

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Laurence Sterne
Tristram Shandy

Read by **John Moffatt**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



NA436512D

1	'Have you not forgot to wind the clock?'	9:55
2	The midwife and the parson	7:11
3	'Alas, poor Yorick!'	3:54
4	My mother's marriage settlement	2:49
5	My father's choice of Christian names	5:02
6	My mother was not a papist	1:19
7	My Uncle Toby's character	6:26
8	'A master stroke of digressive skill'	1:52
9	A man and his hobby-horse	4:13
10	Uncle Toby and the siege at Namur	6:56
11	Uncle Toby recovers	3:22
12	Corporal Trim	8:57
13	The midwife is sent for	10:19
14	Dr. Slop's arrival	9:16
15	Obediah brings the instruments	2:35
16	The singularity of my father's notions	9:23
17	Uncle Toby's wish	3:15
18	The green baize bag	5:42

19	Excommunication	3:23
20	The dangers of birth	4:29
21	The zeal and simplicity of Trim	3:20
22	The affair of the bridge	13:43
23	'A nose, and nothing more, or less'	2:04
24	My father's grief	4:51
25	The christening	8:00
26	A debate upon consanguinity	0:50
27	Aunt Dinah's legacy	6:37
28	News of my brother Bobby's death	18:59
29	The Tristra-paedia	2:50
30	'Slap came the sash down'	6:22
31	My father comforted by the ancients	3:21
32	Another chapter in the Tristra-paedia	6:37
33	A quarrel between Susannah and Dr. Slop	2:37
34	The selection of a private governor	3:04
35	'Poor Master Shandy'	2:14
36	My father's 'beds of justice'	6:15

37	Uncle Toby's kitchen garden	1:28
38	'Step by step with the allies'	10:56
39	Uncle Toby loses his hobby-horse	4:58
40	Uncle Toby in love	4:49
41	The widow Wadman	7:05
42	Love, alphabetically speaking	1:47
43	The sentry box	6:52
44	Corporal Trim's story	8:34
45	Mrs Wadman's attack	9:45
46	My father discourses on love	5:53
47	Advance, retire and advance	9:25
48	'You shall see the very place, Madam'	4:20
49	Mrs Wadman and Bridget make enquiries	13:02
50	Mrs Wadman's humanity	7:09
51	A cock and a bull	5:06

Total time: 5:03:25

Laurence Sterne
Tristram Shandy

Tristram Shandy is an ironic masterpiece, a work of extraordinary originality, wit and learning. It unites contradictions: it is both knowing and innocent, sophisticated and naïve, highly organised and digressive, satiric and indulgently sentimental. It is a work of considerable philosophical complexity but at the same time it is just a piece of flim-flam: it has been called the longest shaggy-dog story in English Literature. It is both a classic novel and an antinovel. It includes passages of seemingly serious theology – but it can also be read as an elaborate bawdy joke.

The version offered to you in this audiobook is shorn of some of the more far-fetched and obscure flights of fancy in Sterne's digressive and multifaceted work. The novel is full of curiosities – passages in French, Latin citations and choice extracts of archana, all touched with a delicious hint of ludicrousness. Some listeners will be grateful to be spared some of Sterne's more rococo *jeux d'esprits*. Others will listen and will want to turn to the novel itself, having developed a taste for the Shandean world.

In doing so they will join generations of adventurous readers – including Joyce, Beckett, and all the Modernists and post-Modernists whose writing shows signs of the influence of this seminal work.

Sterne's visual tricks posed a challenge for the creators of this audiobook version. **Tristram Shandy** is after all a typesetter's worst nightmare: one page is black, another marbled, a third left blank, to give the reader the opportunity to draw the image of his fantasy woman. (Sterne here anticipated the interactive media of our era, in more senses than one!) Several pages set out an elaborate Latin curse and a parallel English translation. There are a number of wonderfully expressive squiggles too. We have attempted to provide aural equivalents for most of these playful tricks.

It is astonishing that so *avant-garde* a work should have been published so early in the history of the newly-emergent English novel. Contemporary readers were amazed; subsequent students of literature no less so. Published in stages between 1760 and 1767, merely twenty years after

Richardson's prudish and prudential **Pamela**, **Tristram Shandy** seems not only to belong to a different order of sophistication but to a different generation, and to a level of self-consciousness far closer to our own.

Tristram Shandy is like no other novel, but for all its originality it has many literary precedents. Cervantes, Rabelais, Erasmus, More, Burton, Locke and Swift are some of the masters of irony, wit and philosophy whose works fed Sterne's fertile imagination. For example, Locke's theory of the association of ideas (which is essential to his explanation of the way language works, as well as the origins of prejudice and mistake) in Sterne becomes the source of serendipitous connections and hilarious translations.

Whatever he owed to his literary precursors Sterne managed to create a work that remains unique two and a half centuries later. Sterne has often been imitated but never bettered. Sterne conjured up a benign and teasingly odd world at Shandy Hall where nothing happens when or as it should, and where nothing is well hung.

Eccentricity is the key. Each character inhabits a private world but in contrast to the bleak isolation of the works of Kafka, Ibsen, Beckett or Pinter we find that the

solipsism of Sterne's heroes creates the ecosystem in which they can flourish. Each Shandean monomaniac adds his or her flash of colour to life's rich tapestry. The learned and irascible Walter can never begin to understand the hobby-horsical gallantry of Toby, but, at another level, he appreciates the nobility of spirit of his naïve brother. Uncle Toby's concentration on the arts of war to the exclusion of all other concerns is reflected in the obsessions of all those around him. As inheritors of the literature of the absurd, we know that it should be impossible for such characters to communicate with each other. We find to our surprise and delight that they can and do. Each speaks his own private language but it sounds very much like English. Words spoken by one brother in the context of his *idée fixe* are understood by the other brother in terms of his. Each proceeds accordingly. By happy chance – the essence of comedy – they coexist quite smoothly. Uncle Toby shares his hobby horse with his faithful Trim, Walter has his books and his theories, none of the tragedies in the story precipitate anyone into despair, and at an instinctual or sentimental level, harmony reigns.

The novel of course has its darker side:

while there are elements of farce and indeed slapstick there are moments of pathos. Sterne long anticipated Monty Python in treating issues of the greatest seriousness with total irreverence – a paradoxical attitude, as his contemporaries were quick to point out, in a clergyman. Parson Yorick (who dies very early in the novel) was also the name that Sterne called himself, and the predicament in which Yorick finds himself – rejected and condemned as a man too witty for his own good – was Sterne's too. Apart from some volumes of **The Sermons of Mr Yorick**

and the hilarious and playful **Sentimental Journey**, **Tristram Shandy** represents the entire literary legacy of Laurence Sterne. In 1768 at the age of 55 he died of pleurisy, insolvent and in lodgings in London, following many years of ill health. Sterne looked mortality full in the face, both in his life and his work, and produced a dark and witty literary riposte to death's proud melodrama. **Tristram Shandy** is a curiosity, a treasure and a joy.

Notes by Daniel Eilon

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

HANDEL HARPSICHORD SUITES NOS. 1-5

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Alan Cuckston

Music programmed by Nicolas Soames

Cover picture: Joseph Highmore (1692-1780),

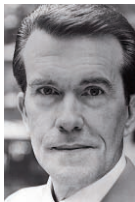
Pamela Shows Mr Williams a Hiding Place for Her Letters, c.1744.

Courtesy The Bridgeman Art Library/Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

Laurence Sterne Tristram Shandy

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John Moffatt's distinguished theatre career encompasses two hundred roles across the UK, forty-two major London productions and two Broadway appearances. He played Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at the Open Air Theatre, Regents Park, appeared in Ingmar Bergman's production of *Hedda Gabler* and in *Married Love* directed by Joan Plowright. Film credits include *Prick Up Your Ears*, and he has been seen on UK TV in productions as varied as *Love in a Cold Climate* and *Maigret*.

“Occasionally in audio there is a match made in heaven between book and reader: here, John Moffatt reads Sterne’s eccentric, hilarious masterpiece with conviction and brio and anyone who has tried and failed to come to terms with this great book should try again – starting right here.”

THE GOOD BOOK GUIDE

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