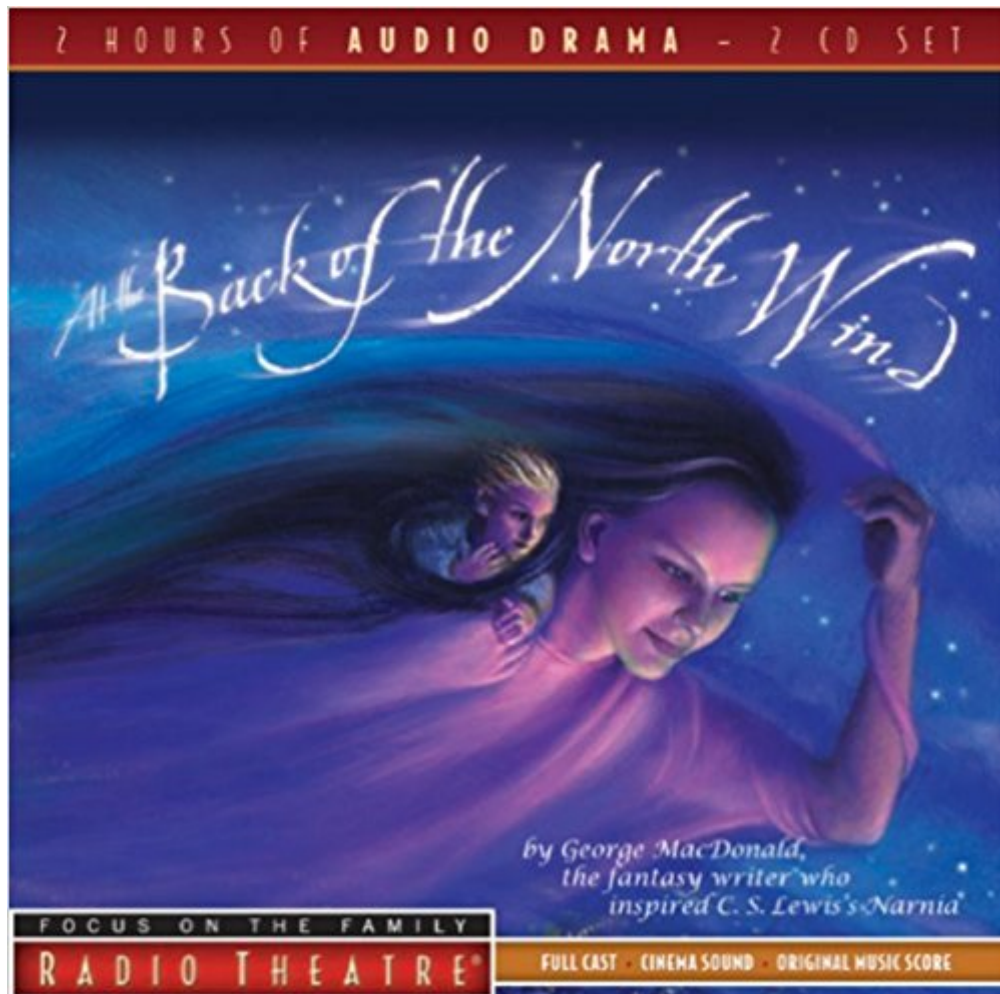




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At The Back Of The North Wind (Radio Theatre)



Synopsis

In this Radio Theatre audio drama adaptation of George MacDonald's classic story, a beautiful woman known as the North Wind blows through a small village in Victorian London, and everyday lives are mysteriously enveloped by a power and a glory. Along the way, she visits a poor stable boy named Diamond and takes him with her on her journeys. At the Back of the North Wind explores the place of death in our lives, social injustice, and our deep need for love and forgiveness. C. S. Lewis, author of the classic Chronicles of Narnia series, said of MacDonald, "What he does best is fantasy—fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic. And this, in my opinion, he does better than any man. MacDonald is the greatest genius of this kind whom I know."

Book Information

Series: Radio Theatre

Audio CD

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 184 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #748,678 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #117 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > Classics #146 in Books > Books on CD > Radio Shows #159 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > Fantasy

Age Range: 8 and up

Grade Level: 3 and up

Customer Reviews

A charming and touching children's novel that I didn't discover until age 52, it was written in England by a former Congregationalist minister in the time of Queen Victoria. It is the story of a frail, impoverished child and his family facing difficult circumstances in Dickensian London. While on the surface it seems a simple story, it is a stylistically sophisticated mix of realism and surrealism with interposed extended dream passages, original fairy tales, and mantric nursery rhymes. Its clear purpose is in moral and religious education, written to affirm both the existence and goodness of

God and the essential goodness of His creation. Never facile or preachy, the author confronts the presence of evil and adversity, and shows considerable psychological insight in the treatment of his characters. I suspect that it would be difficult for today's elementary students to read and understand the work without assistance because of its style and the alienness of its world. Older, more worldly and pseudo sophisticated middle schoolers may find it naïve or jejune. However I would encourage it for the special child and adults who still have some sense of wonder left in themselves. This particular edition is handsome and an excellent value. The novel's otherworldly magic is enhanced by the many original illustrations by preraphaelite artist, Arthur Hughes. I will be giving a copy to a right person this Christmas.

Ratings: Themes and story: 4.5 Length: 2.5 This would be a great book if shorter. Here is the slightly longer review: Point: There are a few who live in light of eternity. These few have been given a glance into the tomorrow of life. Some of those who know these individuals mock, others pity, but all recognize that the long-sighted are something special. Path: George MacDonald leads the reader through a lengthy story of a young boy's life, demonstrating how eternity is viewed by those who have never seen it and by those who have. Agreement: This book had some excellent themes, and for the attentive, a great store of character shaping thoughtfulness. Disagreement: It was very long for the story. Personal App: Things are not how they always seem - and eternity is that way. Favorite Quote: "A poet is not a boat, as you call it. A poet is a man who is glad of something, and tries to make other people glad of it too."

I first read this book years ago, & was glad to have the chance to buy it now for myself. The hardback is well-made, print easy enough to read & so far no misprints. The pictures are a nice addition to the story. He's evidently telling it to a little boy about Diamond's age & keeps the language simple enough generally -- though remember he's writing in another generation & (if you're a Yank like me) another country, so keep a dictionary handy or keep your computer fired up to look things up -- I'm one of those strange types who doesn't mind doing that. MacDonald was a Christian minister, so of course some readers will discount his writings.

Other reviewers have pointed out that *At The Back Of The North Wind* is not exactly the same in this radio-broadcast version as it is in MacDonald's book. This is strictly true. The book has some exuberant, exalted descriptive passages about traveling in the embrace of the North Wind through the sky, which words have been replaced by the soundtrack, complete with post-Romantic

symphony orchestra. And yes, some fables and stories interpolated by MacDonald himself have been removed as well. In short, decisions have been made in order to fit *At The Back Of The North Wind* for a performance to be listened to with one's undivided attention as in the theater or in a concert hall, rather than the bedtime story savored in the privacy of the family home. So this is not the same relaxing, cozy experience which some grownups demand for their children. Rather this adaptation demands a little more of its audience, and gives much in return. Juliet Stevenson's *North Wind* is thoroughly theatrical, as one might expect from the distinguished, award-winning British actress (the premiere production of *Death And The Maiden*, for example, for which she was an award winner); she is also a seasoned audio-reader, with multiple credits for audio versions of Jane Austen novels. If her laugh strikes one previous reviewer as -- what was the word? -- nasty or something, one must remember that the *North Wind* is, amongst other things, the Angel of Death; she is not exactly going to sound like Billie Burke as Glinda the Good Witch of the North from the *Wizard of Oz*, after all! Thank Providence for the presence of the late lamented actor Tom Fleming, a lifelong native of Edinburgh, whose turn as the Narrator/Storyteller of *At The Back Of The North Wind* came near the very end of his long, illustrious career as a commentator and performer. Though Fleming adheres faithfully to the King's English of MacDonald's book throughout, his Scottish accent is unmistakeable, and his vocal presence is not a clipped chilly English character, but avuncular to the point of devoted paternal affection, perfectly suited to the Aberdeenshire-born MacDonald. And rest assured, MacDonald's moral message and multi-layered spirituality, both light and shadow, are presented intact. MacDonald, after all, cut his story-telling teeth on both the intense tragic drama of traditional Scottish ballads (eg "Owen Kemp") and on the Romanticism of such Germans as Hoffman (*The Golden Pot*), Novalis (Heinrich von Ofterdingen), Goethe, Schiller, and above all Heine. What I regret is that the two dreams, one for each of two sleeping children, have been either cut or drastically shortened for the radio play. It is true that the dreams are highly visual experiences with much subjective description, and these do not translate well to an audio medium. Nevertheless, as W. H. Auden has so sensitively observed in his critique of George MacDonald himself, the descriptions of dreaming-reality are amongst the most extraordinary and noteworthy passages in all of MacDonald's writing; this adaptation is the poorer without them. With *At The Back Of The North Wind*, MacDonald created a tale with deep roots, a sturdy trunk, and, improbably, wings, to carry the story high and far over time and space: one of his best, which is saying something.

I was a little confused at first...until I figured out that there were two Diamonds, Diamond the horse

and Diamond the boy. After I got that cleared up, the story was great. George Macdonald writes so that I feel that I am there sharing all the adventures with Diamond and going along with him on his windy rides. The writer portrayed many different types of people: rich, poor, drunken, mothers, fathers, neighbors...I was thinking about going back and taking some quotes. I guess when you want to to that then the story is good. I give it a four because it was a bit confusing at times and there were a lot of poems that I felt when on and on.

This particular printing seems like it was "homemade" There is little information to publisher and content. The story however, is fantastic. Lovely story of a young boy and the North Wind. Perfect chapter sizes to read to your child!

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