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# The Listen List

## 2015

### Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council

**Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council** is Renee Young (chair), *NovelList*, Durham, North Carolina; Jennifer Baker, *Seattle Public Library*; Mary Burkey, *Olentangy Local Schools*, Columbus, Ohio; Diana Tixier Herald, *New Castle (CO) Branch Library*; Danise Hoover, *Hunter College Library*, New York; Joyce Saricks, *Downers Grove, Illinois*; Neal Wyatt, *Richmond, Virginia*.

The Listen List highlights extraordinary narrators and listening experiences that merit special attention by a general adult audience and the librarians who advise them. Recordings are selected because they are engaging and make one reluctant to stop listening. Titles are also named to the list because the narration creates a new experience, offering listeners something they could not create by their own visual reading and because the narrator achieves an outstanding performance in terms of voice, accents, pitch, tone, inflection, rhythm and pace. This juried list, designed for avid listeners and those new to the pleasures of stories read aloud, includes fiction and non-fiction and features voices that enthrall, delight, and inspire.

The 2015 winners are:

**Paull, Laline.** *The Bees*. Narrated by Orlagh Cassidy. Blackstone Audio/HarperAudio (ISBN: 9781483004075).

Cassidy's mesmerizing narration reveals the apian world of Flora 717, a lowly sanitation worker bee who rises through the hive's strict hierarchy amidst multiple disasters and political unrest. Richly detailed and imaginative, this riveting story is intensified by Cassidy's seductive sibilance and transcendent performance.

### Listen-alikes

- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Narrated by Clare Danes. Brilliance Audio.
- Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. Narrated by Ralph Cosham. Blackstone Audio.
- Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Windup Girl*. Narrated by Jonathan Davis. Brilliance Audio.

**Henry, David.** *Furious Cool: Richard Pryor and the World That Made Him*. Narrated by Dion Graham. Tantor Media (ISBN: 9781452645575).

Richard Pryor's rise to self-destructive superstardom is presented within the social context of African-American life during the 1960s and 70s. Channeling an array of celebrities, including a stunning embodiment of Pryor himself, Graham's raw performance captures the passion and pain that fueled Pryor's comic genius.

### Listen-alikes

- Carlin, George. *Last Words*. Narrated by Patrick Carlin and Tony Hendra. Simon & Schuster Audio.
- Richards, Keith. *Life*. Narrated by Keith Richards, Johnny Depp, and Joe Hurley. Hachette Audio.

- Belafonte, Harry. *My Song*. Narrated by Harry Belafonte and Mirron Willis. Books on Tape/Random House Audio.

**La Seur, Carrie.** *The Home Place*. Narrated by **Andrus Nichols**. Blackstone Audio/HarperAudio (ISBN: 9781483005591).

Alma Terrebonne returns home to investigate her sister's death in La Seur's elegantly written novel of landscape, danger, and regret. Nichols' elegiac and unhurried performance immerses listeners in the harshness of life in rural Montana while her masterful characterizations capture the underlying tensions of the novel.

#### Listen-alikes

- Krueger, William Kent. *Ordinary Grace*. Narrated by Rich Orlow. Recorded Books.
- Butler, Nickolas. *Shotgun Lovesongs*. Narrated by Scott Shepherd, Ari Fliakos, Gary Wilmes, Scott Sowers, and Maggie Hoffman. Macmillan Audio.
- Penny, Louise. *Still Life*. Narrated by Ralph Cosham. Blackstone Audio.

**Kidd, Sue Monk.** *The Invention of Wings*. Narrated by **Jenna Lamia and Adepero Oduye**. Penguin Audio/Recorded Books (ISBN: 9781490602707).

Lamia and Oduye flawlessly dramatize the lives of pioneering abolitionist and suffragist Sarah Grimke and her slave Handful in this graphic, luminous, and deeply affecting historical novel. Their seamless interpretation of Kidd's characters evokes the shocking realities of bigotry and suppression in the early-nineteenth-century American South.

#### Listen-alikes

- Odell, Jonathan. *The Healing*. Narrated by Adenrele Ojo. Books on Tape/Random House Audio.
- Chevalier, Tracy. *The Last Runaway*. Narrated by Kate Reading. Penguin Audio/Recorded Books.
- Kline, Christina Baker. *Orphan Train*. Narrated by Jessica Almsy and Suzanne Toren. Brilliance Audio.

**Chase, Loretta.** *Lord of Scoundrels*. Narrated by **Kate Reading**. Blackstone Audio (ISBN: 9781482966213).

When resourceful Jessica Trent is nearly ruined by the haughty Marquess of Dain, she calls his bluff and shoots him. Reading skillfully creates lively characters through tone and tempo and brilliantly conveys the couple's steamy romantic battle, delivering Chase's witty banter with sparkling verve.

#### Listen-alikes

- Heyer, Georgette. *The Grand Sophy*. Narrated by Sarah Woodward. Naxos AudioBooks.
- Bourne, Joanna. *The Spymaster's Lady*. Narrated by Kirsten Potter. Penguin Audio.

- Quinn, Julia. *Sum of All Kisses*. Narrated by Rosalyn Landor. HarperAudio/Recorded Books.

**Weir, Andy.** *The Martian*. Narrated by **R. C. Bray**. Brilliance Audio (ISBN: 9781491523209).

Weir's breakout survival epic transports listeners to Mars alongside stranded astronaut Mark Watney. Bray matches the self-mocking tone and dry wit of Watney's journal entries while detailing efforts of an international team desperate to save him. Authentic accents combine with rollercoaster pacing in this convincing, compelling performance.

#### Listen-alikes

- Scalzi, John. *Old Man's War*. Narrated by William Dufres. Macmillan Audio.
- Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One*. Narrated by Wil Wheaton. Books on Tape/Random House Audio.
- Robinson, Kim Stanley. *Red Mars*. Narrated by Richard Ferrone. Recorded Books.

**Fleming, Ian.** *Moonraker*. Narrated by **Bill Nighy**. Blackstone Audio (ISBN: 9781481507318).

Nighy's dynamic interpretation of Fleming's classic story of high-stakes bridge games and nuclear rockets lures listeners into the exotic world of James Bond. A masterful control of tempo underscores the story's tension, while the villains and hero alike are fully realized in pitch-perfect accents.

#### Listen-alikes

- Forsyth, Frederick. *The Day of the Jackal*. Narrated by Simon Prebble. Blackstone Audio.
- Le Carré, John. *Our Kind of Traitor*. Narrated by Robin Sachs. Books on Tape/Penguin Audio.
- Silva, Daniel. *Portrait of a Spy*. Narrated by Simon Vance. HarperAudio/Recorded Books.

**Collins, Wilkie.** *The Moonstone*. Narrated by **Ronald Pickup, Joe Marsh, Fenella Woolgar, Sam Dale, Jonathan Oliver, Jamie Parker, Sean Barrett, David Timson, John Foley, and Benjamin Soames**. Naxos AudioBooks (ISBN: 9781843797975).

This classic locked-room mystery comes alive through a superb cast of performers whose unique voices and expert characterizations render the ornate language accessible and accentuate the unique and engrossing puzzle. The unhurried pace complements the richly detailed text and draws the listener into nineteenth-century England.

#### Listen-alikes

- Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Narrated by Sean Barrett and Teresa Gallagher. Naxos AudioBooks.
- Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*. Narrated by Simon Vance. Brilliance Audio.
- Catton, Eleanor. *The Luminaries*. Narrated by Mark Meadows. Brilliance Audio.

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## FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

Johansen, Erika. *Queen of the Tearling*. Narrated by Katherine Kellgren. Blackstone Audio (ISBN: 9781483005454).

Raised in hiding, nineteen-year-old Kelsea reluctantly ascends the throne in this epic fantasy adventure. From raucous shouts to dripping menace, Kellgren vividly portrays a diverse cast through the resonant timbre of her voice and impeccable pacing. Engaging characters and a polished performance create a remarkable listening experience.

### Listen-alikes

- McCaffrey, Anne. *Dragonflight*. Narrated by Dick Hill. Brilliance Audio.
- Addison, Katherine. *The Goblin Emperor*. Narrated by Kyle McCarley. Tantor Media.
- Baker, Emily Croy. *A Thinking Woman's Guide to Real Magic*. Narrated by Alyssa Bresnahan. Recorded Books.

Galbraith, Robert. *The Silkworm*. Narrated by Robert Glenister. Blackstone Audio/Hachette Audio (ISBN: 9781478929635).

A missing author, a tenacious private investigator, and scandals in the publishing world form the backbone of this fast-paced and wryly humorous mystery. Glenister's resonant voice and fluid narration ably depict class and region, gender and age, while maintaining the grit and suspense of classic noir.

### Listen-alikes

- Lovesey, Peter. *The Last Detective*. Narrated by Simon Prebble. Blackstone Audio.
- Hammett, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. Narrated by William Dufres. Blackstone Audio.
- King, Stephen. *Mr. Mercedes*. Narrated by Will Patton. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven*. Narrated by Kirsten Potter. Books on Tape/Random House Audio (ISBN: 9780553398076).

Potter lyrically portrays multiple characters across a nonlinear timeline in a novel that illuminates humanity's interconnectedness after a pandemic. Subtle tonal variations and skillful pacing convey the urgency of the survivors' plight. Can a traveling troupe of actors and musicians carry the future of mankind?

### Listen-alikes

- Bohjalian, Chris. *Close Your Eyes, Hold Hands*. Narrated by Grace Blewer. Books on Tape/Random House Audio.
- Heller, Peter. *The Dog Stars*. Narrated by Mark Deakins. Books on Tape/Random House Audio.
- Lee, Chang-Rae. *On Such a Full Sea*. Narrated by B. D. Wong. Penguin Audio/Recorded Books.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. Narrated by Bryan Cranston. Brilliance Audio (ISBN: 9781455851638).

Cranston personifies the narrator of these terrifying and wrenching short stories with his hypnotic voice: sonorous, gentle, and fierce. The narrative immerses listeners in the 1960s, when a draft lottery determined the fates of young men and even survivors carried the scars of war.

### Listen-alikes

- Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Narrated by Frank Muller. Recorded Books.
- Marlantes, Karl. *Matterhorn*. Narrated by Bronson Pinchot. Blackstone Audio.
- Klay, Phil. *Redeployment*. Narrated by Craig Klein. Penguin Audio/Recorded Books.