

Mp3 Norman George - Poe's Greatest Hits: Tales & Poems By The Master Of Horror”2 Cd Set

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Edgar Allan Poe as you've never heard him read before. Norman George ("the nearest thing to Poe in the flesh."-New York Times) portrays the master in nine of Poe's best-loved tales and poems. Includes illustrated biography of the poet. 9 MP3 Songs SPOKEN WORD: Audiobook, KIDS/FAMILY: Children's Storytelling Details: Norman George tours in "Poe Alone: The Last Appeal." He created the title roles on A&E Network's "Biography: The Mystery of Edgar Allan Poe," in Wendell Cordtz's "The Death of Edgar Poe," in WNYE-TV's "Edgar Allan Poe and His Cottage," and has portrayed the writer in educational films and in television and radio documentaries in the United States and Canada. His "La Perichole: New English Libretto" premiered with the Sarasota Opera in 1989; "The Raven and the Dove: A Romance," in Providence in 1987. VOX POE-PULI Poe and performance were made for each other. He has been credited as one of literature's first "writer-performers." Like Dickens and, later, Mark Twain (minus the fortunes they earned by doing so), Poe lectured and recited to audiences of paying customers. Platform speaking must have come naturally to this child of the stage, and we know he was acquainted with some of the leading actors and dramatists of his day. The man knew his audience. Hitching a ride on the popularity of Poe's latest tale, one enterprising Philadelphia stage troupe mounted a production of "The Gold Bug" soon after its publication. Public speakers, too, knew a good thing when they saw it: the first appearance of "The Raven" in hardcover was in a textbook of elocution. With a new century came new forms of entertainment. D. W. Griffith directed the first screen adaptation of the writer's work in 1909. What did Poe sound like? The gramophone didn't exist yet, but we have some clues."The poet's voice was low and musical," wrote scholar T. O. Mabbott, "and he spoke with a slight Southern accent." "His voice was melody itself," reminisced New Yorker Mary Gove Nichols, a frequent visitor to the family's cottage. "His voice seemed attenuated to the finest golden thread," remembered Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who'd heard Poe lecture in Boston-although another contemporary described the poet's recitations as a type of "exquisite, if objectionable 'sing-song [that] resembled music." A Richmond physician recalled that "In face, form and expression Poe strongly resembled Edwin Booth," and, years

later, another admirer compared Poe's voice favorably with the great tragedian's. We can never know for certain, but-being a Richmonder-I like to think that Poe talked like one of us, or (as Poe was in fact) like one of us who moved up Nawth and hung around with actuhs. To the list of popular recordings of Poe's works, Norman George adds an original, entertainingly plausible characterization of a voice stilled long ago. To my ear, these readings hold a trace of Old Family Richmond/Southside Virginia drawl: patrician speech, faint, now, but still echoed in tobacco towns like Rice and Farmville or in the parlors of Halifax County. Distinctive in the accent is the ou sound in words such as "house" (hoe'se, hice), and "down" (doan/dine), and "doubt" (doat/dite)-aural remnants of the city's Anglo-Scots heritage, heard also in the speech of many English Canadians (just recall TV anchorman, the late Peter Jennings' pronunciation of "U.S. Hoe'se of Representatives"). Peculiar to the modern ear may be the flattened aus, once standard in American pronunciation, applied by the actor throughout the readings, most noticeably in "The Raven": ha'nted for "haunted; unda'nted for "undaunted." A century and a half later, they survive in the way most of us say "aunt." Elements of the actor's stage interpretation carry over to the readings. Those occasional rolled Rs and the substitution of the Briton's "me" for "my" (m'soul for "my soul," etc.) are conventions of the Victorian stage that may have influenced Poe in his own recitations: deft touches I've never heard applied to the readings by any other actor. Subtler to the ear are the elided vowels in words like "garden" and "regard"-old pronunciations, preserved in the tales of Uncle Remus and still heard in parts of the South. I like the diffident "uptalk" delivery halfway through "The Raven" ("then this ebony bird beguiling? my sad fancy into smiling?), and the almost touching (nearly human?) ebullience of that maniac in "The Tell-Tale Heart." There's a suppressed edginess in these readings that distills for me the essence of the edgy Mr. Poe. We hear his works in a new (or rather, old) narrative voice: an engaging introduction for first-time listeners and a welcome addition to the archive for admirers of Norman's work. After hearing these recordings, I don't believe that any listener, Yankee or Virginian, will ever think of "The Bells" quite in the same way again. -W. Holt Edmunds, Poe Museum

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