

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

James Joyce

# Finnegans Wake

Read by **Jim Norton**  
with **Marcella Riordan**

NA596012D

**70<sup>th</sup>**  
Anniversary  
Edition

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BOOK I: THE BOOK OF THE PARENTS

**[The fall]**

- ① 'riverrun, past Eve and Adam's...' 10:18  
The scene is set and the themes of history, the fall, the twin brothers and 'Bygmester Finnegan' set out. HCE has fallen ('Hic Cubat Edilis'), we have attended his wake, and now he lies like a giant hill beside his Liffeying wife (Apud Libertinam Parvulam).
- ② 'Hence when the clouds roll by, jamey...' 5:28  
We enter the Wellington museum in Phoenix Park ('The Willingdone Museyroom'). The mistress Kathe is our guide.
- ③ 'So This Is Dyoublong?' 7:03  
Leaving the museum we find the landscape transformed into an ancient battlefield and recall the events of 566 and 1132 AD as recalled in 'the leaves of the living of the boke of the deeds'. A strange looking foreigner appears over the horizon. It is a Jute. He converses with a suspicious native Irishman: Mutt. Mutt's exclamation 'Meldundleize!' is the first of many references to Isolde's final aria, the Liebestod, from Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, which begins: 'Mild und leise...'
- ④ '(Stoop) if you are abcdminded, to this claybook...' 7:17  
We are brought back abruptly to the present and to tales hinting at scandal. Gradually the wake scene re-emerges: 'Anam muck an dhou (soul to the devil)! Did ye drink me doornail!' HCE (Mr Finnemore) is encouraged to lie easy. There's nothing to be done about it – either the sin was committed or it wasn't. Either way it was HCE who caused the hubbub in the first place.

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## [HCE: his name and reputation]

- 5 'Now (to forebare for ever so little...)' 8:12  
How did Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker come by his outlandish name? One account places him as a gardener (Adam?), whose innocent answer to the king 'aw war just a cotchin on thon bluggy earwuggers' may have led to his nickname. In any case the letters HCE, by which he has come to be known, have given rise to a number of questionable interpretations. And three drunken Welsh soldiers have started a rumour about HCE exposing himself to 'a pair of dainty maidservants in the swoolth of the rushy hollow'.
- 6 'Twas two pisononse Timcove's...' 7:15  
It was two poisonous tinkers, Treacle Tom and Frisky Shorty, who really started the gossip when they retold the tale to three downandouts, including Hosty, the busker and balladeer, who promptly set the whole story to music.
- 7 'The wararrow went round, so it did...' 1:55  
And the result was...
- 8 'The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly' 3:53  
(The music for the ballad is fully notated by Joyce in A Major!)  
Two puns here are particularly worth noting:  
(i) 'A Nation Once Again' was the old Republican anthem.  
(ii) The French for earwig is 'Perce oreille'.

## [His trial and incarceration]

- 9 'Chest Cee! Sdense! Corpo di barragio!' 5:56  
That ballad let loose a barrage of poisonous reports – several of which are recorded here, in the form of testimonies at HCE's trial. 'His mildewed cheek' refers to *Tristan und Isolde* again, but the 'tiny victorienne, Alys' is one of many references to Lewis Carroll who (like HCE) was a stutterer and (like Joyce) an inventor of fantastic dreamworlds and dream language.

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- 10 'One of our coming Vauxhall ontheboards...'  
A series of interviews ensues. 4:58
- 11 'But resuming enquiries.'  
A final report concerns a 'huge chain envelope' (HCE)... 'subpencilled by yours  
A Laughable Party'(ALP). 'Anna's incriminating letter – discovered, as we shall hear later,  
by a hen pecking about on a rubbish dump – may have been the final nail in Earwicker's  
coffin. HCE himself kept a list 'of all abusive names he was called' and some of them  
are listed here. 5:57
- 12 'And thus, with this rochelly exetur of Bully Acre...'  
The testimonies are complete and we can see HCE again as an ancient hero.  
'Animadiabolum, mene crededisti mortuum' is dog Latin for: 'Soul of the devil  
do you think me dead?'HCE is reduced again to a slumbering mass. 2:37

### **[The Manifesto of ALP]**

- 13 'In the name of Annah the Allmaziful...'  
This is a lecture on the mysterious letter (or manifesto) written by Anna Livia.  
A study of the literature on the subject and of the remains of the letter itself, is as  
confusing as a novel by James Joyce; but isn't a written text rather like a woman's clothing,  
– 'full of local colour and personal perfume and suggestive, too, of so very much more'? 8:04
- 14 'About that original hen'  
Now we hear something of the history of the letter's discovery, and get a first glimpse  
of its contents ('Dear whom it proceeded to mention Maggy...') which are fragmentary  
due to the decomposition of the paper during its burial in the dump. 6:10

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- 15 'Let us now, weather, health, dangers, public orders...'  
The professor's (Joyce's?) lecture is briefly interrupted by his less articulate brother (Shaun?) – 'We cannot see aye to aye. We cannot smile noes from noes.' Undeterred, the professor continues on the themes of watermarks, the relative unimportance of signatures and the potential in words to mislead. It has always been thus: 'the lightning look, the birding cry, awe from the grave, everflowing on the times.'
- 10:05

### **[Quiz night and the fable of the Mookse and the Gripes]**

- 16 'So? Who do you no tonigh, lazy and gentleman?'  
Now we are to be tested on all the characters and themes so far encountered – Finn MacCool, Anna Livia, the major cities of Ireland and 'the Maggies' (the temptresses).
- 7:41
- 17 'What bitter's love but yearning...'  
This question seems to be addressed by a rejected lover to the temptress Isolde (Iseult, Isobel...), and the answer is her lengthy monologue, which in many ways looks forward to the reminiscences of Anna at the very close of the book.
- 5:02
- 18 'If you met on the bing a poor acheseyeld from Ailing...'  
A question in the form of a schoolboy rhyme is answered by the professor first in rather scholarly terms. Since his pupils appear not to follow, he begins again with a fable:
- 2:46
- 19 'The Mookse and the Gripes'  
Translated from the Javanese(!), this slice of Alice in Wonderland (The Mock Turtle and the Griffon) is at the same time a bit of Irish history. The Mookse is both Pope Adrian IV (an Englishman) and King Henry II, while the Gripes is Lawrence O'Toole, Bishop of Dublin at the time of Henry's invasion of Ireland in 1171 AD.
- 9:59

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- 20 'Nuvoletta in her lightdress, spunn of sixteen shimmers...' 6:25  
Suddenly Nuvoletta (Alice, or Isobel in HCE's pub?) is looking down over the bannisters at the squabbles of the Mookse and the Gripes below. 'I see, she sighed. There are menner.' Then dusk falls, leaving only an elm tree and a stone. Nuvoletta's 'lightdress fluttered' and 'she was gone'.

### [Shem the penman]

- 21 'Shem is as short for Shemus as Jem is jokey for Jacob' 7:17  
Shem (Joyce) is described in unflattering terms by his brother Shaun. He is a low sham who trots out 'the whole lifelong swrine story of his entire low cornaille existence' and tales of 'Mr Humhum' (Earwicker). He fled from Ireland 'one hailcannon night' and went to live in Switzerland to devote his life to 'Poisse' (Poesy). And he wrote his 'usylesly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles' (Ulysses) and sang 'infinitely better than Baraton McGlucklin' (John McCormack). (In 1902 and again in 1904 Joyce appeared on the same concert platform as McCormack.)

- 22 'JUSTIUS (to himother): Brawn is my name 6:07  
Now Shaun addresses Shem directly. There is real venom in his hatred. Shem is simply mad. In reply, Shem (MERCIOUS) points out that they are both sons of the same mother. Gradually he seems to lose his identity altogether in the chattering waters of that mother, 'gossipaceous Anna Livia'.

### [The Washers at the Ford]

- 23 'O tell me all about Anna Livia!' 6:49  
Two washerwomen gossip about the exploits of HCE and ALP as they pound their washing in the Liffey. Their conversation is peppered with references to the world's rivers: 'the mouldaw stains', 'the dneepers of wet', 'the gangres of sin in it'.

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- 24 'By earth and the cloudy...' 8:57  
They read from Anna's letter (though it reads rather differently from the one we encounter elsewhere), and they discuss how Anna brought presents for all her children ('a Christmas box apiece for aisch and iveryone of her childer').
- 25 'We'll meet again...' 4:33  
And though HCE had 'seven dams to wive him' it was Anna Livia 'who was the spouse'. As they chatter, night begins to fall, and the two women turn to tree and stone ('My foos won't moos': I can't move my feet) – 'beside the rivering waters of...hitherandthithering waters of. Night!'

BOOK II: THE BOOK OF THE SONS

**[The Children's Hour]**

- 26 'Every evening at lighting up o'clock sharp...' 9:16  
At the Phoenix Playhouse, nightly, plays 'The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies'. First the cast list is announced, then the rest of the production team and finally the plot summarised. It is a play about 'Chuff' and 'Glugg' – two brothers – and twenty-eight 'delightome' girls (The Floras) from St Bride's Finishing Establishment. All the girls love Chuff, but only his mother loves Glugg; the girls tease him mercilessly: 'Ni, he make peace in his preaches and play with esteem.'
- 27 'Yet, ah tears, who can her mater be?' 4:37  
As the flower maidens chase Glugg away, only Isa (Isolde) remains – 'a glooming in the gloaming' – sad that Glugg has rejected her attentions. The girls ('the ingelles') return and dance a circular dance round Chuff. Meanwhile Glugg (or is it Shaun or HCE?) lies groaning 'foulend up' – dazed and now laid in his grave. But Lo, he rises! And confesses. 'His Thing went the wholeway retup Suffrogate Strate.'

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- 28 'Home all go...'  
Eventually the children's play comes to an end as evening comes and they must return home. Finally a prayer: 'Loud heap miseries upon us, yet entwine our arts with laughters low!' 2:14

### **[Bride Ship and Gulls (HCE's dream)]**

- 29 '– Three quarks for Muster Mark!'  
First the song of the gulls mocking King Mark, whose bride Isolde will be making love to young Tristan aboard the ship carrying her from Ireland. Four old men (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and a donkey will witness their lovemaking, and it will make their mouths water. 11:26

- 30 'Hear, O Hear, Iseult la Belle!'  
The chapter closes with a prayer for Iseult la belle (Isolde). 2:24

## BOOK III: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE

### **[Shaun before the people]**

- 31 'Hark!Tolv two elf kater ten (it can't be) sax'  
Night watchmen call the hour and HCE continues to dream. A figure appears from the misty 'fogbow'. It is Shaun – the postman. Presenting himself to the populace, he is now interrogated. It was Shaun who delivered the fateful letter – who gave it to him? Of course Shaun was just doing his job. And where does he work anyway? Well of course he works extremely hard, walking 'sixty odd eilish mires a week.' 10:41



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- 32 ' – So vi et! we responded. Song! Shaun, song!' 9:34  
Shaun declines to sing, but instead relates the fable of The Ondt and the Gracehopper. In this fable the Gracehopper represents Shem (James) and the Ondt represents Shaun (Stanislaus). The Gracehopper wastes his time on art and literature, while the Ondt is 'sair, sair sullemn and chairmanlooking'. But the Gracehopper eats himself out of house and home and it is the Ondt who ends up in the ascendant, with riches and fine food.
- 33 'The thing pleased him...'  
He recites a poem about it. 2:09
- 34 ' – Now? How good you are in explosion'  
The people applaud Shaun's fable and ask if he is able to interpret the 'Shemletters'. Shaun is dismissive – 'it is a pich of scribble, not wortha bottle of cabbis'. His celebrated brother should be placed in irons. 'Every dimmed letter in it is a copy and not a few of the silbils and wholly words....How's that for Shemese?' In his anger Shaun keels over and, like a huge barrel, rolls away out of earshot and vanishes. 6:33
- [HCE and ALP – their bed of trial]**
- 35 'What was thaas? Fog was whaas? Too mult sleepth.  
Let sleepth' 8:44  
Dawn is approaching and the dream is almost over. While Isobel, the publican's daughter, lay sleeping upstairs, and while HCE (Watchman Havelook) moved around downstairs collecting the empties, Kate the Slop, thinking she heard a knock, went downstairs and caught him naked 'in his honeymoontrim...with the clookey in his fistball.' Now, night after night his trial is reenacted, and the proper sentence is corporal amputation'.

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- 36 'In their bed of trial, on the bolster of hardship...'  
But now, HCE and ALP are in their bed. The scene is described as in a playscript, and we discover that, in fact, they are called Mr and Mrs Porter. In two rooms upstairs are their children – daughter Buttercup and the two twin boys asleep in one bed. 'On heartsleeveside' is Frank Kevin, and 'on codliverside' is Jerry, who has been crying in his sleep. 9:42
- 37 'Jeminy, what is the view...'  
Now we see another view of the Porters in bed, but this time the male form seems to obscure the female. Our view of his buttocks is compared to a map of Phoenix Park. Mrs Porter has gone upstairs to comfort the crying Jerry and Mr Porter calls up to her 'Li ne dormis?'. Mrs Porter, explaining to her husband 'he sighed in sleep', returns to bed. 5:14
- 38 'Now their laws assist them...'  
Husband and wife, the Porters, are all husbands and wives, but principally they are the pair of whom Hosty sang in the Ballad of Perse O'Reilly. 3:59
- 39 'O, O, her fairy setalite...'  
And now HCE is moved to attempt lovemaking with his wife – 'kickakick, she had to kick a laugh' – and the event may be seen by the man in the street as a shadow play on the window blind. The description is given in cricketing terms ('slogging his paunch about', 'after the rising bounder's yorkers', 'with a flick of the bails for lubrication') and the result is not a great success ('You never wet the tea!'). The hotel rules remind us that privacy and discretion are of the essence, or everyone will know your business. 'Tiers, tiers and tiers. Rounds.' This is the nightly routine. 6:49

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BOOK IV

**[Ricorso (Return)]**

- 40 'Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas!' 5:41  
The sanskrit word for 'twilight' suggests the sun rising in the East. We are urged to wake up and begin the cycle anew, and reminded that 'genghis is ghoon for you'. 'A hand from the cloud emerges' bringing light and guiding us again to Howth Castle and Environs ('Hill of Hafid, knock and knock').
- 41 'You mean to see...' 6:12  
We have been having a sound night's sleep and now it is about to 'rolywholyover' and begin again. It was a long dark night. Much has happened, but no time has passed – 'Upon the thuds trokes...it will be exactly so fewer hours by so many minutes of the ope of the diurn...'. Nor can the locality be pinned down exactly, but what we do know is that 'Father Times and Mother Spacies boil their kettle with their crutch. Which every lad and lass in the lane knows.'
- 42 'The cry of Stena chills the vitals of slumbring...' 5:00  
We are passing from sleep into the 'wikeawades world', though it was all so agreeable touring the dreamworld with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and their dappled ass. But today is bound to be a lovely day for marriages in the open. Forget what has gone, but remember it. The whole cycle will repeat and all the particles of that decomposed letter will be reassembled and will be on the table at breakfast, 'as sure as herself pits hen to paper and there's scribings scrawled on eggs.'

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- 43 'Dear. And we go on to Dirdump. Reverend' 6:23  
At last we read the contents of the letter. It is a chatty letter in which ALP berates all the gossipers and rumour mongers, and praises the HCE whose funeral will take place on Tuesday. She wishes it was she under that burial mound. He wasn't so bad. And to those who have wagged on about the rhythms in her twofold bed – here's your answer: The one who is dead beneath the Hill of Howth is another hero. The Earwicker of 'our hamefame' is still asleep, about to arise 'erect, confident and heroic'.
- 44 'Soft morning city! Lsp! I am leafy speafing' 10:47  
The letter dealt with, we find Anna Livia in bed in the early morning, as a leaf taps the bedroom window. Her thoughts are of her hero – Earwicker – and of her family, and of her other self, the river Liffey.
- 45 'I've lapped so long...' 10:38  
She recalls her watery beginnings ('It's something fails us. First we feel. Then we fall. And let her rain now if she likes') and, as the Liffey, drifts out into the vast ocean – her 'cold mad feary father' – rushing into his arms, to be taken up and fall again as rain at the river's source. 'A way a lone a last a loved a long the'

**Total time: 5:09:56**

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**James Joyce**

(1882–1941)

# Finnegans Wake

Even before James Joyce published *Finnegans Wake* in 1939 it would have been anticipated as a novel of great importance. After all, the author of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* had been working on it for 17 years. What's more, Joyce, with his talent for generating both publicity and an atmosphere of mystery, had already published short sections of the Work in Progress as separate stories, apparently with the idea of giving his public a 'taster' of what was to come – and also providing some much needed income along the way.

These 'tasters' may, as Anthony Burgess suggests,<sup>1</sup> have led his public to expect a work of almost childlike charm. 'The Ondt and the Gracehopper' is a parody of a fable by La Fontaine (*The Ant*

*and the Grasshopper*) written in difficult but amusing language reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*. 'The Mookse and the Griperes' – one of the most difficult passages in the novel – is also deceptive because of its fairy-tale style. It begins: 'Eins within a space and a weary wide space it wast, ere whoned a Mookse...', and it ends: 'But the river tripped on her by and by, lapping as though her heart was brook: Why, why, why! Weh, oh weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay!' Such charm may allay the unease of the reader who on first reading (but possibly also on second and third) might find it hard to decipher the precise meaning of these fables.

Another section published separately – in which two washerwomen gossip about the exploits of Anna Livia Plurabelle – ('O tell me all about Anna Livia! I want to hear all about Anna Livia! Well, you

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<sup>1</sup> Burgess A. *Here Comes Everybody*, Faber and Faber, 1965 p185

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know Anna Livia...') – is imbued with such musicality and so many delicious watery puns, including references to hundreds of the world's rivers, that a reader may be less concerned to know the precise background to the gossip. For the language takes us with it, and as the washerwomen turn into tree and stone on the river bank and night falls, the poetic conclusion is satisfying in itself: 'Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!'

As Samuel Beckett wrote, in his essay *Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce*:<sup>2</sup> 'His writing is not about something; it is that something itself... When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep... When the sense is dancing, the words dance.'

And yet the novel certainly is 'about something', and on its publication there must have been rather widespread dismay when enthusiastic fans of *Ulysses* discovered how difficult Joyce had made it for them to discover what that 'something'

might be. Now, at least there was a title – *Finnegans Wake* – and from this title alone a number of deductions could be made. One could assume that these words had more than one connotation. In this case all the analyses lead in a similar direction. Finnegan, a common enough Irish name, contains within it the suggestion of an end and a beginning (Fin/again). It might also recall the popular children's round concerning Michael Finnegan: '...he grew whiskers on his chin again; the wind came up and blew them in again; poor old Michael Finnegan, begin again...'

Certainly, an end is implied in the notion of a wake – where the lamentation (or merrymaking) beside the corpse is intended to escort the soul to its afterlife; but a beginning, too, for after sleep, we wake. And some readers may be familiar with an old popular Irish American ballad called *Finnegan's Wake*, which had been a favourite of Joyce's brother Stanislaus when, as youngsters, they joined in the family musical evenings.

The fall and resurrection of Finnegan the hod-carrier is a kind of modern myth with obvious resonances in Joyce's

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<sup>2</sup> Beckett S. in *Our Exagmination around his Factification for Incarnation of Work in Progress*, Faber and Faber, 1972 p14

## FINNEGAN'S WAKE

*Tim Finnegan lived in Walkin Street,  
A gentleman Irish mighty odd.  
He had a tongue both rich and sweet,  
An' to rise in the world he carried a hod.  
Now Tim had a sort of a tipplin' way,  
With the love of the liquor he was born,  
An' to help him on with his work each day,  
He'd a drop of the craythur every morn.*

### Chorus

*Whack folthe dah, dance to your partner,  
Welt the flure, yer trotters shake,  
Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.*

*One morning Tim was rather full,  
His head felt heavy which made him shake,  
He fell from the ladder and broke his skull,  
So they carried him home his corpse to wake,  
They rolled him up in a nice clean sheet,  
And laid him out upon the bed,  
With a gallon of whiskey at his feet,  
And a barrel of porter at his head.*

*His friends assembled at the wake,  
And Mrs Finnegan called for lunch,  
First they brought in tay and cake,  
Then pipes, tobacco, and whiskey punch.  
Miss Biddy O'Brien began to cry,  
'Such a neat clean corpse, did you ever see,  
Arrah, Tim avourneen, why did you die?'  
'Ah, hould your gab,' said Paddy McGee.*

*Then Biddy O'Connor took up the job,  
'Biddy,' says she, 'you're wrong, I'm sure,'  
But Biddy gave her a belt in the gob,  
And left her sprawling on the floor;  
Oh, then the war did soon enrage;  
Twas woman to woman and man to man,  
Shillelagh law did all engage,  
And a row and a ruction soon began.*

*Then Micky Maloney raised his head,  
When a noggin of whiskey flew at him,  
It missed and falling on the bed,  
The liquor scattered over Tim;  
Bedad he revives, see how he rises,  
And Timothy rising from the bed,  
Says, 'Whirl your liquor round like blazes,  
'Thanam o'n dhoul, do ye think I'm dead?'*



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novel. Clear references to the song, and paraphrases from it, are to be encountered throughout the book: 'Wan warning Phill fild tipping full, his howd feeled heavy, his hoddit did shake...' But at the same time, the mythical hero of this novel is another 'Finn' – the legendary Irish giant Finn MacCumhal. According to Richard Ellman, Joyce later informed a friend: 'He conceived of his book as the dream of old Finn, lying in death beside the river Liffey and watching the history of Ireland and the world – past and future – flow through his mind like flotsam on the river of life.'<sup>3</sup>

Nothing less than the history of Ireland and the world, then, is the subject of Joyce's novel. But there is yet another incarnation of hero Finn – a rather more immediate fictitious protagonist – one Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, publican, a lumbering fellow with a stutter, a hump on his back and a rather disreputable past, for he may have been involved in some sexual impropriety in Dublin's Phoenix Park. His pub, the Mullingar, beside the

Liffey at Chapelizod, is also home to his wife Anna Livia Plurabelle, their two sons (Shem and Shaun) and their daughter Isobel (or Isolde).

In the novel's flotsam and jetsam dreamworld, however, Earwicker, Anna and the rest come and go in a shifting landscape which sometimes defies logic. Their presence is often signalled by the appearance of their initials, HCE and ALP. So we encounter Earwicker, for example, as 'Howth Castle and Environs', or 'A hand from the cloud emerges'; and Anna Livia appears as 'Amnis Limnia Permanent' or 'And the larpnates prittle'. And it is no coincidence that their pub is in the Dublin suburb of Chapelizod, an anagram of HCE, ALP and Izod (Isolde). The sons, Shem and Shaun, are twins and yet opposites. Shem, like Joyce himself, is a 'penman', an artist and man of ideas. His brother Shaun is more practical and less imaginative – a postman, antagonistic towards his more famous brother, who he considers a charlatan and degenerate.

On one level these brothers are indeed James and his brother Stanislaus, who was of the opinion that *Finnegans Wake*

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3 Ellman R. *James Joyce*, OUP, 1959 p557

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represented 'the witless wandering of literature before its final extinction'.<sup>4</sup> On another level, though, they represent all archetypal opposites – active and passive, positive and negative, Yin and Yang, East and West – as well as, for Joyce, the doctrine of the 16th-century philosopher Giordano Bruno of Nola, which sees unity in the reconciliation of opposites. Bruno the Nolan is encountered several times in *Finnegans Wake*, sometimes playfully confused with the Dublin booksellers Browne and Nolan.

A more important philosophical background to Joyce's dream history, however, is the Neapolitan Giambattista Vico, who divided human history into recurring cycles – theocratic, aristocratic and democratic ages followed by a 'ricorso', or return. These four recurring divisions of time allow us to see history as circular, like the seasons of the year or the human life cycle – birth, marriage, death, burial and resurrection. Thus, Joyce structures his entire book in this way – three large chapters and a shorter fourth

one (Ricorso), while individual sentences often refer to the Viconian cycle: 'The lightning look, the birding cry, awe from the grave, everflowing on the times/' 'A good clap, a fore wedding, a bad wake, tell hell's well'. According to Vico, each cycle is initiated by a thunderclap (a big bang?), and Joyce borrows this idea, transforming the thunderclap into a series of 100-letter words.

Central to the entire edifice of *Finnegans Wake* is Dublin itself – along with the Liffey and Howth Head – just as in *Ulysses*. Seen from across the bay of Dublin, Howth Head looks like a person asleep or laid out for a wake. Some refer to it as the sleeping princess, but for Joyce it is the sleeping (or dying) Finn MacCumhal. The River Liffey, Anna Livia, is like the cycle of life itself. From its source in the Wicklow Hills (marked on almost every map nowadays) it trickles and grows past HCE's pub and the Phoenix Park, with its monument to Wellington the Iron Duke, bringing life to the city of Dublin (Baile-atha-Cleath) and water to the Guinness Brewery ('Guinness is good for you', as Joyce regularly reminds us). From the city

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4 *ibid.* p589

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she passes out into the sea where she can be absorbed before being taken up into the atmosphere to fall again as rain on the Wicklow Hills.

Famously, *Finnegans Wake* begins and ends in mid sentence: 'A way a lone a last a loved a long the' – leading us back to 'riverrun, past Eve and Adam's...'

### **Notes by Roger Marsh**

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## A note about the abridgement

A complete recording of *Finnegans Wake* would require 16–20 compact discs. What we offer here amounts to about a quarter of the book (in terms of quantity) but does, I hope, convey a sense of the complete narrative by retaining as much as possible of what is essential and indispensable, but omitting particularly troublesome passages and five whole chapters – one from Book 1, and two each from Books 2 and 3. While there is always a sense of guilt at tampering to this extent with an author's intentions, I have been consoled by two factors. First, Joyce himself allowed part publication of the novel prior to its final appearance in full, in the form of the Tales of Shem and Shaun and Anna Livia Plurabelle, as well as the extracts which appeared in Eugene Jolas's periodical *Transition*.

Second, and more convincingly perhaps, this recording is aimed primarily at those readers who have never been able to make much headway with *Finnegans Wake* (which is most readers) and for whom even Burgess's *Shorter Finnegans*

*Wake* may seem a hard task. Five hours, I would suggest, would seem enough as a first introduction. At the same time, however, I am sure that hearing this material read with understanding will be something of a revelation, even to those who already have some familiarity with the book. For them, and for new readers, the accompanying script of the abridgement will enable a comparison of the spoken word with the written word.

**Roger Marsh**



**Jim Norton**, one of Ireland's leading actors, has worked regularly on Joycean topics, and particularly *Ulysses*, during his long career in film, television, radio and theatre. Born and brought up in Dublin, he spent his early acting years in Irish radio. He now divides his time between London and Hollywood – where, among his many parts, has been the role of Einstein on the popular TV serial *Star Trek*. He has also recorded *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T. E. Lawrence and *Ulysses* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**Marcella Riordan** began her career at The Abbey School in Dublin and has worked in theatres all over Ireland and the UK, including Druid Theatre and Lyric (Belfast). She has worked extensively on BBC Radio and RTE in Dublin. Her previous work on James Joyce text includes playing Gerty McDowell in Anthony Burgess's *Blooms in Dublin* (BBC/RTE), Zoe in *Ulysses* (RTE) and Molly Bloom for Naxos AudioBooks' recording of *Ulysses*. She was awarded Best Actress for her portrayal of Nancy Gulliver in a BBC Radio adaptation of Jennifer Johnston's *The Old Jest*.



**Roger Marsh** is primarily a composer. His music has been performed and broadcast by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, English Northern Philharmonia, Electric Phoenix, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and many others. He directs his own ensemble Black Hair and performs with Midland Music Theatre (with whom he has recorded his vocal work *Love on the Rocks*). His piece *Not a soul but ourselves* is based on texts from *Finnegans Wake*. He has produced *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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## THE MUSIC

BALLAD OF FINNEGAN'S WAKE sung by Jim Norton

**MOZART** DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE 8.660030–31

Cast, Hungarian Festival Chorus, Failoni Orchestra, Budapest, Michael Halász

**BELLINI** LA SONNAMBULA (COME PER ME SERENO) 8.550605

Luba Orgonasova, soprano, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Will Humburg  
Irish fiddle music played by Gill Pearson

**PATTERSON ARR. LIDDLE** THE GARDEN WHERE THE PRATIES GROW

John McCormack, accompanied by Edwin Schneider (1930)

**MARSH** 'NOT A SOUL BUT OURSELVES...' WERGO 60094

Electric Phoenix

**WAGNER** PARSIFAL (CHORUS OF FLOWERMAIDENS) 8.110049–50

Conducted by Karl Muck (Bayreuth 1927)

**WAGNER** TRISTAN UND ISOLDE (ISOLDE'S LIEBESTOD) 8.550498

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Johannes Wildner

JOHN PEEL

Associated Glee Clubs of America (1925)

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## THE MUSIC (cont.)

<b>BALFE</b> THE HARP THAT ONCE IN TARA'S HALLS John McCormack, accompanied by Edwin Schneider (1930)	8.120748
<b>WAGNER</b> TRISTAN UND ISOLDE (ISOLDE'S LIEBESTOD) Meta Seinemeyer, (Berlin 1928)	CD 94.511

## Credits

Post-production: Christine Harwick (speech editing), Simon Weir, Classical Recording Company (music editing)

Studio: Totally Wired, Lime Street Sound

Engineers: Keith McDonnell (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Recordings (speech)

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James Joyce  
**Finnegans Wake**

Read by **Jim Norton** with **Marcella Riordan**

**ABRIDGED AND DIRECTED BY ROGER MARSH**

*“riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs...”*

*Finnegans Wake* is a comedy, although trying to unravel its mysteries is no joke at all! Even the most devoted fans of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* have difficulty in coming to terms with the labyrinthine riddle of Joyce’s last great novel. At root, though, the book is simple, charming and deeply moving.

Publican Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, his ever-loving wife Anna Livia Plurabelle, their daughter Isobel and twin sons Shem and Shaun represent all humanity. The novel is a dream (their dream?) and also a gloss on Irish and world history. The complexities of Joyce’s multilingual puns begin to fall away in this fresh and amusing reading, making the book accessible to many would-be readers for the first time.

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Produced by  
Roger Marsh

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