

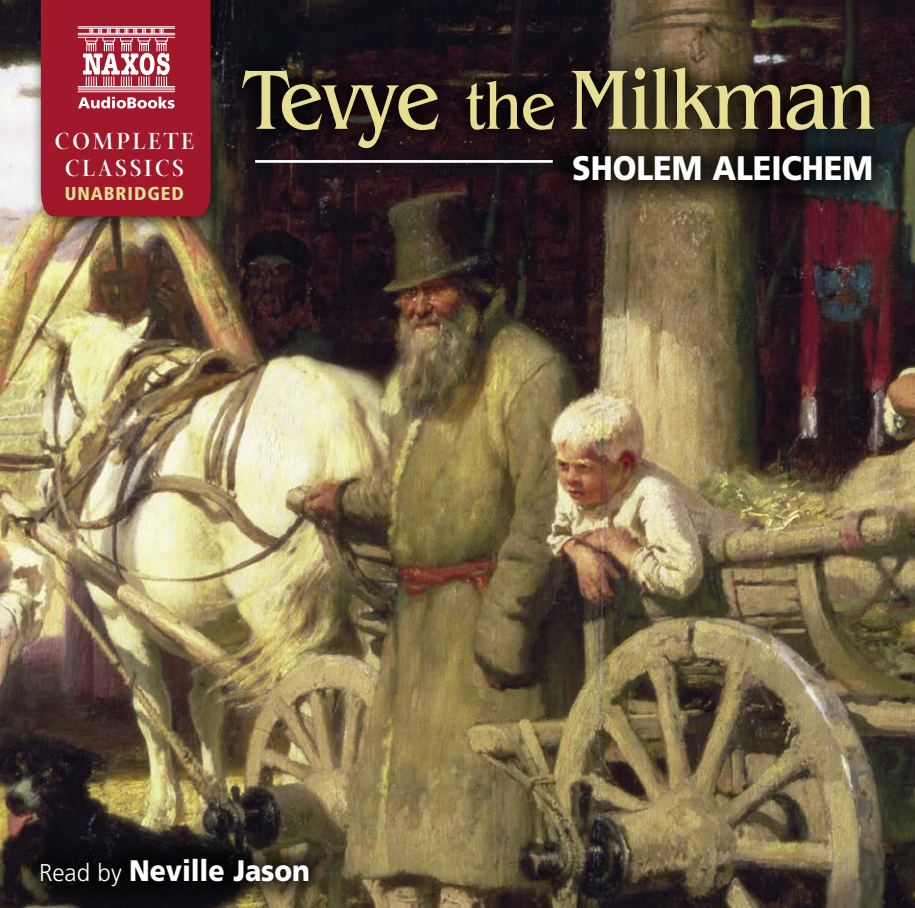


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AudioBooks

COMPLETE
CLASSICS
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Tevye the Milkman

SHOLEM ALEICHEM



Read by **Neville Jason**

CD 1

1	Tevye Wins a Fortune	5:54
2	Anyway, this is how it happened...	4:51
3	Suddenly, the horse stopped...	6:16
4	The women didn't wait to be asked again.	6:41
5	And I drive in smartly, right up to the porch...	7:39
6	Nu, what are you standing there for?	6:24
7	So I told her everything from A to Z...	5:46
8	The Bubble Bursts	6:35
9	'Sholem Aleichem,' Reb Tevye	5:45
10	After we'd eaten and said our benedictions...	5:47
11	Well, why should I drag out the story?	6:52
12	Well, a week goes by, and two, and three...	5:43

Total time on CD 1: 74:25

CD 2

1	I arrive in Yehupetz	5:09
2	I look at him standing there...	4:11
3	Modern Children	5:41
4	Now that we're alone, he says to me...	7:08
5	Well, we took a drop or two...	6:40
6	So, I got through my work as fast as I could...	7:32
7	Well, we came home at last...	6:20
8	If someone had stuck a knife in my heart...	5:57
9	In the beginning, I dreamt that we were having a celebration...	5:23
10	Hodel	5:05
11	I lift up my eyes, and there on the road ahead of me...	5:43
12	There was only one thing I didn't like about him...	7:54

Total time on CD 2: 72:54

CD 3

1	Suddenly, I see two people...	5:33
2	Well, to make a long story short...	4:29
3	Well, a week passed, then two weeks...	6:21
4	So I tell her a story...	6:49
5	Chava	6:38
6	Well, to return to my story...	5:26
7	Now, as they say in books...	5:22
8	I arrived at home, what a scene greeted me.	5:33
9	In such talk the whole night passed.	6:11
10	And the holy books say, a force you must live...	6:08
11	So I think to myself, you want to take me by force...	6:57

Total time on CD 3: 65:40

CD 4

- | | | |
|-----------|---|------|
| 1 | Schprintze | 5:23 |
| 2 | Well, I began coming to the widow from Ekaterineslav... | 7:14 |
| 3 | Well, Shavous arrived, and how beautiful Shavous in the country can be. | 5:26 |
| 4 | After I'd eaten I thought to myself... | 5:27 |
| 5 | Thinking thus, I walked back to the house... | 5:52 |
| 6 | I looked over at Schprintze, she didn't say a word... | 7:11 |
| 7 | I came home and found my family sitting around the supper table. | 6:44 |
| 8 | Teve goes to Palestine | 6:35 |
| 9 | Well, I hired the kadish for her, for my wife... | 6:50 |
| 10 | Hmm. Padhatzur? It sounds familiar... | 6:31 |
| 11 | As I rode along my imagination carried me away... | 6:49 |

Total time on CD 4: 70:12

CD 5

1	Now let us forsake the hero	5:00
2	But forgive me Mr Sholem Aleichem, for straying away...	5:55
3	And I addressed myself to him thus...	6:43
4	I'll tell you the honest truth...	5:55
5	Well, after having supped well on the grief of my youngest child...	6:25
6	Get Thee Out!	6:45
7	For when troubles descend on Tevey, they never come singly.	6:38
8	I arrived home from Boiberik one evening...	7:13
9	And while I'm sitting there deep in such thoughts...	9:05
10	And so I persuaded her that we had to go...	6:24
11	Do you think that Tevey's daughter didn't find an answer to this too?	6:27

Total time on CD 5: 72:39

Total time on CDs 1–5: 5:55:50

SHOLEM ALEICHEM

Tevye the Milkman

When Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916, crowds of around 100,000 people attended his funeral and a reading of his work was given to a packed Carnegie Hall. There are monuments to him in Moscow and Kiev, and streets named after him in New York and Tel-Aviv. Today he is generally known, if at all, as the author of the stories on which the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* is based; but for those fortunate enough to have discovered him, his work is a source of endless pleasure.

Born Solomon (Sholem) Rabinowitz in 1859 in Pereyaslavl, then Russia but now the Ukraine, he first began to publish stories at the age of twenty under the name 'Sholem Aleichem', the Yiddish greeting which means 'Peace be with you'. By the time *Tevye the Milkman* appeared in 1894 the author's name had already become familiar to readers of newspapers and periodicals, and he went on to

become the most admired and beloved of Yiddish writers. Many years later Sholem Aleichem was known in the United States as 'the Jewish Mark Twain' (for reasons which went beyond the fact that both authors wrote under pseudonyms), but when the two finally met Twain graciously responded that he considered himself to be the American Sholem Aleichem.

In Russia, where Jews were denied full citizenship and forced to live in designated areas, anti-Semitism was an accepted fact of life. But the spirit of revolution which was rising in Russian society found its reflection in Jewish political, artistic and literary circles. Sholem Aleichem was part of a movement among Russian Jewish intellectuals which championed Jewish culture, Zionism and the Yiddish language. Hebrew may have been the accepted language for worship and for serious written works, but the everyday

language used by ordinary people was Yiddish – and Sholem Aleichem wanted to write for, and about, ordinary people. He wanted to express the courage and spirit with which poor people faced hardship. As he said: ‘Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, and a tragedy for the poor.’

The humour in *Tevye the Milkman* has its roots in the persecution and oppression that Jews were obliged to suffer in Russia; it expresses a spirit that refuses to be crushed by hardship. Although in the first story, ‘Tevye Wins a Fortune’, Tevye’s innate kindness makes him rich, by the next story he has lost it through his trusting nature, and in the following stories his love and care for his family bring him more pain than pleasure. Yet even though he complains bitterly to God about His unfair treatment of him, he never loses the faith which gives him the strength to survive.

The history of the Jews in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russia makes depressing reading. They were obliged to live in the Pale of Settlement, excluded from official positions, unfairly taxed,

barred from various occupations, restricted in schools and universities, and drafted into the army in disproportionate numbers from the age of twelve to serve a virtual life sentence. Universal anti-Semitism resulted in a widespread belief in the absurd ‘blood libel’: stories in which Jews murdered Christian children in order to use their blood to bake Passover unleavened bread. The Jews were made scapegoats for revolutionary unrest and government failures, and the authorities either actively supported or turned a blind eye to the pogroms in which they were massacred. Sholem Aleichem himself was present during one such pogrom in Kiev: he witnessed it from the window of a hotel in which he and his family had taken refuge. This unremitting persecution of Jews led to the enormous exodus westward at the turn of the century, when millions settled in England and America.

Sholem Aleichem’s descriptions of life in the *shtetl* have their pictorial equivalent in the paintings of Mark Chagall. It was with considerable insight that the creators of the musical based on the Tevye stories

chose for its title the figure of Chagall's fiddler on the roof – a visual image of the indomitable spirit of mankind (here specifically that of the Jewish people) as it rises above oppression and adversity.

Sholem Aleichem wrote for the people, and perhaps he would have been delighted for his work to reach such a vast audience through its being translated into a musical play. Just as Eliza Doolittle from Shaw's *Pygmalion* and Dolly Levi from Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* are familiar to millions more people through their musical alter egos in *My Fair Lady* and *Hello Dolly*, so Sholem Aleichem's Tevye has become known to an immeasurably greater public through *Fiddler on the Roof*.

However, in the transition from page to stage, even if much is gained, something vital is necessarily lost. What is impossible to reproduce is the author's voice: his literary style, his turn of phrase, his wit – in sum, the direct experience of being in his company. But, happily, different versions of any artistic work are able to co-exist. Popular musicals, operas and films do

not banish from library shelves the books which inspired them. On the contrary, they inspire new readers. And where an author of genius is concerned, his work is able to transcend barriers of time and language. For *Tevye the Milkman* we are fortunate to have the translation of Frances and Julius Butwin to bring us the spirit of the original Yiddish.

The enduring success of the Tevye stories on stage, screen and in print is a tribute to the universal appeal of the author's creation. You don't have to be Jewish to appreciate Tevye's battles with poverty, authority, discrimination and a rebellious family. We all know what it is to have troubles. As Sholem Aleichem himself said with characteristic wit: 'No matter how bad things get, you got to go on living, even if it kills you.'

Notes by Neville Jason

Credits

From *The Old Country* by Sholem Aleichem translated by Frances and Julius Butwin and *Tevye's Daughters* by Sholem Aleichem translated by Frances Butwin (both published by Valentine, Mitchell (London) 1973). By kind permission of Dr Joseph Butwin and Random House.

Produced by Peter Walton and Neville Jason

Recorded by Norman Goodman, edited by Malcolm Blackmoor at Motivation Sound Studios (www.motivationsound.co.uk)

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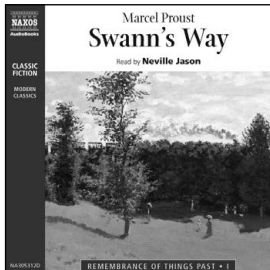
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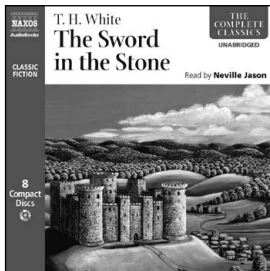
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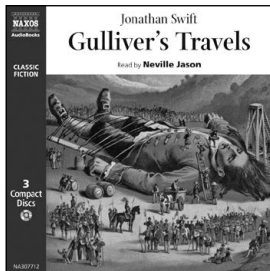
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