

CHAN 6653

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COLLECT

Favourite English Songs

Felicity Lott soprano
Graham Johnson piano

Favourite English Songs

- Maude Valérie White** (1855–1937)
- 1 **So we'll go no more a-roving** 4:38
Words by Lord Byron
- Sir Edward Elgar** (1857–1934)
- 2 **Queen Mary's Song** 4:29
Words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- Thomas Dunhill** (1877–1946)
- 3 **The Cloths of Heaven, Op. 30 No. 3** 2:29
from *The Wind among the Reeds*
Words by W.B. Yeats
- Roger Quilter** (1877–1953)
- 4 **Love's Philosophy, Op. 3 No. 1** 1:24
from *Three Songs*
Words by Percy Bysshe Shelley
- Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872–1958)
- 5 **Silent Noon** 4:38
from *The House of Life*
Words by D.G. Rossetti

Dorothy Hogben (dates unknown)

- 6 **The Shawl** 4:23
Words by Lawrence Atkinson
- Benjamin Britten** (1913–1976)
- 7 **Fish in the unruffled lakes** 3:08
Words by W.H. Auden
- Sir Lennox Berkeley** (1903–1989)
- 8 **O lurcher-loving collier, Op. 53 No. 2** 2:30
from *Five Poems by W.H. Auden*
- Benjamin Britten**
- 9 **O Waly, Waly** 3:58
from *British Folk Songs*, Volume 3 No. 6
Folksong from Somerset
- Percy Grainger** (1882–1961)
- 10 **The Sprig of Thyme** 2:32
Folksong from Lincolnshire
- Geoffrey Bush** (1920–1998)
- 11 **Sigh no more, ladies** 1:56
from *Eight Songs for High Voice*
Words by William Shakespeare

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

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 Words from an old carol
- 13** **Gavotte** 3:05
 Words by Sir Henry Newbolt

Frank Bridge (1879–1941)

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 from *Three Belloc Songs*
 Words by Hilaire Belloc

Cecil Armstrong Gibbs (1889–1960)

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 Words by Walter de la Mare

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 Words by W.H. Davies

Liza Lehmann (1862–1918)

- 19** **The Swing** 1:25
 from *The Daisy-Chain*
 Words by R.L. Stevenson

**Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson,
 Lord Berners (1883–1950)**

- 20** **Red Roses and Red Noses** 2:23
 Words by Lord Berners

Benjamin Britten

- 21** **Come you not from Newcastle?** 1:06
 from *Hullah's Song-Book* (English)

Sir William Walton (1902–1983)

- 22** **Old Sir Faulk** 2:05
 Words by Dame Edith Sitwell

TT 63:05

Felicity Lott soprano
Graham Johnson piano

Favourite English Songs

Flora Nielsen, with whom I studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London, said that I was 'an adagio singer'! Certainly my selection of English songs is predominantly reflective in mood. As a student at the Royal Academy of Music I met Graham Johnson, a great champion of song in all its forms (and an excellent pianist). He played for my lessons with Flora, whom we adored, and he has copies of all the recordings she made with Gerald Moore, including a lovely performance of 'The Early Morning'. Also at the RAM, Michael Head was a gentle professor who wrote many beautiful songs and sang them to his own accompaniment. Whilst a student, I sang the role of the wife, Anthea, in his one-act opera *After the Wedding*, and also sang several of his songs.

I was born in Cheltenham and took part annually in the local competitive festival, with the help of my first teacher, Ursula Hughes. I sang in the church choir and there I first heard the beautiful anthems of Herbert Howells. I believe I performed *Come Sing and Dance* in the festival one year, and Graham introduced me to *Gavotte*, a delicate evocation of former times.

Colleagues in Cheltenham led me to the

eccentric music of Lord Berners. We gave a concert at his house in Farringdon, where pigeons fluttering in the garden ignored notices specially placed for them in the trees – 'Please do not peck the fruit' – and where books in the guests' bedrooms bore the inscription 'This book has been stolen from Lord Berners'...

As a student of French I studied singing with Joan Gray who introduced me to many of the pieces on this recording and gave me a list of English songs to be explored. To this list I would add a few new discoveries, such as *The Shawl* which Dorothy Hogben sent to me, out of the blue. Graham brought 'The Swing' to the recording session, saying that it was Britten's favourite song, and since it was one of my daughter's favourite poems I sang it for her! I wish I had known Britten; I so enjoy singing his music – songs, concert works and operas: so powerful and disturbing or witty and beautiful – a great composer.

Although I have sung German lieder and French *mélodies* throughout my working life, the English song has a natural place in my affection, and, I should like to think, at its best it stands up well to its rivals. This recording is a personal 'Those I have loved', and in most

cases the words are of equal importance to the music; many of our greatest poets are represented.

I hope you enjoy it.

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Maud Valérie White: So we'll go no more a-roving

Born in Dieppe, the English composer Maud Valérie White spent a considerable time abroad, becoming a proficient linguist and writing songs in several languages. While many of her songs are Victorian drawing room ballads by intention and inclination, she looked to the German lied for her models and brought the genre to considerable distinction, this setting of well-known words by Byron being one of the best examples. It was published by Chappell in 1888. She was an important precursor of Quilter, who dedicated his setting of Dekker's *Oh, the Month of May* to her.

Sir Edward Elgar: Queen Mary's Song

It was a long hard slog before Elgar established himself as a composer. This lute song, Mary Tudor's lament at the passing of her beauty, from Tennyson's historical drama *Queen Mary*, was composed in 1887. (The words had already been set for the stage of the Lyceum Theatre, London by Stanford

eleven years earlier.) Elgar sold it outright in 1889, when it became his second published song. It later gained popularity when Elgar included it in an album of his early songs with the title *Edward Elgar's Seven Lieder*, published in 1907.

Thomas Dunhill: The Cloths of Heaven

A pupil of Stanford at the Royal College of Music, Dunhill achieved fame in the 1930s with several popular operettas, of which *Tantivy Towers*, to words by A.P. Herbert, is arguably the best. He also wrote orchestral and chamber works but is probably now best remembered for his songs. 'The Cloths of Heaven' comes from his orchestral song cycle *The Wind among the Reeds*, setting well-known words by Yeats, and was first heard at London's Queen's Hall in 1912.

Roger Quilter: Love's Philosophy

With Percy Grainger, Norman O'Neill, Cyril Scott and Balfour Gardiner, Quilter was one of the 'Frankfurt Gang', all students at the Hoch'sche Konservatorium in Frankfurt am Main. He established his style in his *Three Songs*, Op. 3, the first of which, this passionate setting of Shelley's poem *Love's Philosophy* (not quite perfectly remembered), was written in 1905. It was dedicated to, and sung by, Gervase Elwes who was to be closely associated with Quilter's songs for the rest of

his life. Elwes, like Quilter from a 'county' family, was also associated with Percy Grainger and introduced him to folksong collecting in Lincolnshire.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Silent Noon

When he is so well remembered for his symphonies and his choral works it is possible to forget that Vaughan Williams first achieved celebrity as a songwriter, soon after the turn of the century. Songs such as *Linden Lea* and the cycle *On Wenlock Edge* quickly established themselves as enduring masterpieces. One of his best-known songs is 'Silent Noon' from the pre-Raphaelite song cycle *The House of Life*, six settings of sonnets by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Composed and first performed early in 1903, the song was published the following year and incorporated as the second in the cycle, which was finally heard in December 1904.

Dorothy Hogben: The Shawl

This is a setting of a prose account by Lawrence Atkinson who was better known as a painter and sculptor of non-representational art. It evokes the reality of working in the peatfields and was published by Oxford University Press in 1926. It contrasts strongly with the more romanticised settings of O'Sullivan and Colum by Hogben's contemporaries, and is marked to be sung in a

'flat and colourless' way. Dorothy Hogben spent many years at the BBC, as accompanist, arranger, conductor, and as sole music director of major productions. Her talks for television and radio include an introduction to one of Lord Beecham's symphonic concerts. She published a small number of songs and choral pieces starting in 1922 and ending with a *Cherry Tree Carol* in 1970.

Benjamin Britten: Fish in the unruffled lakes; O Waly, Waly; Come you not from Newcastle?

In the 1930s Britten reacted strongly against the established British composers of his day, most of whom he found technically wanting. This was particularly true of his songwriting, in which, stimulated notably by the poetry of Auden and by his discovery of the songs of Purcell, Britten demonstrated a brilliant technique. This is seen in the cycle *On This Island*, completed in October 1937, and in the following separate Auden setting, *Fish in the unruffled lakes*, which was not published for ten years.

Britten and Peter Pears left for the USA in May 1939 and did not return to the UK until 1942, arriving in Liverpool on the Swedish cargo ship *Axel Johnson* on 17 April. Though previously antagonistic to the folksong school, Britten appears to have started making arrangements of British folksongs for

performance during the recitals he and Pears gave while they were in the USA. These and others made on their return were collected in a first album of folksong arrangements published in 1943. Both folksong settings in this recital appeared in Britten's third collection, published by Boosey & Hawkes in 1947. Both proclaim their personality, and their kinship with the Auden setting, in their accompaniments. *O Waly, Waly* was collected by Cecil Sharp from a Mrs Caroline Cox at High Ham, Somerset on 8 August 1905, as well as variants at about the same time, though a version of it had already been published in Francis James Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* in the 1880s.

Sir Lennox Berkeley: O lurcher-loving collier

Although ten years his senior, Berkeley was for a time strongly influenced by Benjamin Britten in the mid-1930s, and therefore was part of that circle dominated by the young W.H. Auden. His *Five Poems by W.H. Auden*, Op. 53 date from 1958 and constitute a later tribute to the poet. The texts of all but the first are taken from the collection of 'Songs and Other Musical Pieces' in the poet's *Collected Shorter Poems* which had appeared a couple of years earlier.

Percy Grainger: The Sprig of Thyme

In his folk music settings, the Australian Percy Grainger was not looking for the merely tuneful

or picturesque. His intense, passionate treatment, and particularly his harmony, evokes a tortured emotion that is quite remarkable. This is particularly encountered in the songs *Shallow Brown* and *Willow Willow*, but it is felt here, too. Grainger collected this folksong from Joseph Taylor of Saxby-All-Saints in 1906, and in 1908 persuaded him to make a commercial recording of it and other songs with the Gramophone Company. The song had also been collected elsewhere, though Grainger's treatment is based on the way he heard it sung in Lincolnshire. Grainger designated it his British Folk Music Setting No. 24 and took until 1920 before he brought it to its published state. Paradoxically, as in all Grainger's folksong settings, in attempting to capture an emotional climate he felt to be authentic, he actually created a unique world of his own.

Geoffrey Bush: Sigh no more, ladies

Geoffrey Bush, composer, teacher and champion of late Victorian composers, is well known for his choral music, his orchestral works and his songs. As songwriter Geoffrey Bush remarked on his preference for poems of the past 'whose modernity of feeling make them timeless', adding 'the chief problem in writing songs is to discover the right words'. It is remarkable that Bush succeeded in doing this on so many occasions. This characteristic setting of familiar words from Act II Scene 3

of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* was published as one of the *Eight Songs for High Voice* in 1979.

Herbert Howells: Come Sing and Dance; Gavotte

Vocal music made a strong contribution to Howells's early reputation as a young composer to be watched, and among the music he submitted for his Royal College of Music Open Scholarship in composition in 1912 was a set of five songs. Others soon followed, and like Gibbs he was drawn to the poetry of Walter de la Mare. Sir Henry Newbolt's *Gavotte* inhabits a not dissimilar world to de la Mare's wide-eyed verse, and Howells set it in April 1919, matching the poet's evocation of the old dance with stately music in the same measure. When published in 1927 it was dedicated to his daughter Ursula (later the well-known actress). The same year he set an old carol, *Come Sing and Dance*, written for the soprano Dorothy Silk in October and published immediately. In this, one of his most beautiful songs, we find the two faces of Howells's art: formality and a passionate exultation, the latter finally overwhelming the former at the climax.

Frank Bridge: Go not, happy day

Frank Bridge, like Howells and Vaughan Williams also a pupil of Stanford, set

Tennyson's lyric 'Go not, happy day' from the poetic monodrama *Maud* in 1903, probably at about the time he completed his studies at the Royal College of Music. Like Vaughan Williams's 'Silent Noon' the song was first published in the journal *The Vocalist*, in 1905. As a composer Frank Bridge was largely forgotten for many years, his name remembered only as that of the teacher of Benjamin Britten and the composer of this song. Since the late 1960s there has been a complete reassessment of Bridge's music and his later scores are now recognised as among the most forward-looking of their day.

Peter Warlock: My Own Country

Philip Heseltine first published under the name Peter Warlock in 1916. Originally he used the identity to publish articles, but soon found it convenient to be able to issue his songs anonymously in this way, until in 1919 he was found out when an employee at his publisher recognised his immaculate and highly personal handwriting. The publisher agreed to keep the secret. In January 1927 Heseltine composed three settings of poems by Hilaire Belloc, of which this is the third. Although conceived as a set they were in fact published separately. The poem was one of twelve that appeared in the text of Belloc's curious fictional celebration of Sussex ('a farrago' as he called it) *The Four Men*. 'There are dreams', says the

poet – one of the four men, 'in which men do attain to a complete satisfaction, reaching the home within the home and the place inside the mind.'

Cecil Armstrong Gibbs: Silver

At first a junior master at The Wick, a preparatory school near Brighton, Gibbs was launched on a career in music when he commissioned Walter de la Mare's play *Crossings* (1919) for the school and, having written the incidental music himself, asked the young Adrian Boult to conduct. Boult was so impressed that he offered to pay a year's tuition fees at the Royal College of Music for Gibbs to study composition with Vaughan Williams and conducting with himself. The young composer's career developed quickly and his name remained associated with de la Mare, whose delightful 'book of rhymes' *Peacock Pie* was a potent source. This poem, 'Silver', in particular, has been chosen by many composers; Gibbs's near perfect setting dates from 1920 while he was still a student at the RCM.

Gerald Graham Peel: The Early Morning

Gerald Graham Peel was popular in his day as a songwriter who encompassed the ballad tradition and appealed to a popular market as well as to recital audiences. He established himself with his settings from Housman's

A Shropshire Lad, of which the song 'In Summer-time on Bredon' was for a long time very popular. 'The Early Morning' is a setting of a short poem from Hilaire Belloc's *Verses and Sonnets* of 1896.

Michael Head: Sweet Chance, that led my steps abroad

Michael Head was a recitalist who specialised in accompanying himself. His songs were largely written for these occasions and concentrate on charm rather than addressing great issues. He made a point of setting living poets, often very minor ones. His cycle of W.H. Davies settings, *Songs of the Countryside*, dates from 1928, and this is the fifth song, dedicated to his publisher, Leslie A. Boosey. It was first performed by Keith Faulkner at the Queen's Hall in December that year.

Liza Lehmann: The Swing

Liza Lehmann first achieved celebrity as a teacher and singer, and in a London concert in 1888 she was accompanied in two Schumann songs by Clara Schumann. She subsequently became well known as a composer, with her setting of words from Fitzgerald's *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, under the title *In a Persian Garden*, published in 1896. The format she adopted there, a quartet of solo singers with piano accompaniment, also served her well in her later song cycle

The Daisy-Chain, which was her second big hit when published in 1900. This 'garland' of twelve songs of childhood took five of its lyrics from Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Of these 'The Swing' is placed eighth in the cycle. It is dedicated 'to my small son Rudolf', to whom Lehmann was passionately attached and who broke her heart when, having enlisted as a gunner-cadet, he died from pneumonia in March 1916.

Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson, Lord Berners: Red Roses and Red Noses

During and after the First World War, antipathy to German music articulated reaction to its dominant influence before the war and resulted in a vogue for an avant garde preoccupied with Stravinsky and Les Six. Among British composers none was musically more anti-German than Lord Berners, an amiable English eccentric, diplomat, painter, writer and composer whose music found favour with Stravinsky and whose ballet *The Triumph of Neptune* was to be Diaghilev's first production of an extended British score, in 1926. Although most of Berners's music

dates from the First World War and the 1920s, *Red Roses and Red Noses* was written during the Second World War. Berners's exquisite lied dedicated to 'a young lady who expressed the wish that, when she died, Red Roses might be strewn upon her tomb' is all the funnier for its straight-faced presentation: every word has to be relished.

Sir William Walton: Old Sir Faulk

This song had its origins in Walton's entertainment *Façade* and was given a singing rather than a speaking voice when it became the last of three songs setting words by Edith Sitwell, all more or less founded on the earlier work. The foxtrot 'Old Sir Faulk' takes the vocal line variously from the top line of the original instrumental accompaniment, and was described as 'nello stile americano'. It was dedicated to the composer's publisher at Oxford University Press, Hubert Foss, who with his wife, the soprano Dora Stevens, gave the first performance at the Wigmore Hall in 1932.

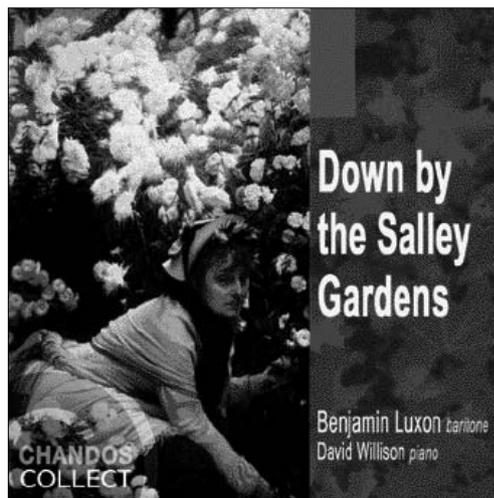
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