

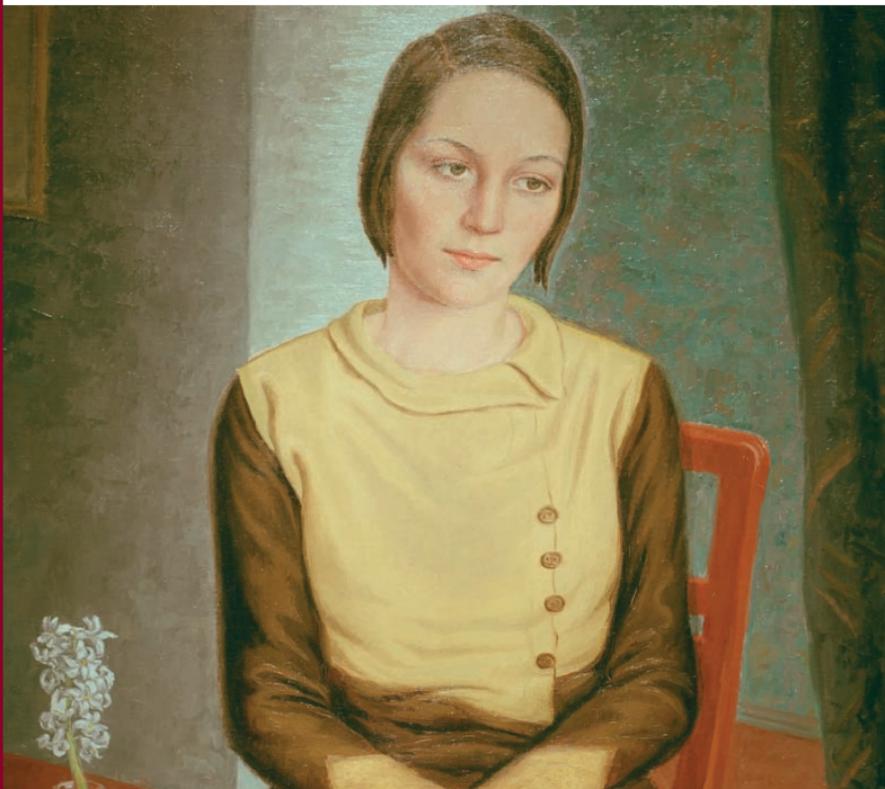
NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION

MODERN
CLASSICS

Daphne du Maurier
Rebecca

Read by **Emma Fielding**



NA432312D

1	Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.	4:44
2	We can never go back again, that much is certain.	4:15
3	I wonder what my life would be today,	5:33
4	“What brings you here?”	4:31
5	The morning after the bridge party	4:15
6	There was a strange air of unreality about that luncheon,	4:50
7	Mine was a happy mood that afternoon,	4:12
8	What gulf of years stretched between him and that other time,	3:58
9	I am glad it cannot happen twice,	4:44
10	I did not notice the slowing down of the car,	5:59
11	Packing up.	3:32
12	“You haven’t started a cold, have you?”	5:52
13	We went up in the lift to the first floor,	2:39
14	I went to Mrs Van Hopper,	3:34
15	We came to Manderley in early May,	4:25
16	We went together up the flight of steps.	4:04
17	I got up slowly,	4:08
18	I could see she despised me,	3:35
19	I had never realized, of course,	4:24
20	I turned away into the hall again,	3:04

21	And when the telephone rang,	4:44
22	When I heard the sound of the car in the drive	3:19
23	I stood for a moment outside the morning-room,	3:47
24	At that moment the door opened	4:19
25	We watched the car disappear round the sweep of the drive,	4:02
26	We threw more stones,	4:13
27	I wondered if there was any string in the boat-house,	3:08
28	I went across the shingle	3:35
29	I walked slowly across the hall to the library.	4:06
30	I could not forget the white, lost look in Maxim's eyes	3:27
31	In the car going home I sat in my corner	5:10
32	I did not see much of Mrs Danvers.	4:16
33	Frith left the room and we were alone again.	3:18
34	She went out of the room,	4:38
35	Maxim had to go up to London at the end of June	4:23
36	As I wandered across the lawn to the terrace	3:41
37	The man wheeled round suddenly and saw me.	4:52
38	He walked out on to the drive,	2:51
39	I was uncertain which way to go.	4:45

40	Then I heard a step behind me	5:42
41	Her fingers tightened on my arm.	4:44
42	It was one Sunday, I remember,	3:55
43	In the evening, when I was changing for dinner,	3:09
44	The great day dawned misty and overcast,	5:24
45	The band were changed,	4:51
46	I began tearing at the hooks of my dress,	3:52
47	I felt I had forfeited her sympathy by my refusal to go down.	2:51
48	I think I fell asleep a little after seven.	3:18
49	I could not go on sitting in my bedroom any longer.	3:54
50	I passed through the door to the west wing,	4:47
51	She pushed me towards the open window.	3:56
52	It was Maxim.	3:22
53	I left him and walked towards the path through the woods,	6:14
54	Maxim was standing by the window.	5:10
55	I was aware of no feeling at all,	6:37
56	He lit a cigarette,	4:41
57	I came back after dinner,	6:49
58	I could hear the murmur of Maxim's voice in the	

	little room beyond.	3:32
59	At five minutes to one I heard the sound of a car in the drive,	4:30
60	The inquest was to be on the Tuesday afternoon at two o'clock.	6:07
61	The policeman was bending over me,	4:07
62	I did not hear Frith come in at the door.	3:52
63	The door opened and Maxim came into the room,	4:35
64	Maxim walked slowly across the room	4:28
65	"You have just made a serious accusation against de Winter."	3:37
66	Ben stepped awkwardly into the room.	4:25
67	At last she was silent again.	5:47
68	Mrs Danvers shook her head slowly.	4:12
69	When I awoke the next morning,	6:53
70	We went and stood by the car.	4:44
71	It was quiet and happy and friendly in the restaurant.	3:40
72	I climbed over and sat beside him,	2:32

Total time: 5:16:48

Daphne du Maurier

Rebecca

'Last night I dreamt I went to
Manderley again...'
(*Rebecca*, *Daphne du Maurier*)

'Reader, I married him...'
(*Jane Eyre*, *Charlotte Bronte*.)

Though a hundred years separates these quotations, two of the most famous in English Literature, they are linked by a common theme and story; for Daphne du Maurier's '*Rebecca*' is undoubtedly a homage to '*Jane Eyre*'. Both novels depict a young, gauche and plain girl who meets a dashing but troubled older man, falls in love with him and by her devotion saves him from despair and death. The similarities go further: Maxim de Winter has a stately home called Manderley; Rochester has Thornfield. The happiness of both the heroines is threatened by the former wives of their lovers, and it is only the destruction by fire of Manderley/Thornfield that finally purges the past, and allows some prospect of future happiness for the hero and heroine. *Jane Eyre*, an established classic by

1938, when *Rebecca* was published, is well matched by du Maurier's 20th-century tribute, though it did not on its first appearance attract critical acclaim, being dismissed by V.S. Pritchett as a novel that would be 'here today and gone tomorrow'. In similarly dismissive tones some critics regarded it as another addition to the growing genre of 'women's fiction'.

The reading public disagreed and the novel went through twenty-eight reprints in its first four years, launching du Maurier's career as an international writer, and subsequently has never been out of print. It was turned into a classic Hitchcock film in 1940, starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine, and has had countless adaptations made for the stage, radio and television, as well as several sequels that attempt to answer so many of the questions posed but unanswered in the novel.

So what is the endless fascination of a story that does indeed seem on the surface to be a piece of light romantic fiction?

It may well be the overall mood of '*Rebecca*'; which du Maurier herself

described as 'rather macabre'. The mood is gothic fantasy, hovering between the daydreams of the heroine and her nightmares. The novel in fact begins famously with a dream. The 'ghost' of Rebecca, the first Mrs. de Winter, pervades the whole book, getting inside the heroine's mind and pushing her to the brink of insanity. Du Maurier thought her story would prove to be 'too gloomy...too grim' to appeal, but it is this close identification the reader inevitably feels for the unnamed heroine that makes the novel so powerful; we are gripped by the relentless drive of the narrative, all seen from the perspective of this tormented young girl.

It does not take any great insight to see that the heroine of *'Rebecca'* is the author herself. The young girl refers to the difficulty people find in pronouncing her 'lovely and unusual' name, although we are never told what it is; 'du Maurier' no doubt presented similar difficulties for the author. 'I'm gauche and awkward, I dress badly, I'm shy with people,' says the heroine, and though the author had many more complex sides to her personality than the narrator, she does seem to have been at times cripplingly shy, and felt herself out of place, which was her situation when she began writing the book.

Her husband, Frederick Browning, a commanding officer in the Grenadier Guards, had been posted to Egypt and Daphne went with him. Desperately homesick, hating the hot country and feeling inadequate to the duties of an officer's wife, she took refuge in writing an intensely personal novel set in her beloved Cornwall (though the word 'Cornwall' is never actually used). She explored the two sides of her personality: the socially inept versus the wild, rebellious, independent type she could sometimes be, as exemplified in the first Mrs. de Winter, Rebecca. There is also a hint in the close relationship she had with Mrs. Danvers, that Rebecca might have been bisexual; while the narrator often thinks of herself as a boy: 'I was like a little scrubby schoolboy, with a passion for a sixth-form prefect, and he kinder, and far more inaccessible.' Daphne du Maurier was digging deep into her subconscious self.

It is the close identification the reader has with the narrator that blunts the unavoidable truth that is at the centre of this novel: the narrator's husband Maxim de Winter is a self-confessed murderer of his first wife and her unborn child. Yet du Maurier has so cleverly involved us in her heroine's story that we can't help feeling

that we want him to escape hanging, so they can live happily ever after (as in *Jane Eyre*). Herein lies the moral centre of du Maurier's story: is a wife justified in staying loyally devoted to her husband even when he has committed murder? We feel guilty as we willingly become accessories to perjury, though the sharp and brutal ending of the novel and the subsequent exile from their country of the two main characters compensate to some degree any latent desire for moral justice the reader may feel.

Du Maurier need not have feared that '*Rebecca*' would be 'too gloomy', for on one level it is the Gothic accessories: the haunted mansion, the sinister servant, fog, mirror-images, troubled dreams and a dead first wife who for the narrator comes to

have all the characteristics of a vampire, that make the book such a page-turning read. For the more cerebral it can be seen as a psychological novel exploring the evolution of a girl into a woman; or read merely as a simple romance, where a young insignificant girl wins her man by beating her sexually charged rival, and this seems to be the version the critics responded to in their reviews of 1938.

It is a clever book that can be read on many levels, but always wrapped in mystery and suspense: du Maurier's trade marks.

In truth though, it is a brilliant and skilful novel that manipulates and disturbs far more than its role model '*Jane Eyre*'.

Notes by David Timson

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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Maggini Quartet

BRIDGE STRING QUARTETS NOS 1-3 8.557133
Maggini Quartet

Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Daphne du Maurier

Rebecca

Read by **Emma Fielding**

'Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.'

These famous words open the most popular novel by Daphne du Maurier, the story of an intense romance set in a mysterious house in Cornwall. Its unforgettable atmosphere and tension has transformed it from a popular romance on the page and on film to become a modern classic. Here, it is presented in a new and absorbing recording by Emma Fielding.



Emma Fielding trained at RSAMD. She has worked for the Royal National Theatre and the RSC, most notably in John Ford's *The Broken Heart* for which she won the Dame Peggy Ashcroft Award for Best Actress and the Ian Charleson Award. She has also appeared in numerous radio plays for the BBC and performed the parts of Desdemona in *Othello*,

Ophelia in *Hamlet* and the title role in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as reading *Jane Eyre* and *Hedda Gabler* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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