

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Henry Fielding
**The History of Tom Jones
A Foundling**

Read by **Maurice West – VOICE OF THE YEAR**

in association with **THE TIMES**



NA633112D

Voice of the Year Competition

Voice of the Year Competition, introduced and sponsored by Naxos AudioBooks and The Times Books Pages, edited by **Erica Wagner**, took place in Spring 2004. Readers without any formal drama training or professional acting experience were invited to send in one recording from the set texts (a short extract of either Dickens, Austen or Kenneth Grahame) and a recording of personal choice.

The judging panel, **Martin Jarvis**, **Juliet Stevenson** and **Anton Lesser**, with **John Tydeman**, **David Timson** and **Christina Hardyment**, audiobook reviewer for The Times, under the chairmanship of Naxos AudioBooks' managing director **Nicolas Soames**, chose the winner and finalists from nearly 1000 entries.

First prize was to read a classic for Naxos AudioBooks. The winner was **Maurice West**, a 55-year-old English teacher from Croydon. His chosen piece was from **Tom Jones** and he was invited to read an extended abridgement of the same novel.

'We were very impressed by the natural storytelling talent shown by Mr West, with a strong narrative character, a sense of period style as well as a firm grasp of the many characters who appear,' said Nicolas Soames. 'In the event, he proved a totally natural storyteller, working in the professional environment of the studio in a relaxed and easy manner.'

1	In that part of the western division of this kingdom	2:26
2	Mr Allworthy had been absent a full quarter of a year in London	3:29
3	It was now the middle of May	2:14
4	Not otherwise than when a kite, tremendous bird	3:42
5	When Jenny appeared before him, Mr Allworthy took her into his study	2:13
6	Neither Mr Allworthy's house, nor his heart	2:58
7	It hath been observed, by wise men or women	4:33
8	Eight months after the celebration of the nuptials	3:42
9	There have been, in all ages and nations	2:05
10	Mrs Wilkins brought back such a confirmation	2:48
11	An affection placed on the understanding is, by many wise persons	3:48
12	We are obliged to bring our hero on the stage	4:37
13	Poor Jones spent a very melancholy night	2:22
14	The name of this gentleman	4:31
15	The reader may remember that Mr Allworthy gave Tom Jones	3:09
16	Jones was lately grown very intimate with Mr Western	2:40
17	The amiable Sophia was now in her eighteenth year	5:42
18	Now, though this young gentleman, Jones	2:23
19	Her mother first perceived the alteration in the shape of Molly	4:53
20	Just as Tom arrived at Mr Allworthy's outward gate	2:29
21	The reader will be pleased, I believe, to return with me to Sophia	3:59
22	Jones was ordered into a bed	3:59

23	If Jones could hope to find no bar to his happiness from the daughter	3:21
24	Molly remained a few moments in silence	3:49
25	The infidelity of Molly, which Jones had now discovered	4:59
26	Mr Western was become so fond of Jones	5:35
27	Neither Thwackum nor Square were much satisfied with their legacies	2:53
28	Jones retired from the company, into the fields	3:16
29	When he perceived the enemy's approach, leaped forth our hero	3:04
30	The rest of Mr Western's company were now come up	3:52
31	To Mr Western's house	4:08
32	Mr Allworthy had been engaged to dine with Mr Western	4:05
33	Sophia was in her chamber, reading	3:43
34	Mr Blifil soon arrived	5:39
35	Soon after Jones had left Mr Western, his sister came to him	2:11
36	Mr Allworthy was now retired from breakfast with his nephew	6:20
37	Jones was commanded to leave the house immediately	4:39
38	Sophia had passed the last twenty-four hours	3:45
39	Mrs Western had been engaged abroad all that day	2:14
40	The morning in which Mr Jones departed	3:50
41	Mrs Western proposed not only an immediate conclusion	2:51
42	Mrs Honour no sooner heard a piece of news	4:04
43	We left Mr Jones on his road to Bristol	3:50
44	As for the landlord, he was prevented by his fears	2:39

45	The other officers who marched with him were a French lieutenant	5:03
46	Jones endeavoured to close his eyes, but all in vain	5:05
47	The clock had now struck five when Jones awaked from a nap	4:22
48	In the morning Jones grew a little uneasy	5:17
49	Mr Jones and Partridge, or Little Benjamin	5:04
50	Jones presently ran to lift up the old gentleman	5:56
51	The day began to break, when Jones walked forth	3:07
52	Jones helped Northerton upon his legs	2:54
53	Mr Jones and his fair companion no sooner entered the town	5:34
54	A serjeant and a file of musqueteers	3:58
55	We think it no disparagement to our hero	3:45
56	The fair one, enraged at her frequent disappointments	2:40
57	While our lovers were entertaining themselves	1:47
58	Now the little trembling hare	5:02
59	The landlady, remembering that Susan had been the only person	3:52
60	The lady had no sooner laid herself on her pillow	2:40
61	Sophia (for it was she herself) lay reclining her lovely head on her hand	3:57
62	It was now past five in the morning	4:01
63	Jones having, at length, shaken Mr Western off	4:11
64	Before we proceed any farther in our history	4:34
65	Sophia, having directed her guide to travel through bye-roads	2:25
66	Sophia now, at the desire of her cousin	3:57

67	At length we are once more come to our hero	4:08
68	Partridge began to prophesy	3:59
69	They were got about two miles beyond Barnet	5:30
70	From that figure which the Irish peer, who brought Sophia to town	4:32
71	To dissuade Sophia from the match was an endeavour of the same kind	5:32
72	Our company brought together in the morning	3:31
73	Mr Nightingale, having taken a turn or two with his companion	5:50
74	Jones grew still more and more impatient to see Sophia	4:25
75	Mr Jones was rather earlier than the time appointed	4:48
76	This point being cleared up	4:24
77	Jones had not been long gone	5:01
78	Jones was no sooner alone than he eagerly broke open his letter	5:18
79	The clock had now struck seven	3:25
80	As to Squire Western	3:39
81	We shall now proceed to show by what method the squire discovered	3:28
82	Jones was certainly at this instant in one of the most disagreeable	3:47
83	Mr Nightingale came into Jones' room	3:23
84	After some hesitation, Jones, upon the strength of this assurance	3:46
85	We must now convey the reader to Mr Western's lodgings	4:49
86	By the means of Black George	3:57
87	The extraordinary tenderness which I have for my heroine	2:29
88	Love had taken too deep a root in the mind of Lord Fellamar	4:22
89	Mr Jones, at the appointed hour, attended on Mrs Fitzpatrick	3:28

90	The reader hath been already often informed of the jealous temper	4:47
91	Mr Allworthy and Mrs Miller were just sat down to breakfast	3:17
92	Mrs Miller had not long left the room when Mr Western entered	4:12
93	Sophia's ill stars were not contented with all that she had suffered	5:27
94	Whether it was that Fortune was apprehensive lest Jones should sink	4:59
95	Mr Jones passed about twenty-four melancholy hours by himself	5:19
96	While Jones was employed in those unpleasant meditations	2:19
97	Mr Allworthy, in talking with Mrs Miller and Mr Nightingale	5:25
98	Allworthy recollected Partridge the moment he came into the room	3:17
99	"Mr Allworthy," says she	3:52
100	Allworthy was interrupted by the arrival of Mr Dowling	5:56
101	At length Mr Allworthy arrived at Mr Western's	3:24
102	"If this be your resolution," replied Allworthy	3:05
103	When Allworthy returned to his lodgings	3:05
104	Allworthy then acquainted Jones with the whole matter	2:30
105	Jones, being now completely dressed	5:53
106	At this instant Western, who had stood some time listening	4:49

Total time: 6:58:47

Henry Fielding

The History of Tom Jones

A Foundling

Henry Fielding's masterpiece, **Tom Jones**, is the odyssey of "the healthy average life of the average healthy man". Set at the time of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, it clearly shows Fielding's revulsion for this political escapade by having its hero at one point volunteer to serve as a soldier against the rebels. This serves to fix the story in a clearly defined period, just as it is situated in carefully depicted places, for it is part of Fielding's purpose to create a world recognisably real and tangible. This then allows him license to introduce improbable coincidences and last-minute revelations, such as one finds in old romances, without alienating the reader.

If Fielding *did* alienate certain readers at the time of the novel's publication, it was not for contrivances of plot but for moral reasons. He was accused of discouraging virtue and undermining religion, ridiculous charges not altogether dissimilar to those levelled by those who were outraged by Monty Python's *Life of Brian* film – especially

those who never actually saw it. Likewise, one of Fielding's severest critics, the novelist Samuel Richardson, resolutely refused to read the book.

But these negative voices were drowned out by those who responded to the great qualities of the novel. The entire first edition of **Tom Jones** sold out before the date of publication. Before the end of the year three further editions were demanded. It has never fallen out of favour since. Sir Walter Scott observed that it is "truth and human nature itself" and in our own day Kingsley Amis wrote: "Two hundred years have not dimmed Fielding's realism. His humour is closer to our own than that of any writer before the present century".

Fielding, born a gentleman's son, was in his youth not unlike the hero of his novel, at least insofar as his love life was concerned. After leaving Eton and before making his way to London, he fell in love with a young heiress whom he tried to abduct and somewhat later he eloped with Charlotte

Cradock, the model for Tom's beloved, the beautiful Sophia Western. However, that was not until after he had established himself as a successful dramatist.

He was twenty-one when his first play, **Love in Several Masques**, a comedy in five acts, reached the stage at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and he managed to compose some twenty-five theatrical pieces during the following years, establishing himself as the most popular and inventive playwright of his day. (In more recent years, George Bernard Shaw's opinion of Fielding the dramatist was that he was second only to Shakespeare.)

Fielding's best known theatre work was the hilarious **Tom Thumb**, a travesty of the grandly rhetorical heroic tragedies of John Dryden *et al*, written in imitation of the dramas of Racine and Corneille. But his most effective works were two political satires which mercilessly mocked the government of Prime Minister Robert Walpole. Too effective were they in fact since they led to the Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737. This meant, in short, stage censorship wielded by the office of the Lord Chamberlain, an institution which the nation only managed to release itself from as recently as 1967. What it meant to

Fielding was the end of his career in the theatre.

He turned to the law and after a short interlude, inspired by Richardson's novel *Pamela*, he produced a parody entitled **Shamela**, which mocked what Fielding saw as his contemporary's humourless moralising. He developed this vein into a more fully realized novel, **Joseph Andrews**, where the hero is shown struggling to defend his honour, thus making fun of the manner in which Richardson depicts his heroine defending hers until finally she more or less blackmails her would-be seducer into marrying her before she will accept his advances.

Fielding went on to write two further novels, **Jonathan Wild** being the better known and regarded, before he produced, at the age of nearly thirty-two, the incomparable **Tom Jones** in 1749.

The avowed aim of this great flowering of his genius is "to make good men wise, rather than bad men good", using as example the central figure of Jones himself, a person incapable of meanness but often wanting in that good sense which might ensure him greater happiness. His experiences lead him via the path of folly to that palace of wisdom to be found in the

arms of Wisdom herself, Sophia, who, however, is no mere symbol but is as wonderfully alive and fully realized a character as the energetic and exuberant Tom himself.

Even in such a cynical age as our own, few readers will not rejoice in the conclusion of the story where goodness is rewarded and malice confounded. A happy ending seems, as it were, unavoidable from the outset but Fielding's skill is to keep us in suspense until the very end, Tom's woes deepening and his hopes waning to the brink of disappearance so that it seems as though he must fail in his quest.

There is so much to enjoy in **Tom Jones** but surely one of the principal delights is the ever-present author himself. The humour varies from mock-heroic similes to witty asides and ironic comments upon his characters' actions but it is always genial.

As for those characters themselves, the greatest creation must be Squire Western, the irascible but essentially goodhearted country gentleman, barbarous and loudmouthed but somehow loveable. His sister, the redoubtable Mrs Western, in some ways seems to foreshadow the formidable Lady Bracknell. Then there are the kindly poltroon Partridge, the sly

deceitful Blifil, the well-meaning Mrs Miller, the preposterous Lord Fellamar, designing Lady Bellaston... a gallery as various as any reader could wish.

In 1963 a film version reached cinema screens and was awarded four Oscars. Not exactly subtle in its attempt to capture Fielding's comic vision, it deserved its success as much for bringing new readers to the book as for entertaining cinema audiences. It now looks rather dated whereas the novel is as fresh today as when it was first presented to a grateful public.

Notes by Maurice West

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

SOLER SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD, VOLUME 1 Gilbert Rowland, Harpsichord	8.553462
SOLER SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD, VOLUME 2 Gilbert Rowland, Harpsichord	8.553463
SOLER SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD, VOLUME 3 Gilbert Rowland, Harpsichord	8.553464
SOLER SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD, VOLUME 5 Gilbert Rowland, Harpsichord	8.554434

Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Henry Fielding
**The History of Tom Jones
A Foundling**

Read by **Maurice West**

Tom Jones, a foundling, is brought up by the kindly Mr Allworthy as if he were his own son. Forced to leave the house as a young man after tales of his disgraceful behaviour reach his benefactor's ears, he sets out in utter despair, not only because of his banishment but because he has now lost all hope of gaining the hand of the beautiful Sophia. But she, too, is forced to flee her parental home to escape an undesirable marriage, and as their stories and adventures intertwine, Fielding entertains us with a rich gallery of characters from all classes of society in a tale whose purpose is both comic and yet also serious, though never solemn or overstated. Tom is the first fully rounded hero in English fiction and he is as real today as he ever was.

WINNER VOICE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION • NAXOS AUDIOBOOKS & THE TIMES



Maurice West was born in Croydon, attended John Ruskin Grammar School and won an Open Scholarship to Cambridge University where he read English. After graduating, he toyed with the idea of becoming an actor and even gained a place at the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art. But unable to secure another grant, and wary of the precarious nature of the acting profession, he eventually found himself involved with local amateur theatre. For most of his adult life he has taught English to foreign students. This recording was the prize for winning the VOICE OF THE YEAR competition organised by **Naxos AudioBooks** and **THE TIMES**

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**Total time
6:58:47**