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## The Overcoat

*Nicolai Gogol (1809 - 1852) Translated by Constance Garnett*

Read by: Bob Neufeld      Language: English  
Length: 1 hour 19 minutes      Style: Solo  
Genre: Fiction

### Product Formats and Options

Format	Package	Catalog	EAN/UPC	MSLP
MP3 CD	DVD case	DB-6017	0686175923124	\$8.99
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“We all come out from Gogol’s ‘**The Overcoat**’”. This statement by Fyodor Dostoyevsky expresses the great influence of the story written in 1842. It tells the story of Akaki, a meek, balding, middle-aged copyist in the Russian government. He is a hard worker and content with his paltry lot in life, but is bullied by the younger clerks, who make fun of the shabby overcoat he wears both indoors and out. He consults with his neighbor, a one-eyed, heavy-drinking tailor, about a new coat. After scrimping and saving, he receives an unexpected holiday bonus that enables him to buy the coat. The new garment causes his standing at the office to rise a few notches. He is invited to a party after work, stays late and is accosted by ruffians on his way home who steal his overcoat and leave him shivering in the snow. Efforts to recover the coat through the police go nowhere. Advised by a co-worker to see

an important general for help, he is dressed down instead for wasting his time on such a trivial matter. Akaki walks home in the cold with no coat, falls ill the next day and dies in a fever dream. Soon thereafter stories begin circulating of a ghost haunting the streets of St. Petersburg and stealing overcoats. The story showcases Gogol’s distinctive ability to shift from tone to tone. Vladimir Nabokov wrote “with Gogol this shifting is the very basis of his art... When, as in the immortal *The Overcoat*, he really let himself go and pottered on the brink of his private abyss, he became the greatest artist that Russia has yet produced.”

**Nikolai Vassilievitch Gogol** (March 31, 1809 - March 4, 1852) was a Russian author best known for his short stories, his play the Government Inspector, and his novels Dead Souls and Taras Bulba. During his lifetime he was considered a preeminent figure of the emerging natural school of Russian realism but has since come to be known for his gifts for satire, absurdity, surrealism, and the grotesque. Born in the government of Pultowa, in Ukraine, then Little Russia, he was educated in a public gymnasium and subsequently in the Lyceum newly established at Niejinsk. In 1831 he was appointed teacher of history at the Patriotic Institution, a position he then exchanged for the professorship of history in the University of St. Petersburg. He resigned at the end of a year when it was learned that he was unqualified. From 1835 he devoted himself entirely to literature. In 1836 Gogol left Russia and lived most of the time in Rome. In 1837 he wrote Dead Souls. In 1840 he went to Russia for a short period to superintend the publication of the first volume of ‘Dead Souls,’ and then returned to Italy. In 1846 he returned to Russia and fell into a state of fanatical mysticism. One of his last acts was to burn the manuscript of the concluding portion of Dead Souls, which he considered harmful. His stories include ‘The Nose,’ Overcoat,’ and the collections ‘Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka,’ ‘Mirgorod,’ and Arabesques’.