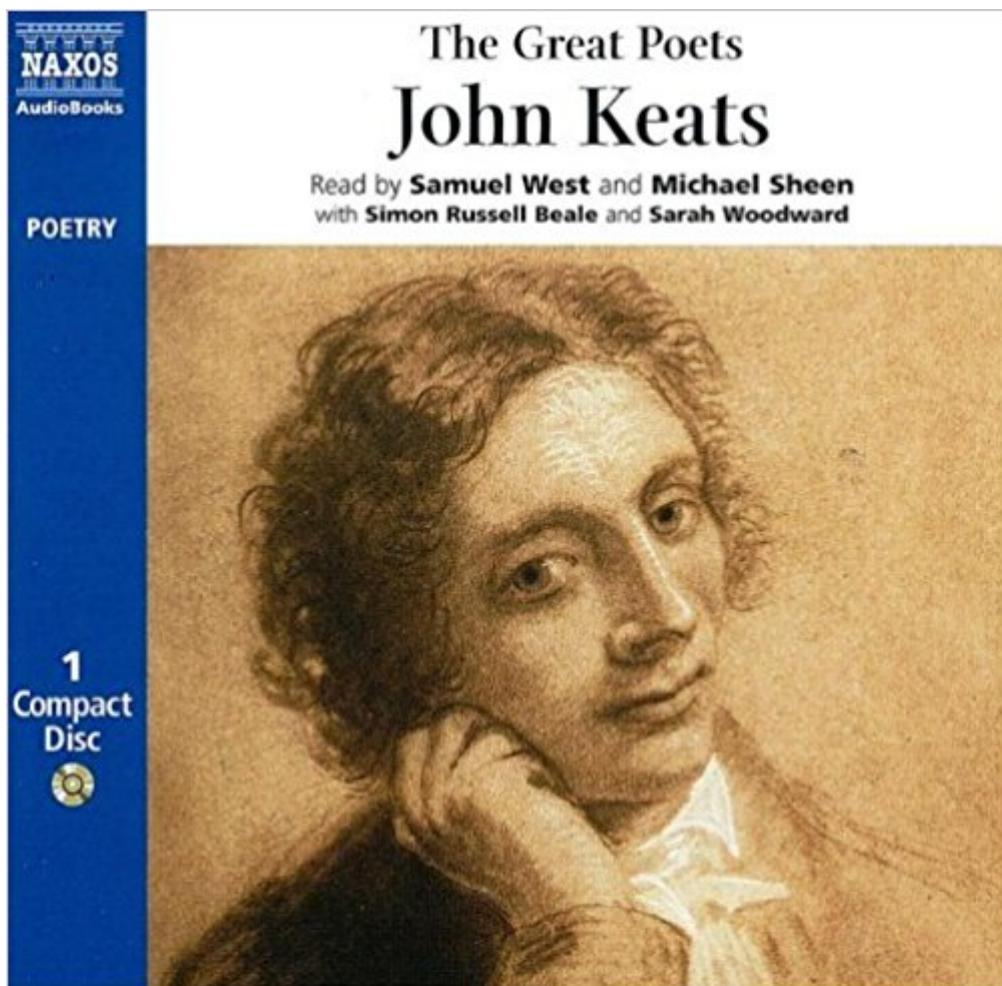


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The Great Poets John Keats



Synopsis

Long overshadowed by Jane Eyre, Villette is widely admired as one of Charlotte Brontë's finest works. This story of a young teacher at a girls school in the city of Villette is a particular challenge for the young reader for it requires maturity of vision, a fine narrative sense and a command of French! Mandy Weston, a newcomer to Naxos AudioBooks, tells the story magnificently.

Book Information

Series: Great Poets

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

All the performers have well trained, pleasing voices and give superb interpretations of these famous poetic lines. - Maine Portland, AudioFile

The elegant cadences of Keats's poems are artistically performed by a quartet of actors. Samuel West leads the production, reading the first eight poems. Michael Sheen, who performs the famous "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," has a quiet but rich voice. Simon Russell Beale performs only one piece, "There Was a Naughty Boy," giving it a brisk and vibrant reading. The long romantic narrative "Eve of St. Agnes" is performed by West and Sarah Woodward, each doing justice to the passionate lovers Porphyro and Madeline. All the performers have well trained, pleasing voices and give superb interpretations of these famous poetic lines. The notes include a brief but useful biography of Keats. R.F. © AudioFile 2008, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

I discovered Keats and have loved him since about the age of 20. I'd only heard him read once before. After much begging, a friend I made in London read "Welcome Joy & Welcome Sorrow". This was years ago. I never realized it from reading them alone, but these poems are pompous, shallow, grandiose, paradoxically usually very thin, ridiculous, not at all musical (despite Scott Fitzgerald's tears!) - they're terrible! Blackwood's and The Quarterly weren't nice, but they were right! But. About this CD (which I snatched up when I found it). Keats according to a friend of his read his poems with a heavy sing-song accent. These readers don't go that far (though I wouldn't have objected if they had), but (thank god! unlike some hideous readings of poems I've heard) there is a clear feel for the meter in them. And I would say they are well-read, clearly enunciated, easily understood and read of course by Englishmen. If you like Keats, I see no reason why you wouldn't enjoy them. Unless, like me, your love (illusion) is completely shattered and you are disenchanted. Three final notes. "La Belle Dame". If you can't tell from the title (I can never keep them straight), the version read is "knight at arms". I prefer (and thought I loved) "wretched wight". I believe the "wight" version is Keats' revision and evidently the one he preferred. Okay. Find it in an anthology! Great critics of poetry and Keats (who couldn't write a line of poetry if they tried!) know better than Keats what's good in Keats, and "knight at arms" is the one almost always anthologized. Modern Library prints "wight" and Random House's collection of poems and letters prints both. The English Oxford "complete" Keats prints "knight". "The Eve Of St. Agnes". It is done like a play. Different readers take different characters/voices in the poem. The meter is shot. Because it is in fact not a play, it's a poem. Finally, when I put this CD on, the first few poems swept over me like a wonderful, beautiful wave. The water receded.

These are outstanding recordings: great clarity and diction, and an outstanding grasp of the poetic mood expressed by Keats' poetry. My compliments to the actors who participated in this recording.

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