NAXOS

The Best of VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

DDD

The Lark Ascending

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

The Wasps Overture

'London' Symphony

Fantasia on Greensleeves

Linden Lea

8.556835

The Best of
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
(1872–1958)

1 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** 49th Parallel - Prelude (8.223665 - track 1)
RTE Concert Orchestra, Andrew Penny 2:17

2 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (8.555867 - track 1)
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Judd 15:12

3 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Linden Lea (8.557643 - track 16)
Roderick Williams (baritone), Iain Burnside (piano) 2:40

4 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Symphony No. 2 'London' - I. Lento - Allegro risoluto. Molto pesante (8.550734 - track 1) (extract)
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Kees Bakels 8:09

5 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** The Wasps (Overture) (8.550734 - track 5)
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Kees Bakels 9:33

6 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Silent Noon (8.557114 - track 6)
Anthony Rolfe Johnson (tenor), Graham Johnson (piano) 4:41

7 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** 5 Variants of Dives and Lazarus (8.557798 - track 4) (extract)
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, David Lloyd-Jones 6:10

8 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Symphony No. 1, 'A Sea Symphony'
II. On the Beach at Night, alone (8.557059 - track 2)
Christopher Maltman (baritone) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Paul Daniel 10:29

9 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** Fantasia on Greensleeves (8.555867 - track 4)
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Judd 4:37

10 **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** The Lark Ascending (8.553955 - track 10)
David Greed (violin), English Northern Philharmonia, David Lloyd-Jones 15:23

Get this free download from Classicsonline!

Holst: St. Paul's Suite 'Finale: The Dargason'
Copy this Promotion Code **NaxoFqbGYVk2** and go to www.classicsonline.com/mpkey/holst_main

Downloading Instructions

1 Log on to Classicsonline. If you do not have a Classicsonline account yet, please register at http://www.classicsonline.com/UserLogIn/SignUp.aspx.
2 Enter the Promotion Code mentioned above.
3 On the next screen, click on "Add to My Downloads".

classicsonline
THE TOTAL CLASSICAL MUSIC DOWNLOAD SITE

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in the Gloucestershire village of Down Ampney in 1872, the son of a clergyman. His ancestry on both his father's and mother's side was of some intellectual distinction. His father was descended from a family eminent in the law, while his maternal grandfather was a Wedgwood and his grandmother a Darwin. On the death of his father in 1875 the family moved to live with his mother's father at Leith Hill Place in Surrey. As a child Vaughan Williams learned the piano and the violin, and received a conventional upper middle class education at Charterhouse, after which he delayed entry to Cambridge, preferring instead to study at the Royal College of Music, where his teachers included Hubert Parry and Walter Parratt, later Master of the Queen's Musick, both soon to be knighted. In 1892 he took up his place at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read History, but took composition lessons from Charles Wood. After graduation in both History and Music, he returned to the Royal College, where he studied composition with Stanford, and, perhaps more significant, became a friend of a fellow-student, Gustav Holst. The friendship with Holst was to prove of great importance in frank exchanges of views on one another's compositions in the years that followed.

In 1897 Vaughan Williams married and took the opportunity to visit Berlin, where he had lessons from Max Bruch and widened his musical experience. In England he turned his attention to the collection of folk-music in various regions of the country, an interest that materially influenced the shape of his musical language. In 1908 he went to Paris to take lessons, particularly in orchestration, from Ravel, and had by now begun to make a reputation for himself as a composer, not least with the first performance in 1910 of his first symphony, *A Sea Symphony*, setting words by Walt Whitman, and his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* in the same year. The even tenor of his life was interrupted by the war, when he enlisted at once in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. 1914 was also the year of the *London Symphony* and of his rhapsodic work for violin and orchestra, *The Lark Ascending*. Three years later, after service in Salonica that seemed to him ineffective, he took a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery and was posted to France. There he was also able to make some use of his abilities as a musician.

After the war Vaughan Williams returned to the Royal College of Music, now as a professor of composition, a position he retained until 1938. In these years he came to occupy a commanding position in the musical life of the country, with a series of compositions that seemed essentially English, the apparent successor of Elgar, although his musical language was markedly different. The war of 1939 brought the challenge of composition for the cinema, with notable scores for *The 49th Parallel* in 1940 and a number of other films, culminating in 1949 in his music for the film *Scott of the Antarctic*, the basis of the seventh of his symphonies. Other works of the last decade of his life included two more symphonies, the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a violin sonata and concertos for harmonica and for tuba, remarkable adventures for an octogenarian. He remained active until his death in 1958.

Michael Powell's film *The 49th Parallel*, starring Laurence Olivier, Raymond Massey, Eric Portman and Leslie Howard, was first shown in London in 1941. It deals with the attempts of a German U-Boat crew, stranded in Canada, to escape to the United States. The *Prelude* in the score by Vaughan Williams, his first work for the cinema, accompanies the introductory panorama and commentary, showing *The 49th Parallel*, the undefended frontier between Canada and the United States.

Vaughan Williams conducted the first performance of his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester in 1910. He revised the work in 1913 and 1919. The *Fantasia* takes a theme by the Elizabethan composer Thomas Tallis that Vaughan Williams had included in his own *English Hymnal*, and is scored for double string orchestra and string quartet.

Linden Lea, a setting of words by the Dorset dialect poet William Barnes, remains the best known of all the songs of Vaughan Williams. It was written in 1901 and appeared in the first number of *The Vocalist*, on the recommendation of Stanford, to be heard in London for the first time in 1902.

The second of the symphonies of Vaughan Williams, *A London Symphony*, composed, as he himself said, by a Londoner, owed its origin to the encouragement of George Butterworth. It was he who urged Vaughan Williams to attempt a symphony, against the latter's original intentions and inclination. He had made earlier sketches for a symphony, later abandoned, and then plans for a symphonic poem on the theme of London, and this latter material the composer decided to recast in symphonic form. The work was first performed under Geoffrey Toye in 1914, to undergo slight changes in the war years and revision for further performance in 1920 under Albert Coates. There were later revisions in subsequent years, notably for performances in the 1930s under Sir Thomas Beecham. Scored for a large orchestra, the work opens with what might suggest London fog. Big Ben is heard in harp harmonics, leading to an *Allegro risoluto* in which the city awakes, with a rich medley of thematic material that suggests the varied life of London.

The incidental music by Vaughan Williams for Aristophanes's comedy *The Wasps* was written in 1909 for an undergraduate production in Cambridge, where a curiously English tradition of classical Greek drama in the original language is still jealously guarded. The play itself, although it has a chorus of litigious old men buzzing like wasps, is a satirical attack on the politicians of Athens in the late fifth century B.C. The *Overture* opens with the buzzing of the wasps, proceeding to a more firmly English form of music in a work in traditional sonata-form.

Silent Noon, written in 1903 and included in the 1904 cycle of six settings of poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is among the most effective of Vaughan Williams's songs, evoking countryside in summer.

Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus was written for performance under Adrian Boult at the 1939 New York World Fair. Scored for strings and harp, it is a treatment of a folk-song long familiar to the composer, the tune known with a variety of texts. The theme is heard at the outset, with the first variants here included.

Vaughan Williams began work on *A Sea Symphony* in 1903, completing it in 1909. It was first heard the following year at the Leeds Festival. Reflecting various contemporary influences in English music of the time and a seeming interest at the time in the poetry of the sea, the new work sets words from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and, in the last movement, from the same poet's *Passage to India*. The second movement, *On the Beach at Night, alone*, for baritone and chorus, has the poet looking up to the skies, seeing there *'All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different / All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist'* spanned, held and enclosed.

The opera *Sir John in Love*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and incorporating folk-songs, where these seemed appropriate, was completed in 1928. The *Fantasia on Greensleeves*, drawn from the introduction to the third act of the opera, was arranged in 1934 by Ralph Greaves for string orchestra, harp and one or two optional flutes. The work starts with the familiar melody, used to frame a lively contrasting folk-dance.

The Lark Ascending was written in 1914 and later revised, to receive its first performance in 1920. It was dedicated to the violinist Marie Hall and is based on a poem by George Meredith. Rhapsodic in mood, the work allows the solo violin to soar above the English countryside in its expansion of initial pentatonic thematic material. There is an inevitable air of nostalgia here, as in other works of this period, when, after the horrors of war that Vaughan Williams himself had experienced, he returns again to a pastoral idyll, breathing an air of peace and serenity that now seemed lost.

Keith Anderson

8.556835

The Best of VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

NAXOS

One of the leading English composers of his generation, Vaughan Williams went some way towards creating a specifically English musical idiom, influenced by his interest in folk-song yet underpinned by a personal vision and language. This is nowhere better expressed than in his superb cycle of Nine Symphonies. The *'London' Symphony* features a rich medley of thematic material that suggests the varied life of the capital city. *The Lark Ascending*, which concludes this disc, is one of Vaughan Williams's most enduringly popular compositions.

The Best of VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872–1958)

1	49th Parallel: Prelude	2:17
2	Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis	15:12
3	Linden Lea	2:40
4	Symphony No. 2 'London' : I. Lento - Allegro risoluto. Molto pesante (extract)	8:09
5	The Wasps: Overture	9:33
6	Silent Noon	4:41
7	Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus (extract)	6:10
8	Symphony No. 1 'A Sea Symphony' II. On the Beach at Night, alone	10:29
9	Fantasia on Greensleeves	4:37
10	The Lark Ascending	15:23

Includes Free Downloadable Bonus Track available at www.classicsonline.com.
Please see inside booklet for full details. Cartoon of Vaughan Williams by John Minnion.

NAXOS

DDD

8.556835

Playing Time
79:00

7 30099 68352 4

℗ 1993-2005 & © 2008 Naxos Rights International Ltd.

Booklet notes in English.

Disc made in Canada. Printed and assembled in USA

www.naxos.com

NAXOS

The Best of VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

8.556835