

NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION



Edgar Allan Poe
**The Murders
in the
Rue Morgue**

**The Mystery
of Marie Rogêt**

**The
Purloined
Letter**

The Dupin Stories

Read by
Kerry Shale

NA427612D

1	The Murders in the Rue Morgue	9:04
2	I become acquainted with Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin	5:57
3	A stroll in the vicinity of the Palais Royal	6:52
4	The murders are reported in the Gazette des Tribunaux	3:46
5	Additional particulars in the next day's paper	7:04
6	Further testimonies	9:06
7	Dupin and I go to the Rue Morgue	4:22
8	Dupin begins his explanation	5:32
9	'The means of egress'	7:12
10	'The mode of descent'	3:42
11	More strange revelations	6:04
12	Dupin reveals the identity of the murderer	8:29
13	A stranger enters the house	4:24
14	The stranger tells his story	8:08
15	The Mystery of Marie Rogêt	3:13
16	The details of the case	7:36
17	I gather all the newspaper reports on the case	5:15
18	Reports from the newspaper L'Etoile	4:52
19	Insinuations	4:20
20	A new discovery	4:39

11	Dupin begins his observations	3:21
22	We examine the arguments in L'Etoile	6:47
23	'The rationale of the rule'	6:54
24	The identity of the corpse?	8:25
25	Dupin dismisses the insinuations	2:39
26	On the opinions of Le Commercial	4:17
27	On the article in Le Soleil	4:30
28	The following week	3:47
29	I wait for an explanation	8:14
30	The supposed scene of the crime	5:53
31	The articles of Marie Rogêt	6:49
32	A gang or an individual?	5:19
33	The pocket handkerchief	5:45
34	Dupin starts to sum up	8:01
35	Coincidences	6:24
36	The Purloined Letter	4:18
37	The Prefect tells of the affair	4:10
38	The first search for the letter	8:09
39	A month later	3:46
40	The explanation	7:19
41	Poet or Mathematician?	8:14
42	The recovery of the letter	7:45

Total time on CDs 1-4: 4:10:56

Edgar Allan Poe
The Murders in the Rue Morgue
The Mystery of Marie Rogêt
The Purloined Letter

In Conan Doyle's '*A Study in Scarlet*' Dr. Watson says:

'You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin.'

Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe.

'No doubt you think that you are complimenting me in comparing me to Dupin,' he observed. 'Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow... really very showy and superficial.'

It seems singularly ungrateful of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to be quite so disparaging about Dupin to whom after all his own creation Sherlock Holmes owed so much; for Dupin's creator, the volatile American Edgar Allan Poe, is universally recognised as the father of the modern detective novel. Poe himself did not use the word 'detective' in describing the three short stories he wrote that include Dupin, but termed them rather tales of 'ratiocination' or deduction through rational logic.

Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin is a solver of problems, a rational thinker, a game player. The solving of crimes is a pastime for him: he could as well be solving a non-criminal problem so perhaps he is the equivalent of a modern crossword enthusiast, puzzling the answer out is where the fun lies! Above

all, he is an *amateur* detective.

In 1841, the year of publication of the first Dupin story, **The Murders in the Rue Morgue**, the professional detective did not exist – indeed most European police forces were still in their infancy. La Sureté had been founded in Paris in 1812, and the Metropolitan Police Force in London in 1829. The creation of a detective force at Scotland Yard did not take place in England until 1842, the year after Poe's story was published; and America's famous Pinkerton Agency did not materialise until 1850.

So Poe's Dupin was a new literary invention, a man of undoubted genius who uses his mental powers in a logical and scientific manner to find the solution to a problem, criminal or otherwise. Dupin, we are told by the anonymous friend that

narrates the tales, is a gentleman reduced by poverty to living economically, books being his only luxury. He is moody by nature and 'enamoured of the Night'.

Here then is a character that possesses all the essential ingredients that we have come to expect from the fictional detective. He is an amateur or at least working outside the official force and eccentric almost to the point of being certifiable, as is Holmes. He has a friend in attendance, a simple soul who can bring out the detective's genius, such as Dr. Watson, or Hercule Poirot's Captain Hastings.

The setting for the stories is Paris, which may give us a clue as to Poe's real-life model for Dupin. Vidocq was a criminal in Paris during the late 18th century who, escaping twice from the galleys, had a high reputation in the underworld. Essentially, though, he was unsuited to be a criminal and turned police informer. He worked as a sort of double agent, eventually being so successful in his fight against crime that he not only created La Sureté with Napoleon's blessing, but went on to found the world's first private detective agency.

The equivocal moral nature of Vidocq fascinated Poe who weaves elements of his life and attitudes into his Dupin stories. Throughout, there is the balance between the rational as exemplified by Dupin, and the irrational as exemplified by the criminal. A chance result is ruled out by a scientific

approach, making the solution conclusive. Vidocq had used such science as was available to him, such as the matching of a bullet to the barrel of a gun, and even experimenting with the use of fingerprints towards the end of his career but failing to find suitable ink.

These elements: rationality, irrationality, use of science, originating with Poe, are to be found in some form in every successive detective novel from Conan Doyle onwards.

In **The Murders in the Rue Morgue**, Poe presents us at once with one of the key elements of so many subsequent detective novels, the 'locked room mystery' – no way in, and no way out: the doors and windows securely fastened, yet a murder has been committed there and the perpetrator gone. Agatha Christie's *Murder in Mesopotamia* is another such mystery.

In **The Mystery of Marie Rogêt** (1843) Poe takes the real case of the murder of Mary Rogers from America, and fictionalises it, changing the setting to Paris. Dupin solves a case that had not been solved in reality at the time the story was written, and Poe suggests that his methods could perhaps be applied with positive results to the original case that inspired his story. It is armchair 'detection', simply deducing the solution from the material presented to him such as newspaper cuttings, police reports etc. No legwork required.

In a footnote to a later edition Poe tells

us that the 'confessions of two persons... confirmed in full, not only the general conclusion, but absolutely *all* the chief hypothetical details by which that conclusion was attained.'

The Purloined Letter (1844) contains another classic situation of the detective genre, the most unlikely solution turning out to be the correct one. When others are blind to the obvious it is Dupin who 'sees' the evidence for himself.

Three stories with three classic situations much imitated by crime writers through the decades that followed. Poe is indisputably the father of the detective novel, and it is clear that Poe admired his creation who was probably his own ideal self-image, an unemotional reasoning machine. Alas, real life was to prove too tough and cruel for Poe to achieve it.

He was born in 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of itinerant actors. His father deserted the family, and his mother died of tuberculosis when Poe was two. He was cared for by John and Frances Allan, hence his middle name. He was educated in a number of institutions (including one in Stoke Newington, England), but found it difficult to fit in. He did, however, make a success of being a soldier.

He enlisted at Boston in 1827, rising to the rank of sergeant major. Eager to conform, he went to West Point to train as an officer, but was thrown out because of

his increasingly intemperate behaviour. He was destitute, and though he was by now writing stories on a regular basis, he made no money out of them.

He found salvation in the home of his Aunt Clemm in Baltimore. It was his most prolific period of writing; marked by swings from intense industry to debauched and drunken sprees. He said of himself: 'My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an every-day matter to my companions.' In 1836 he controversially married his cousin, Virginia, who was 13, but she died of tuberculosis after six years of poverty with her husband. Poe never really recovered from this loss, he descended into the maelstrom (as he might have said) of drink and drugs, though still continuing to write.

He became the haunted figure of his own imagination, living out his morbid dreams; fantasies such as *The Pit and the Pendulum* and *The Tell-tale Heart*. Only his poem *The Raven* seems to have received any public recognition during his lifetime. Even his death in Baltimore in 1849, in a drunken delirium, was suspicious. It took another generation to discover this lost genius, whose literary skill had invented the genres of the detective story and science fiction, and who was described by Baudelaire as a 'fallen angel, who remembered heaven'.

Notes by David Timson

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

- MENDELSSOHN** PIANO QUARTETS NOS 2 & 3 8.550967
Bartholdy Piano Quartet
- MENDELSSOHN** PIANO TRIOS NOS 1 & 2 8.555063
Gould Piano Trio
- MENDELSSOHN** STRING QUARTETS VOLUME 3 8.550863
Aurora String Quartet

Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Edgar Allan Poe
The Murders in the Rue Morgue
The Mystery of Marie Rogêt
The Purloined Letter

The Dupin Stories

Read by **Kerry Shale**

C. Auguste Dupin, investigator extraordinaire, was the remarkable creation of Edgar Allan Poe. Written in the 1840s, Poe presented the acutely observant, shrewd but idiosyncratic character who, with his chronicler, provided the inspiration for Doyle's more famous Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. Here are the three Dupin stories.

What is the strange story behind *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*? Can Dupin solve, by analysis from afar, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*? And how can he possibly retrieve *The Purloined Letter* when the efforts of the Paris police have been in vain?



Kerry Shale has performed his acclaimed one-man shows around the world. Other theatre work includes *Aunt Dan and Lemon*, *The Normal Heart*, *True West* and *The Odd Couple*. His TV credits include *Cracker*, *Sharpe's Rifles* and *Sherlock Holmes*. Films include *Yentl*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *102 Dalmations* and *Max*. He has won three Sony Awards for radio acting and writing.

"This new edition, chillingly read by Kerry Shale, exaggerates the melodrama with appropriate music, making this less a book than a production. I can think of no better way to spend an evening, curtains drawn, candles lit, a dying fire in the grate, and this...scaring you to death."

THE GUARDIAN

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