apology' and 'Phaedo' describe the trial, conviction and execution of Plato's friend and mentor Socrates. Why, we may ask, was there a trial? What was Socrates accused of? Was he guilty? And if he wasn't guilty (as Plato clearly thinks he wasn't) why was he accused? Is this a verbatim report of the speeches he gave? More generally, what is it about these dialogues, and about Socrates himself, that has exercised such a fascination over later ages?

To take these questions in order:

He was accused of two things:

- 1) not believing in the gods the city believed in; and
- 2) corrupting the young.

Was he guilty? Well, it depends on your

point of view. You could say, with some justice, that very few people in late fifth-century Athens believed in the gods the city believed in. Certainly not in the Olympian gods such as Zeus, or Aphrodite, or Apollo. There were still those who believed the sun and the moon were gods. Indeed, the catastrophic loss of the Athenian expeditionary force to Sicily fourteen years earlier had in the end been caused by its commander's superstitious refusal to abandon an untenable position for twenty-eight days following an eclipse of the moon. But then Socrates was prepared to accept the sun and the moon as gods, as he explains in the 'Apology'.

Did he corrupt the young? In a sexual

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sense, no. Alcibiades, the best-looking young man in Athens, famously attempted to seduce Socrates sexually, and failed. But in a different sense, maybe the answer could be yes. What Socrates did was to teach the young to ask questions which their elders found difficult or impossible to answer. If you were one of those elders, you might well have thought that he was making young people into worse people than they would otherwise have been. In that sense, from the point of view of their elders, maybe he did corrupt the young. It's a common enough argument, now as then: 'when I was young we respected our elders; these days there's no respect any more; someone must be to blame.'

Was that a sufficient reason for him to be accused? In normal times, no. But these were not normal times. Within the last five years the Athenians had lost a war and an empire, and been deprived of their democratic rights. Many of the people who had taken away those rights had been followers of Socrates in their youth. When democracy was restored, there were those who wanted their revenge.

Is the 'Apology' the speech Socrates actually made? And did he spend his last hours in the way Plato describes? It is

hard to know. As far as we know, Socrates never wrote anything, and if he did write anything, it hasn't survived. Almost everything we know about him comes from Plato, though there is a hint in Xenophon which suggests that what he actually said at his trial was a bit different from what Plato has given us. It may be we have to take Plato's account as coloured by what he thinks Socrates should have said, or what he would have liked Socrates to have said.

We can, however, say with confidence that the way Socrates talks and acts in the 'Apology' and 'Phaedo' is wholly in character with the way he talks and acts in every other Platonic dialogue. Beyond that, we have to accept that the Socrates who has been admired for more than 2000 years is the Socrates presented to us by Plato, just as the Jesus who has been admired for 2000 years is the Jesus presented by the New Testament.

And finally, what is it about Socrates which has so fascinated later ages? Two things, principally: an ethical standpoint and a method of argument. The ethical standpoint can be summed up in two of Socrates' most famous beliefs: It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, because only doing wrong can harm you. And no

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one does wrong on purpose; people do wrong only from a failure to perceive what is right. More striking still is the method of argument: it annoyed the ancient Athenians, and it annoys a lot of people today, but it is revolutionary for all that – and as needed now as it was then. Before Socrates there were three ways of resolving a disagreement: by force, by appeal to authority or by competitive oratory. What all three have in common is that they produce a winner and a loser, and that the loser is

even less convinced at the end than at the beginning. Socrates' method – arguing by agreed steps from agreed premises – necessarily results in an agreed conclusion. If you don't like the conclusion, you can go back and amend the premises.

So – a new ethical position, and a new method of argument. And nowhere will we find either more clearly and movingly exemplified than in the 'Apology' and the 'Phaedo'.

**Notes by Tom Griffith**

Recorded by Norman Goodman and Mark Smith, Motivation Sound Studios

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Original Music: composed by Nicholas Denney for this recording

Music programmed by Nicolas Soames

*Cover Picture:*

The Death of Socrates by Salvator Rosa by courtesy of Bridgeman Art Library



**Bruce Alexander** is best known as Superintendent Mullett in *A Touch of Frost* and has appeared in many other TV shows such as *Berkeley Square*, *Casualty* and *Peak Practice*. He has also played major roles in the theatre, notably with the RSC. He is a director of ACTER, which annually tours Shakespeare to US campuses. He has featured in the Naxos AudioBooks recordings of *Macbeth* and *Oedipus*, and also reads Plato's *The Republic* for Naxos AudioBooks.



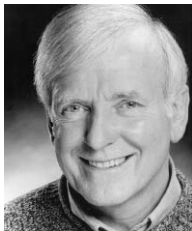
**Jamie Glover** trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama and has since played title roles in *Hamlet* and *Henry V* and a number of other roles in, amongst others, *Tartuffe* and *The Rose Tattoo* for Sir Peter Hall. His TV appearances include *A Dance to the Music of Time* and *Cadfael*. He has also featured in *Richard III* and *Hamlet* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**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. He has abridged and read Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* for Naxos AudioBooks. 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.



**David Timson** has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode* and *The Seagull*. He has appeared on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*. A familiar and versatile audio and radio voice, he reads *The Middle Way – The Story of Buddhism*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Stories* and directs *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night* and *Henry V* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**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*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has read *Dead Souls*.



Plato

# The Trial and The Death of Socrates

Read by **Bruce Alexander • Jamie Glover**  
with **Neville Jason • Gordon Griffin • David Timson**

*The Trial and The Death of Socrates* remains a powerful document not least because it gives a first-hand account of the end of one of the greatest figures in history. In 'Apology' Socrates defends himself before the Athenian court against charges of corrupting youth. 'Phaedo' is the account, by a young man, of the actual last words and moments of Socrates. These are presented with scene-setting introductions to the historical situation.

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New translation and introductory notes by Tom Griffin  
Produced by Nicolas Soames and David Timson

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