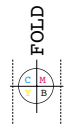






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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

CD 1 79'02

- 1 The Wasps: Overture 9'06
- 2 Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis 14'15
- 3 In the Fen Country – Symphonic Impression 14'15
- 4 Variations for Orchestra 12'06  
arranged by Gordon Jacob from 'Variations for Brass Band'
- 5 Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 in E minor 11'09
- 6 Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus' 11'07
- 7 Romance for strings, piano and harmonica 6'43

CD 2 78'16

- 1 The Lark Ascending 10'17
- 2 Fantasia on Greensleeves 4'23
- Concerto Grosso**
- 3 I Intrada 2'18
- 4 II Burlesca Ostinata 2'38
- 5 III Sarabande 3'13
- 6 IV Scherzo 2'07
- 7 V March and Reprise 4'07

English Folk Song Suite

- transcribed by Gordon Jacob
- 8 I March: Seventeen come Sunday 3'21
- 9 II Intermezzo: My Bonny Boy 3'18
- 10 III March: Folk Songs from Somerset 3'54

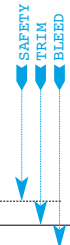
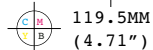
**Recording producers:** Erik Smith (The Wasps, Tallis Fantasia, In the Fen Country, Variations, Norfolk Rhapsody, Dives and Lazarus); Michael Bremner (The Lark Ascending); Chris Hazell (Concerto Grosso, Romance, Greensleeves, English Folk Song Suite, British Folk Song Arrangements)

**Recording engineers** Erdo Groot, Jan Wesselink, Alex Marcou (The Wasps, Tallis Fantasia, In the Fen Country, Variations, Norfolk Rhapsody, Dives and Lazarus); Stanley Goodall (The Lark Ascending, Romance, Greensleeves, English Folk Song Suite, British Folk Song Arrangements); John Dunkerley, Martin Atkinson (Concerto Grosso)

**Recording locations:** Abbey Road Studios, London, UK, July 1993 (The Wasps, Tallis Fantasia, In the Fen Country, Variations, Norfolk Rhapsody, Dives and Lazarus); Kingsway Hall, London, UK, October 1972 (The Lark Ascending), February 1980 (Greensleeves, English Folk Song Suite, British Folk Song Arrangements); St. John, Smith's Square, London, UK, June 1976 (Romance), January 1977 (Concerto Grosso)

**Eloquence series manager:** Cyrus Meher-Homji

**Art direction:** Chilu Tong



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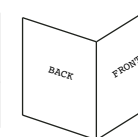
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ARTIST:Peter Maag	JOB #:			PMS	PMS	COLORS
TITLE:Mozart Symphonies 28, 29 etc	SEPARATOR:			607		
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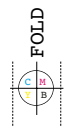
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The *English Folk Song Suite* (1923) originally was scored for military band. Later, Gordon Jacob arranged it for full orchestra. This is one of the composer's most uncomplicated works. Replete with tunes straightforwardly presented, it has an immediate appeal for performers and audiences alike. The outer movements are swaggering marches, both of them medleys, while the central Intermezzo includes not only the tune 'My Bonny Boy', but also 'Green Bushes', which Percy Grainger had previously turned into a passacaglia and which George Butterworth had used in *The Banks of Green Willow*.

Between 1916 and 1921, Vaughan Williams wrote a haunting yet unsentimental *Pastoral Symphony*. That masterpiece was anticipated by *The Lark Ascending*, a short 'romance for violin and orchestra' composed in 1914, and inspired by the eponymous poem by George Meredith. Meredith's lark

rises and begins to round,  
 he drops the silver chain of sound  
 Of many links without a break,  
 In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake  
 and both his flight and his song are unmistakably described by the solo violin. The work was dedicated to violinist Marie Hall, who first performed it in 1920.

As already has been shown, Vaughan Williams incorporated folk-tunes from England (and elsewhere) into larger works throughout his long career as a composer. There were times, however, when he was content to let folk-tunes speak for themselves in simple arrangements for solo voice, accompanied or unaccompanied chorus, or small instrumental ensembles. These works proved to be ideal for non-professional musicians who wanted to perform first-class music that was within their abilities, yet not artistically condescending. As Michael Kennedy writes, Vaughan Williams's 'rule was that the only way to arrange a folk song was "with love" and his love for the tunes never failed.' That does not mean that the composer was unafraid to put his personal imprint on them. 'The odd thing,' writes Kennedy, 'was that the more like one of his original compositions he made a tune, the more it seemed to bring out the tune's indigenous quality.'

The nine folk songs presented here, although not arranged by Vaughan Williams himself, pay tribute to the composer's deep respect for folk song traditions, as well as his belief that the music could not only tolerate but encourage constant reinterpretation and

The *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* was first heard in 1910 at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester Cathedral, with the composer at the podium. A few years earlier, Vaughan Williams had been commissioned to edit *The English Hymnal*, a new collection of hymn-tunes for use in English churches. He asked fellow composers to contribute melodies, but he drew mostly upon several centuries of pre-existing music – not just from England – in assembling the *Hymnal*. As work progressed, Vaughan Williams encountered a melody that Thomas Tallis (1505-1585) had set to the words 'When rising from the bed of death' and this eventually became the basis of the *Tallis Fantasia*.

Drawing on his experiences as a church organist, Vaughan Williams gave the new work cathedral-like sonorities, even when played in a standard concert hall. This effect is created, in part, by the use of three distinct string ensembles: a solo string quartet, a smaller group of strings and the full string orchestra. Together with his first symphony ('A Sea Symphony', also premiered in 1910), the *Tallis Fantasia* established Vaughan Williams's reputation as a composer of international stature.

These were not his first orchestral works, however. As far back as 1894, Vaughan

Williams had tried his hand at the genre. His first orchestral work to survive and remain in the repertoire today, however, is the 'symphonic impression' *In the Fen Country*, completed in 1904 and premiered (by Sir Thomas Beecham) in 1909. (There were several revisions, the last as late as 1935.) 'The Fens' is a low-lying region in the eastern part of England within Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk counties. One might guess that Vaughan Williams used folk tunes in this work, but the melodies appear to be original. In his biography of the composer, James Day writes, '*In the Fen Country* is a curious, often attractive, yet somewhat uncertain amalgam of Vaughan Williams's 'pre-Raphaelite' style with his newly-emerging folk-song-based melodic idiom.' On the other hand, the solo viola at the close of the work is quite typical of the mature composer.

His next orchestral works (1906-07) were a trio of *Norfolk Rhapsodies*, of which only the first was published. (In fact, the score to the third has been lost.) Unlike *In the Fen Country*, the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* incorporate actual folk songs that Vaughan Williams had collected in that region early in 1905. These are 'The Captain's Apprentice' (introduced by a solo viola), 'The Bold Young Sailor' and 'On Board a 98'. When it was premiered at a 1906



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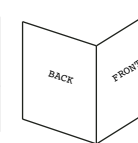
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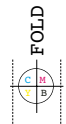


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Proms concert, the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* had a stirring conclusion, but when Vaughan Williams revised it in 1914, he ended the work with a return to the quiet, atmospheric music of the opening.

Vaughan Williams first encountered the folk-song *Dives and Lazarus* perhaps as early as 1893, when he was a university student at Cambridge. In 1939, when he was asked to write a piece for the New York World Fair, he returned to it as the basis for *Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'*. Sir Adrian Boult, who conducted the premiere, recalls that the venue's air-conditioning had given out on a hot June day, and that audience members fanned themselves with their programs throughout.

*Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'* is scored for strings and one or (preferably) two harps. Why are these 'variants' and not 'variations'? Because of regional differences and the passage of time, folk-songs rarely exist in any one 'definitive' version. The composer wished to acknowledge this, and he explained, 'These variants are not replicas of traditional tunes, but rather reminiscences of various versions in my own collection and those of others'. This was one of the pieces played at the composer's funeral in 1958.

Near the end of his life, and as he was working on his Ninth Symphony, the still active Vaughan Williams composed a set of eleven variations on an original theme as a test piece for the 1957 National Brass Band Championship of Great Britain. Several years later, after the composer's death, it was arranged for full orchestra by Gordon Jacob, and became known as the *Variations for Orchestra*. James Day remarks that 'an interesting feature of the re-scored version is the manner in which Dr. Jacob [...] produces a genuine "late Vaughan Williams" sound from the orchestra.' The premiere was given in 1960 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

In his incidental music for Aristophanes's comedy *The Wasps* – a satire on litigious Athenians as appropriate today as it was during the playwright's lifetime – Vaughan Williams made no attempt to write archaic-sounding music suggestive of ancient Greece. In fact, after the overture's buzzing opening, the first tune we hear could easily be an English folk song, and so it goes throughout the course of this jovial curtain-raiser. (The effect of the composer's studies with Ravel also has been noted.) The music was commissioned by Vaughan Williams's

alma mater in 1909, and the composer came up with 18 separate numbers, of which five (including the present overture) were selected for an 'Aristophanic' concert suite that saw light of day a few years later.

Old age did not stifle the composer's willingness to extend himself. For example, in 1954, he composed a concerto for bass tuba and orchestra. Three years earlier, harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler asked Vaughan Williams to write a work for him, and – after receiving a basic course in harmonica technique from Adler, plus some gnashing of teeth – the composer obliged with the *Romance in D flat*, which was first heard a year later. Adler was extremely pleased with the result, and commented that of all the composers who had received commissions from him, Vaughan Williams was the one who showed the most complete understanding of what the harmonica could and could not do. In a letter to Michael Kennedy, the composer commented, 'I was surprised myself when it turned out a "best seller".' The harmonica is accompanied by strings, with an added piano.

One doesn't have to be English to know 'Greensleeves', a tune which has been in existence since at least the sixteenth century. Vaughan Williams used it several times in his

works, including as an entr'acte in his Falstaffian opera *Sir John in Love*. (In the last act of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the fat knight cries, 'Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of "Green-sleeves".'.) In 1934, five years after the premiere of *Sir John in Love*, Ralph Greaves (supervised by the composer) adapted it for strings, two flutes, and harp. The famous tune is quoted at the beginning and the end, and in the middle section, we hear the folk-tune 'Lovely Joan', which Vaughan Williams had collected during his travels in Norfolk three decades earlier.

The Concerto Grosso for strings (1950) resulted from a rather unusual commission from the Rural Music Schools Association to write a work for string players – over 400 in all! – of various degrees of technical ability. The smaller concertino group was to include the most skilled players, and the tutti group was to accommodate the more limited skills of the amateurs. (Vaughan Williams also included 'ad lib' parts for even less accomplished players, but these usually are omitted in professional performances.) During the premiere, the composer sat with the second violins 'just to see how they were getting on'.

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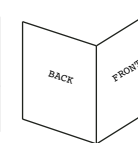


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