

# O, to be in England

## Music for a green and pleasant land

---

A fine collection of moving and wistful orchestral works which celebrate the English landscape and its natural beauty. English composers have always excelled at pastoral music with a hint of nostalgia: from 'The lark ascending' to the strains of 'Greensleeves' this evocative selection features some of this pleasant land's finest music.

- 1 **Fantasia on Greensleeves** Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)  
*The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Judd*
- 2 **Chanson de nuit Op 15/1** Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)  
*The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Judd*
- 3 **Summer music** Arnold Bax (1883–1953)  
*The Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones*
- 4 **On hearing the first cuckoo in spring** Frederick Delius (1862–1934)  
*The Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones*
- 5 **The lark ascending** Ralph Vaughan Williams  
*David Greed, violin, The English Northern Philharmonia  
conducted by David Lloyd-Jones*
- 6 **A Somerset rhapsody Op 21/2** Gustav Holst (1874–1934)  
*The Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones*
- 7 **Tintagel** Arnold Bax  
*The Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones*

The *Gift*  
of Music®

**CCL CDG1213**  
Cover image: *Seven Sisters coastline from  
Seaford Head* © Carolyn Clarke/Alamy  
This compilation © & © 2009  
Classical Communications Ltd  
Made in Great Britain

For our complete range of high quality  
CDs, please ask for a catalogue or visit  
our website: **t: +44(0)1865 882920**  
**www.thegiftofmusic.com**  
**Classical Communications**  
**Worton, Oxfordshire OX29 4SZ, UK**



# O, TO BE IN ENGLAND

The *Gift*  
of Music®

MUSIC FOR A GREEN & PLEASANT LAND

# O, to be in England

## Music for a green and pleasant land

### Home-thoughts, from Abroad

O, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England – now!

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossom'd pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops – at the bent spray's edge –  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
– Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

Robert Browning

English music-making and composition has long been associated with a reaction to the beautiful and varied rural landscapes of this historic country. Because it is often tinged with nostalgia and a forlorn romanticism, English music has often been undervalued, not least by the British establishment itself. Sir Edward Elgar was keen on being a part of that establishment, and composed much ceremonial and formal music for royal events and state occasions.

He resisted the pastoral idiom at all stages of his life, although the 'Chanson de nuit' comes pretty close, and is one of several 'miniatures' which Elgar composed in a deliberately contrasting style from his patriotic marches and choral works.

Vaughan Williams and Bax, amongst others, are often thought of as part of an English pastoral tradition stretching back centuries. All these composers were fascinated by English folk music and both used folk songs as the melodic basis of many of their works. But let's not forget that Vaughan Williams studied in Paris with Ravel, and Bax in London with Frederick Corder, an ardent Wagnerian: neither of these great teachers were particularly enamoured of lightweight composing and both were steeped in a fundamentally European tradition of the highest order. Vaughan Williams' and Bax's incredibly fine understanding of orchestral writing reflects this. Bax's tone poems fit into the pastoral mode, too, and we enjoy them particularly for this today: but they are also rigorously constructed works by a fine symphonist who was clearly aware of the techniques of Brahms, Bruckner and Wagner. Bax was fascinated by Celtic legend and English history. This is reflected in the subject matter of 'Tintagel' with its association with King Arthur: 'the castle-crowned cliff of Tintagel, and...the long distances of the Atlantic, as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless summer day.' Bax described 'Summer Music' as 'a musical description of a hot windless June mid-day in some wooded place of Southern England'.

A composer of German parentage who spent much of his adult life in Florida and France writes a work using a Norwegian folksong, and it's considered to be quintessentially English music! Thus 'On hearing the first cuckoo in spring'. Delius' shimmering orchestrations and carefully crafted melodies and harmonies create an immediately evocative and appealing work.

Gustav Holst loved the English countryside, having been brought up in Gloucestershire on the edge of the Cotswolds. His most famous work is 'The Planets', an orchestral tour de force of the highest order. The 'Somerset Rhapsody' features several folk tunes wrapped up in a sophisticated orchestral texture. It was written at the suggestion of Cecil Sharp, the great collector of English folk music who was also a friend of Vaughan Williams.