

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Wilkie Collins
The Moonstone

Read by **Clive Swift • Chris Larkin • Delia Paton**
Bill Homewood • Neville Jason

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



NA302712D

1	The Storming of Seringapatam	5:17
2	Gabriel Betteridge's account begins	7:26
3	The Indian strangers	6:47
4	Rosanna's past	11:46
5	Love strikes	5:42
6	The Birthday	6:39
7	The guests arrive	8:54
8	Sergeant Cuff arrives	10:20
9	Rosanna arouses suspicion	5:11
10	Cuff on the trail	5:09
11	Cuff declares his thoughts	5:01
12	Rosanna perplexed	11:21
13	Rosanna's fate	8:30
14	Betteridge ends his account	6:11
15	Miss Clack begins her story	9:02
16	Luncheon with Aunt Verinder	6:34
17	Aunt Verinder's request	6:53
18	Behind the curtain	9:27
19	At Brighton	8:17
20	Mathew Bruff, Solicitor	8:17
21	A strange visitor	6:34
22	Franklin Blake	7:09
23	Revelation at Cobb's Hole	4:26

24	Rosanna's last words	5:38
25	Back to London	6:33
26	Dorking and Yorkshire	9:19
27	The journal of Ezra Jennings	13:38
28	Blake resumes the story	11:27
29	An explanation – and a body	4:58
30	Sergeant Cuff's report	9:12
31	Mr Candy's letter	1:47
32	India and The Moonstone	4:07

Total time: 3:56:00

THE MOONSTONE – CAST

Gabriel Betteridge	Clive Swift
Miss Clack	Delia Paton
Mathew Bruff/Ezra Jennings	Neville Jason
Franklin Blake	Chris Larkin
Sergeant Cuff/Cousin/Mr Murthwaite	Bill Homewood

Wilkie Collins

The Moonstone

William Wilkie Collins was born in London in 1824, the son of a successful landscape painter. After working in the tea business and reading for the bar at Lincoln's Inn, he determined to become a 'man of letters' and was fortunate to acquire Charles Dickens as his literary patron. His interest in writing novels came from his early involvement in the theatre and in 1851 he became stage valet to Dickens for one of the many dramatic entertainments which Dickens and his friends and family staged for various charitable causes. Eventually, Collins was promoted and in 1856 the two writers co-starred in a play, *The Frozen Deep*, which Collins had written himself. His plays were full of drama and suspense and it was his love of the immediacy of the theatre which went on to inform his novels with the vitality and pace which are so evident in *The Moonstone* and which were to make it so popular with such a huge audience.

Like Dickens, Collins was both a popular and highly literary writer; a hundred years later, T.S. Eliot was to describe *The*

Moonstone as 'the first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels', and Collins' device of letting each 'witness' give his own version of the events owes as much to the drama of the courtroom as to the theatre. By adopting this structure Collins was able not only to sustain interest and suspense throughout a long novel based on a single event, but was also able to use his skill of characterisation to the full. Gabriel Betteridge is no ordinary old retainer; he is sought out as often for his wisdom as for his dependability and it is his beguiling voice which draws us into the story. Collins wrote that the 'Narrative of Miss Clack...proved most successful in amusing the public' and she remains one of his greatest creations, as familiar today as she was when the book was first published. Rosanna Spearman and Rachel Verinder are both strong and passionate women who do not conform to the strict Victorian archetype. In fact, Collins defied convention himself: he formed a liaison with Martha Rudd, by whom he had two daughters and a son, but whom he never married, and

continued throughout to sustain another relationship with Caroline Clow. The fact that his private life left him on the margins of respectable society may explain why Collins felt able to create characters who are less constrained by their social position than many figures in Victorian literature.

In the Preface to the first edition of the book, Collins wrote: 'The attempt made here is to trace the influence of character on circumstance. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl, supplies the foundation on which I have built this book.' However, the book is much more than this might suggest and part of Collins' success is no doubt attributable to his astute commercial sense. *The Moonstone* appeared in serial form in the popular magazine *All the Year Round* from January 4 to August 8 1868. He explained in a preface of 1871 how difficult the process had been, when he was struck down by

illness and his mother lay dying: 'I doubt if I should have lived to write another book, if the responsibility of the weekly publication of this story had not forced me to rally my sinking energies of body and mind – to dry my useless tears, and to conquer my merciless pains.' In fact, Collins suffered from recurring attacks of gout and depression and relied increasingly on laudanum for relief from his pain. The drug was freely available and no doubt he drew on his own experiences of laudanum when he wrote *The Moonstone*.

Between 1859 and 1870, Collins published four major novels, *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, *Armada* and *The Moonstone*. Although he went on to write many more novels, none was to match the perfection in style and content of *The Moonstone*. Wilkie Collins died in 1889.

Notes by Heather Godwin



Clive Swift is familiar to television audiences around the world for his comic work in *Keeping Up Appearances* but his career has been based on extensive theatrical work with the RSC and other leading British companies. Among his films have been *Excalibur* and *A Passage to India*; his radio work has included Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *From the Depths of the Waters* which won the Sony Award. In addition, he has directed extensively and played a creative role in drama teaching, instigating The Actor's Centre in London and writing *The Job of Acting*.



Chris Larkin trained at LAMDA and has since appeared in seasons at Colchester, Farnham, Clwyd and Derby. Film credits include *Angels and Insects* and *Jane Eyre*. For Naxos AudioBooks, he took the role of Walton in *Frankenstein*.



Delia Paton trained at LAMDA and after early experience in repertory and on tour she moved towards radio and television work. She has worked extensively for BBC Radio and has read several books for them. She performs her own adaptation of Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.



Neville Jason trained at LAMDA and has appeared with the English Stage Company, the Old Vic Company and the RSC, as well as with repertory theatres and in West End musicals. His many television roles include Lapointe in *Maigret*, Horatio in *Hamlet* and Prince Reynart in *Dr Who*. Formerly a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he is frequently to be heard in radio plays and readings.



Bill Homewood has an extensive record of leading classical roles with major repertory companies including the RSC. TV and film credits include *Hamlet* and *Spy Trap*; he has also recorded Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Wilkie Collins
The Moonstone

Read by **Clive Swift • Chris Larkin • Delia Paton
Bill Homewood • Neville Jason**

When Rachel Verinder inherits the Moonstone, a huge and priceless diamond, her delight turns to dismay when the gem disappears. But this is no ordinary theft. Sergeant Cuff of Scotland Yard is called in and immediately suspects an intricate plot. However, not even his powers of detection can penetrate fully the mysteries surrounding the diamond. And as we listen to each character's version of the events, layer upon layer of drama and suspense builds to the final and astonishing dénouement of the first, and most magnificent, English detective novel.

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