NAXOS

William Vincent
WALLACE

Chopinesque

Le Zéphyr

Woodland Murmurs

Le Chant des Oiseaux

Grande Fantasie
La Cracovienne

Rosemary Tuck, Piano

Tait Chamber Orchestra

Richard Bonynge

William Vincent Wallace (1812-1865)

Chopinesque

The Irish composer William Vincent Wallace rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most famous musicians of his day. In 1831, whilst only a teenager, he heard the great violinist Paganini and determined to become a virtuoso himself, on the piano as well as the violin. By 1835 he felt ready to take the stage and took the bold decision to try his luck in Australia. During a two-year stay, he gained a lasting reputation as the first musician of quality to visit the colony, giving over twenty concerts and establishing not only Australia's first musical academy but its first music festival. Eventually financial problems forced him to move on. Sailing from Sydney, Wallace crossed the Pacific to Valparaiso, travelling for the next two years through Chile, Peru, Jamaica, Cuba and Mexico, surviving earthquakes, pitched battles and revolution on the way. In May 1842 he arrived in New Orleans and created such a sensation at his first concert that the musical city took him to its heart. The following year he found even greater success in New York, both as a performer and composer.

Wallace made his début as a pianist/composer in London in May 1845 and was soon after commissioned to write an opera for Drury Lane theatre. The result was *Maritana* (Naxos 8.660308-09), an immediate and popular success that made his reputation overnight. A second opera, *Matilda*, followed in 1847, but the vogue for English opera was now on the wane and with no prospect of further operatic success in London, he returned to New York where he was able to make a good living from his popular piano and vocal compositions. In 1857 the formation of a permanent English Opera company in London prompted Wallace to move back to Britain and in March 1860 his third opera *Lurline* (Naxos 8.660293-94) was produced at Covent Garden. An immediate hit, *Lurline* ran for many nights over two seasons, but soon, once again, the taste for English opera declined. Wallace's last three operas, *The Amber Witch* (1861), *Love's Triumph* (1862), and *The Desert Flower* (1863), though more musically ambitious, were financially unsuccessful. The composer moved on to Paris, where he made a last vain attempt to stage his operas in the French capital. By now, Wallace's health had broken down and he died, aged only 53, on the 12th October 1865.

As well as his six published operas, Wallace wrote a vast number of piano compositions, highly popular in their day. Ranging from stunning virtuoso works to lighter pieces for enjoyment in the home, all display an infectious delight in the sound of the piano. Yet at a time when most aspiring musicians headed for the Paris of Chopin and Liszt, Wallace was finding his inspiration far away in the Americas. On his arrival in New York in 1843, it was reported that the much-travelled Wallace had "literally sown the world with his compositions". When his original piano music first appeared in that city he soon won the hearts of the public. Waltzes, "written in the tropics and redolent of the rich voluptuousness of the climate" were alive with the ambience of Latin America; nocturnes and romances, memorably melodic and atmospherically rich, were described as "music that intoxicates the soul". His undeniable gifts were well served by the developing piano, with its growing ability to sustain and control a melody in the manner of *bel canto* song. But Wallace was no mere melodist: texture, colour and dramatic effect are staples of his work and it is no surprise that the composer of piano music soon achieved fame on the operatic stage.

Soon Wallace was able to make a comfortable living from his music; by 1851 his American publisher was paying him the breathtaking sum of $100 for each piano piece produced. The demand for sheet music then was enormous by today's standards, driven by the rapidly growing popularity of the domestic piano. Wallace's music, melodic, often witty, and never dull, appealed to a wide market and provided a much-needed bridge to the music of the great masters, its importance well summed up by the *New York Musical Times*:

> *Almost every artist and musician of standing in Europe, as well as America, concedes to him the highest position in this department of musical ability: and the great and universal success of his works with the musical public, proves that his genius is practical, and covers the wants of the masses.*

1 Polonaise De Wilna (1868)

The elegant *Polonaise de Wilna* in D is preceded by a very "classical" introduction in the minor. The rich orchestral textures of this duet and the absence of pianistic "effect" suggest that this posthumously published piece may come from one of Wallace's manuscript operas.

2 Nocturne Mélodique (1847)

The *Nocturne Mélodique* was written during a turbulent period of Wallace's life when his marriage had broken down and he was threatened with blindness. The main melody, passionate and full of yearning is presented without introduction. A long and unsettled development section follows, veering between darkness and light before the main melody returns, fortissimo.

3 La Sympathie – Valse (1844)

Dedicated to "Mlle Rosario Warran de Mexique", the waltz *La Sympathie* is distinctly Spanish in character. Wallace captures the sound of the soft guitar in the lively opening. A central section, dreamily romantic and noble by turn, leads a reprise of the first subject and a witty finale.

4 Le Zéphyr – Nocturne (1848)

Published in London and Vienna in 1848, *Le Zéphyr* contains a quotation from the poet Lamartine on the title page, which describes the wind brushing a lyre's strings as gently as the wing of a bird. Wallace skilfully imitates the sound and resonance of the harp in the opening section and the work develops dramatically and delicately, as the wind swirls round.

5 Souvenir de Cracovie – Mazourka (1864)

Written towards the end of Wallace's life, *Souvenir de Cracovie* is the work of a master. The melody slides subtly onto a gentle rocking introduction. A stately middle section effortlessly leads back to the opening theme. Wallace would have certainly come across Chopin's mazurkas in New Orleans, for there he befriended the Polish exile Emile Johns, who had been a friend of Chopin in Paris and dedicatee of the latter's *Mazurkas, Op. 7*.

6 Woodland Murmurs – Nocturne (1844)

Originally published in New York as *Op. 20, No. 2*, the shape of the opening melody of *Woodland Murmurs* strongly resembles that of *Pretty Gitana* from Act One of *Maritana*, written the following year and giving credence to the suspicion that much of the music of that opera was put together from material Wallace had written in Latin America. The Spanish voice is evident throughout this work, which opens and closes quite darkly.

7 Le Chant des Oiseaux –
Nocturne pour le piano (1852)

Le Chant des Oiseaux is headed by a quotation from the Persian poet Sadi, who writes of the song of the birds being as harmonious as poetry. Rather than giving an imitation of birdsong, Wallace evokes the mood of the poem in sound. One of his most engaging melodies is developed and ornamented with suggestions of birds in flight, and the music builds to a triumphant tremolo in which all the birds of the air seem to join the song.

8 Valse Brillante (1848)

The playful and witty *Valse Brillante*, replete with unexpected notes and occasional discords, has a distinct Latin American flavour.

9 Au Bord de la Mer – Nocturne (1849)

Headed by a quotation from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "The Music crept by me upon the waters, allaying both their fury and their passion", *Au Bord de la Mer* was written at the time Wallace had met the love of his life, the pianist Helene Stoepel. The barcarolle-like melody, calm and gentle is followed by suggestions of waves. A magical second subject leads to a splendidly virtuosic finale.

10 Varsovie – Mazourka pour le piano (1852)

One of Wallace's most popular mazurkas, *Varsovie* was written in New York and remained in print for many years. Brimful of passion throughout, its success is no surprise.

11 Three Nocturnes, Op. 20, No. 1 (1844)

Nocturne Op. 20, No. 1 is one of a set of three nocturnes published originally in New York. These were dedicated to Sigismund Thalberg, whose own nocturnes were popular in their day. The song-like melody is followed by a brief but passionate development before the song returns with a flowing accompaniment.

12 Souvenir de Naples – Barcarolle (1854)

Wallace's *Souvenir de Naples* was described on publication as "graceful throughout, a new interest attached to the theme on each time of its recurrence, and without one commonplace thought or passage from the first page to the last".

13 La Brunette – Valse Brillante de Salon (1853)

A long nocturne-like passage leads to *La Brunette*, a very bright waltz, the dreamy second section of which builds to an emotional climax before the return of its first subject. It was also published as *Lotus Leaf* by William Hall in New York during the same year.

14 Innocence – Romance (1850)

The German edition of *Innocence* is entitled *La Mélancholie*. With the agitated accompaniment and the markings *con tristessa* and *dolente* in the middle of the work one can understand why. Yet the work begins and ends *dolcissimo* – sweet innocence prevails.

15 Victoire – Mazourka (1862)

A masterly composition, *Victoire*, with its unexpectedly fast middle section complete with drones and an interestingly complex modulation, was dedicated to Lady Crampton, the daughter of another giant of English opera, Michael William Balfe.

16 La Grace – Nocturne (1850)

With the title "*Graziella*" in Germany, *La Grace,* a charming little nocturne, is graceful throughout.

17 Grande Fantaisie La Cracovienne (1842)

Composed for piano and orchestra in New Orleans in 1842, but only published in a version for solo piano, the *Grande Fantaisie La Cracovienne* begins with a long and dramatic exposition with original themes into which the melody of the Cracovienne is eventually introduced. After a bold statement of this theme, a set of brilliant variations follows, leading to a grand and exciting coda.

Peter Jaggard

Tait Chamber Orchestra

The Tait Chamber Orchestra consists primarily of young Australians in Britain who are affiliated with the Tait Trust, an organisation founded in 1992 by Isla Baring in memory of Sir Frank Tait and his brothers, who played an important part in the establishment of theatre and the performing arts in Australia. The Trust offers awards, grants and performing opportunities to young Australian musicians and performing artists in the United Kingdom. The orchestra first performed in 2010, conducted by Kelly Lovelady, who assisted with this recording. 2012 sees the Tait Trust present a special Gala concert in London conducted by Richard Bonynge to commemorate William Vincent Wallace's Bicentennial year.

Photos: Paul Talbot

Rosemary Tuck

Photo: Phil Rowlands

The Australian pianist Rosemary Tuck was born in Sydney. She studied with John Winther in Canberra, before pursuing further study with Walter Hautzig at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and finally with Andrzej Esterhazy, himself a pupil of Stanislav Neuhaus, in Moscow. She represented Australia in a series of recitals in America under the auspices of the Australian-American Bicentennial Foundation, including a recital at Carnegie Hall. She has performed in the Sydney Opera House, at the South Bank Centre in London, the National Concert Hall in Dublin and at the Aarhus Festival in Denmark in the presence of Queen Margrethe II. In 2001, she gave the first official performance in the William Vincent Wallace Millennium Plaza in Waterford, Ireland and has appeared in an all Wallace programme in London conducted by Richard Bonynge, AC, CBE. Her previous recordings include music by Liadov, Ketèlbey and Wallace.

Richard Bonynge

Richard Bonynge, AC, CBE, was born in Sydney and studied piano at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music and later with Herbert Fryer, a pupil of Busoni, in London. He made his conducting début in Rome in 1962 with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra and has since conducted at most of the world's opera houses. He was Artistic Director of Vancouver Opera and Musical Director of Australian Opera. He was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 1977, made Officer of the Order of Australia in 1983, Companion of the Order of Australia in 2012, Commandeur de l'Ordre National des Arts et des Lettres, Paris, in 1989 and Socio d'onore of the R. Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna in 2007. He married the late soprano Joan Sutherland in 1954. He has recorded over fifty complete operas, made videos and DVDs of many operas and recorded numerous ballets. Richard Bonynge is acknowledged as a scholar of *bel canto* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera and ballet music. In 2012 he was awarded Australia's highest honour, Companion of the Order of Australia, recognising his "eminent service to the performing arts as an acclaimed conductor and music scholar".

The scintillating virtuoso pianist and composer William Vincent Wallace wrote a sheaf of memorable compositions for his instrument. He met the huge demand for sheet music by producing a series of waltzes, nocturnes, mazurkas, barcarolles, and other works dazzling in their variety, invention, wit, humour and charm. Their tone ranges from Latin American to Spanish and from seascape to melancholy reflection. Widely admired exponents of Wallace's music, Rosemary Tuck and Richard Bonynge are joined by the Tait Chamber Orchestra for the brilliant *Grande Fantaisie La Cracovienne*.

William Vincent WALLACE
(1812-1865)

Chopinesque

1. Polonaise De Wilna* 4:20
2. Nocturne Melodique 6:33
3. La Sympathie – Valse 3:36
4. Le Zéphyr – Nocturne 4:56
5. Souvenir de Cracovie – Mazourka 3:33
6. Woodland Murmurs – Nocturne 2:29
7. Le Chant des Oiseaux – Nocturne pour le piano 4:20
8. Valse Brillante 5:26
9. Au Bord de la Mer – Nocturne 6:04
10. Varsovie – Mazourka pour le piano 4:45
11. Three Nocturnes, Op. 20, No. 1 1:52
12. Souvenir de Naples – Barcarolle 4:39
13. La Brunette – Valse Brillante de Salon 5:24
14. Innocence – Romance 1:49
15. Victoire – Mazourka 2:31
16. La Grace – Nocturne 3:28
17. Grande Fantaisie La Cracovienne (orch. Jeremy Silver)† 13:34

Rosemary Tuck, Piano

Tait Chamber Orchestra† • Richard Bonynge, Piano* / Conductor†

Recorded at Forde Abbey, Chard, Somerset, UK, on 6th March, 2011 (track 1) and on 17th and 18th October, 2011 (tracks 2-16), and at St Paul's, Knightsbridge, London, UK, on 24th November, 2011 (track 17)
Produced, engineered and edited by Phil Rowlands • Booklet notes: Peter Jaggard • Piano: Steinway
Publishers: Hutchings and Romer (track 1); Ashdown and Parry (track 2); D'Almaine and Co. (track 3); Chappel and Co. (tracks 4, 9, 16); Cramer, Wood and Co. (track 5); W. Williams and Co. (track 6); Robert Cocks and Co. (tracks 7, 15); R. Addison and Co. (track 8); Cramer, Beale and Co. (tracks 10, 12, 13); Martin and Co. (track 11); Firth, Pond and Co. (track 14)
Thanks to the Tait Memorial Trust, Harry Hobson, Quintin Potgieter and Julia Bruun
Cover: *William Vincent Wallace* (Brady-Handy Photograph Collection (Library of Congress))