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The Madman: His Parables and Poems

Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931)

Read by: David Wales Length: 46 minutes
 Language: English Style: Solo
 Genre (s): Fiction, Poetry

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The Madman, published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1918, was Khalil Gibran's first book to be published in English. The book is a collection of inspirational and thought-provoking parables and poems, many of which shine an ironic light on mankind's ambitions, ideas, beliefs, and vanity. The form and perspective of the Madman may remind the reader of some of the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Rabindranath Tagore. It includes a number of illustrations, black and white drawings that might recall William Blake and Auguste Rodin. The book was favorably reviewed by Lebanese-Palestinian poet May Ziadeh in the Egyptian magazine *Al-Hilal*.

Kahlil Gibran (January 6, 1883 – April 10, 1931) was a Lebanese-American poet, writer and visual artist best known as the author of *The Prophet*. He was born in Bisharri, Lebanon and emigrated to the United States in 1895 with his mother and three siblings, settling in the South End of Boston. He was enrolled in a class for immigrants to learn English and enrolled in art school as well, where he came to the attention of avant-garde artist and publisher Fred Holland Day. He returned to Lebanon three years later to study Arabic, returning to Boston in 1902. Shortly thereafter after he suffered the deaths of his mother and two siblings. He began publishing his work in 1904 in the *Mirror of the West*, an Arabic newspaper, and began exhibiting his art. During his first exhibition he met Mary Elizabeth Haskell, an educator and philanthropist who became an intimate lifelong friend and benefactor. Within ten years he had become well-known in the Arab-American community, publishing many original literary works and drawings in the journal *al-Funun*. *The Prophet* was published in 1923 and sold well, gaining popularity in the 1930's and becoming a staple of the 1960's counterculture. Its success made Gibran the third-best-selling poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu. He drank heavily in the years following *The Prophet* and succumbed to cirrhosis and tuberculosis at age 48. He was buried in Lebanon at Mar Sarkis Monastery, now the Gibran Museum. Kahlil Gibran Memorials have been established in Boston and Washington, D.C.