

# WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 15 October 2022  
7.00pm

## Serenade to Music

### Nash Ensemble

Amelia Freedman CBE  
artistic director

Simon Crawford-Phillips  
piano

Philip Moore piano

Philippa Davies flute

Stephen Waarts violin

Jonathan Stone violin

Lars Anders Tomter viola

Rosalind Ventris viola

Adrian Brendel cello

Sally Pryce harp

Rebecca Evans soprano

Lucy Crowe soprano

Nardus Williams soprano

Ailish Tynan soprano

Jess Dandy mezzo-soprano

Catherine Wyn-Rogers

mezzo-soprano

Grace Durham

mezzo-soprano

Hugh Cutting countertenor

Benjamin Hulett tenor

Alessandro Fisher tenor

Kieran Carrel tenor

Nick Pritchard tenor

Theodore Platt baritone

Julien Van Mellaerts

baritone

Roderick Williams baritone

Jonathan Lemalu bass

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Nocturne and Scherzo (1906)

*Nocturne • Scherzo 'founded on an English folk-song'*

Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

Elegiac Trio for flute, viola and harp (1916)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

On Wenlock Edge (with Alessandro Fisher) (1908-9)

*On Wenlock Edge • From far, from eve and morning •*

*Is my team ploughing? • Oh, when I was in love with you •*

*Bredon Hill • Clun*

*Interval*

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



Frank Bridge (1879-1941)	Phantasie Piano Quartet in F sharp minor (1910) <i>Andante con moto - Allegro vivace - Andante con moto</i>
Ralph Vaughan Williams	6 Studies in English Folksong (1926) <i>I. Adagio 'Lovely on the water' • II. Andante sostenuto 'Spurn Point' • III. Larghetto 'Van Diemen's Land' • IV. Lento 'She borrowed some of her mother's gold' • V. Andante tranquillo 'The lady and the dragon' • VI. Allegro vivace 'As I walked over London Bridge'</i>
	Five Mystical Songs for baritone, piano and string quartet (with Roderick Williams) (1911) <i>Easter • I got me flowers • Love bade me welcome • The Call • Antiphon</i>
	Interval
Ralph Vaughan Williams	Phantasy String Quintet (1912) <i>I. Prelude. Lento ma non troppo • II. Scherzo. Prestissimo • III. Alla Sarabanda. Lento • IV. Burlesca. Allegro moderato</i>
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	Salut d'amour Op. 12 (1888) La capricieuse Op. 17 (1891) Sospiri Op. 70 (1913-4)
Ralph Vaughan Williams	Serenade to Music (1938)

'Music must be offered to all... We must speak the password to everybody; only in that way can we find out who will respond.'

– Vaughan Williams, *The Making of Music*, 1954

This evening's performance is a celebration of the life and music of **Ralph Vaughan Williams**, 150 years after his birth in the Gloucestershire village of Down Ampney. Over the course of our programme, we trace a journey from early works, via the compositions of friends and colleagues, to end with the composer's tribute to music itself.

The early *Nocturne and Scherzo* was composed in the first decade of the 20th Century. The *Nocturne* was inspired by Walt Whitman's poem 'By the bivouac's fitful flame' from *Leaves of Grass* (later the text source of the composer's *A Sea Symphony*), whilst the *Scherzo* draws on the folk melody 'As I walked out'. The former is heavy with late-Romantic longing, the latter delightfully energised by its folksong – though still not quite the familiar voice of the older composer.

**Arnold Bax** was a little over a decade younger than Vaughan Williams and a good friend. Although English by birth and ancestry, Bax felt profoundly connected to Irish and Celtic culture and supported the foundation of an independent Irish Republic. Thus he knew and much admired Pádraig Pearse who, in 1916, led the Easter Rising in Dublin that was intended to lead to Irish independence. The rebellion was quashed and Pearse, along with 15 of

his comrades, was court-martialled and executed. Bax's *Elegiac Trio* was written just a few weeks later, one of several pieces he composed in mourning and tribute to Pearse and his colleagues. The ensemble matches that of Debussy's *Sonata* of 1915, and although that work had not yet been premièred (and Bax's harmonies are not Debussyan), it seems likely that he would have known of its existence. Bax's work was premièred in March 1917 by a trio including the harpist Miriam Timothy – who had been the first harpist to perform here at Wigmore (then Bechstein) Hall, on 12 June 1901.

Vaughan Williams scored his settings for tenor, pianoforte and string quartet ad lib., and the full instrumental quintet provides him with a rich palette from which to conjure 'atmospheric effects'. These range from the whipping wind which blows through the ensemble in the opening song, to the ghostly muted strings of 'Is my team ploughing?'. The cycle also alternates strikingly between broadly-conceived canvases and punchy miniatures. 'From far, from eve and morning' and 'Oh, when I was in love with you' are both vivid and brief; whilst the magical tolling bells and ugly funeral knell of 'Bredon Hill' occupy the greatest space in the set. 'Is my team ploughing?' contrasts the gentle, hesitant whispers of the ghost (over a static string chord – life paused) with the passionate, fulsome voice of the living friend and the urgent pulsing accompaniment of the blood pumping in his veins. The closing song, 'Clun', effortlessly weaves

British folk-inflected melody with gamelan-like piano figurations in its opening bars. There is a constant sense of movement downwards, of falling phrases in the instruments, but the end seems to offer hope, if only of the ultimate promise of peace: we come to rest, at last, in A major.

More than one piece in this evening's programme bears a variant of the word 'Phantasy' in its title. The first of these is **Frank Bridge's** *Phantasie Piano Quartet*, composed in 1910; though the inspiration for this descriptor is exactly the same as Vaughan Williams's Quintet that we will hear later. The 'phantasy' was an Elizabethan form, newly promoted by the businessman and chamber musician Walter Wilson Cobbett. Cobbett established a chamber competition in 1905 for pieces written in this self-consciously non-Austro-German genre, hoping to encourage a more obviously British approach to chamber music. He also offered independent commissions to some of the winners. Bridge had won the competition in 1907 and was commissioned several years later to write this Quartet. It is a work full of dramatic contrasts: a boldly emphatic opening immediately proceeded by lyrical, mellifluous writing that seems to owe something to Gabriel Fauré, and a taut, bouncing scherzo that points to Brahms.

Despite their title, Vaughan Williams's *6 Studies in English Folksong* are also instrumental, rather than vocal, pieces. They were written for the brilliant British cellist May Mukle, who was a good friend of the composer, and were premièred in 1926 by Mukle and her sister Anne. They are not exact folksong transcriptions, but rather an attempt to build a series of pieces for which folk melodies provide inspiration and musical shapes and rhythms – 'studies' because the work done here formed the basis of a later pieces for cello and orchestra, *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Songs*, of 1929. Each miniature has an identifiable source, from the wistful beauty of the second ('Spurn Point') to the springy sixth ('As I walked over London Bridge') – yet Vaughan Williams chose not to reveal these titles in his score.

The *Five Mystical Songs* of 1911 – premièred in the same Three Choirs concert in Worcester as Elgar's Violin Concerto – are a fascinating mix of Elgarian hints (Vaughan Williams was a particular admirer of the older man's orchestral approach), familiar modal inflections and the rapt melismas of plainsong; not to mention references to *The English Hymnal* which the composer had edited several years earlier. The colour and variety of these approaches breathes incredible life, energy and human empathy into George Herbert's 17th-century poetry.

We come now to Vaughan Williams's engagement with Cobbett's chamber project: the *Phantasy Quintet*, commissioned in 1912. As in so many of Vaughan Williams's works, his musical themes are inflected by folksong models – something that initially irritated critics, who thought it demonstrated a lack of personal creativity not to be able to think of new tunes and have to borrow

someone else's! Vaughan Williams tells us that 'There is one principal theme (given out by the viola at the start) which runs through every movement –

- (1) Prelude (in slow 3/2 time)
- (2) Scherzo (this is a quick movement – the longest of the four)
- (3) 'Alla Sarabanda' (Here the cello is silent and the other instruments are muted)
- (4) Burlesca (This movement is, for the most part, in the form of a 'basso ostinato')

In 1888, when Vaughan Williams was still a boy, **Edward Elgar** composed a short violin piece for his bride-to-be, Caroline Alice Roberts. Since Alice was fluent in German, he called it *Liebesgruss*. The following year, a publisher paid 2 guineas outright to issue the newly retitled *Salut d'amour*. Despite the piece subsequently selling thousands of copies, Elgar made only £12 12S in total from it over the course of his life.

*La capricieuse* (originally named '*Le staccato*' for its tiptoeing opening phrases) was written a couple of years later and aimed similarly at the ever-growing audience for violin parlour pieces: the 1880s and 1890s saw a 'violin craze', when increasing numbers of women took up the instrument, which had previously been considered unsuitable for ladies. *Sospiri*, too, was intended for this market – although this time, Elgar composed the piece for strings, ad lib. harp and organ, with a solo violin part for his friend WH Reed. Intended as kind of sequel to *Salut d'amour*, *Sospiri* was premièred in August 1914 just 11 days before the outbreak of the First World War. This, combined with the possibility of performing the piece with larger forces, has transformed the twisting heartache of *Sospiri*'s sobbing melody into something that seems to suggest a communal memorial: as Alice Elgar observed, it sounded 'like a breath of peace on a perturbed world.'

Wielding the baton for this final Elgar première was Sir Henry Wood, founding director of the Promenade Concerts in 1895. Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* was composed for Wood's golden jubilee as a conductor in 1938. Premièred at the Royal Albert Hall alongside Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto (the composer played the solo part himself and was in tears during the *Serenade*), Vaughan Williams's piece was carefully crafted to the particular talents of his vocal ensemble. This cast of 16 highly respected soloists included the sopranos Isobel Baillie and Elsie Suddaby; the alto Astra Desmond; tenor Heddle Nash and baritone Roy Henderson (teacher of Kathleen Ferrier). The text is taken from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, cut and shaped by Vaughan Williams, and the glittering nocturnal setting is marked by individual reflections from the soloists. Shakespeare invokes the music of the spheres, and the particular magic of melodies at night-time. 'This *Serenade* shines,' as writer Michael Kennedy so beautifully puts it, 'as strongly and clearly as the full moon.'

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## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

### Nocturne and Scherzo (1906)

*Nocturne*

*Scherzo 'founded on an English folk-song'*

## Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

### Elegiac Trio for flute, viola and harp (1916)

## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

### On Wenlock Edge (1908-9)

*AE Housman*

#### On Wenlock Edge

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;  
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;  
The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger  
When Uricon the city stood:  
'Tis the old wind in the old anger,  
But then it threshed another wood.

Then 'twas before my time, the Roman  
At yonder heaving hill would stare:  
The blood that warms an English yeoman,  
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,  
Through him the gale of life blew high;  
The tree of man was never quiet:  
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:  
To-day the Roman and his trouble  
Are ashes under Uricon.

#### From far, from eve and morning

From far, from eve and morning  
And yon twelve-winded sky,  
The stuff of life to knit me  
Blew hither: here am I.

Now – for a breath I tarry  
Nor yet disperse apart –  
Take my hand quick and tell me,  
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;  
How shall I help you, say;  
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters  
I take my endless way.

#### Is my team ploughing?

'Is my team ploughing,  
That I was used to drive  
And hear the harness jingle  
When I was man alive?'

Ay, the horses trample,  
The harness jingles now;  
No change though you lie under  
The land you used to plough.

'Is my girl happy,  
That I thought hard to leave,  
And has she tired of weeping  
As she lies down at eve?'

Ay, she lies down lightly,  
She lies not down to weep:  
Your girl is well contented.  
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

'Is my friend hearty,  
Now I am thin and pine,  
And has he found to sleep in  
A better bed than mine?'

Yes, lad, I lie easy,  
I lie as lads would choose;  
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,  
Never ask me whose.

#### Oh, when I was in love with you

Oh, when I was in love with you,  
Then I was clean and brave,  
And miles around the wonder grew  
How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,  
And nothing will remain,  
And miles around they'll say that I  
Am quite myself again.

#### Bredon Hill

In summertime on Bredon  
The bells they sound so clear;  
Round both the shires they ring them  
In steeples far and near,  
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning  
My love and I would lie,  
And see the coloured counties,  
And hear the larks so high  
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her  
In valleys miles away;  
'Come all to church, good people;  
Good people come and pray.'  
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer  
Among the springing thyme,  
'Oh, peal upon our wedding,  
And we will hear the chime,  
And come to church in time.'

But when the snows at Christmas  
On Bredon top were strown,  
My love rose up so early  
And stole out unbeknown  
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,  
Groom there was none to see,  
The mourners followed after,  
And so to church went she,  
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,  
And still the steeples hum,  
'Come all to church, good people.' -  
O noisy bells, be dumb;  
I hear you, I will come.

## Clun

Clunton and Clunbury,  
Clungunford and Clun,  
Are the quietest places  
Under the sun.

In valleys of springs of rivers,  
By Ony and Teme and Clun,  
The country for easy livers,  
The quietest under the sun.

We still had sorrows to lighten,  
One could not be always glad,  
And lads knew trouble at Knighton  
When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,  
In London, the town built ill,  
'Tis sure small matter for wonder  
If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older  
The troubles he bears are more,  
He carries his griefs on a shoulder  
That handselled them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver  
This luggage I'd lief set down?  
Not Thames, not Teme is the river,  
Nor London nor Knighton the town:

'Tis a long way further than Knighton,  
A quieter place than Clun,  
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten  
And little 'twill matter to one.

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## Interval

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### Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

**Phantasie Piano Quartet in F sharp minor (1910)**  
*Andante con moto - Allegro vivace -  
Andante con moto*

### Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

#### 6 Studies in English Folksong (1926)

- I. Adagio 'Lovely on the water'*
- II. Andante sostenuto 'Spurn Point'*
- III. Larghetto 'Van Diemen's Land'*
- IV. Lento 'She borrowed some of her mother's gold'*
- V. Andante tranquillo 'The lady and the dragon'*
- VI. Allegro vivace 'As I walked over London Bridge'*

*Texts continue overleaf*

## 5 Mystical Songs for baritone, piano and string quartet (1911)

George Herbert

### Easter

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise  
Without delayes,  
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise  
With him may'st rise;  
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,  
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part  
With all thy art.  
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,  
Who bore the same.  
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key  
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song  
Pleasant and long:  
Or since all musick is but three parts vied  
And multiplied,  
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,  
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

### I got me flowers

I got me flowers to strew thy way;  
I got me boughs off many a tree:  
But thou wast up by break of day,  
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sun arising in the East,  
Though he give light, and the East perfume;  
If they should offer to contest  
With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,  
Though many suns to shine endeavour?  
We count three hundred, but we miss:  
There is but one, and that one ever.

### Love bade me welcome

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,  
Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack  
From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning  
If I lack'd anything.  
'A guest', I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'  
Love said, 'You shall be he.'  
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,  
I cannot look on thee.'  
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

'Who made the eyes but I?'  
'Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame  
Go where it doth deserve.'  
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'  
'My dear, then I will serve.'  
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'  
So I did sit and eat.

### The Call

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:  
Such a Way, as gives us breath:  
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:  
And such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:  
Such a Light, as shows a feast:  
Such a Feast, as mends in length:  
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:  
Such a Joy, as none can move:  
Such a Love, as none can part:  
Such a Heart, as joys in love.

### Antiphon

Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,  
My God and King.  
The heavens are not too high,  
His praise may thither fly;  
The earth is not too low,  
His praises there may grow.

Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,  
My God and King.  
The Church with psalms must shout,  
No door can keep them out;  
But above all, the heart  
Must bear the longest part.

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### Interval

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## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

### Phantasy Quintet (1912)

- I. Prelude. Lento ma non troppo*
- II. Scherzo. Prestissimo*
- III. Alla Sarabanda. Lento*
- IV. Burlesca. Allegro moderato*

**Edward Elgar** (1857-1934)

**Salut d'amour Op. 12** (1888)

**La capricieuse Op. 17** (1891)

**Sospiri Op. 70** (1913-4)

**Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958)

**Serenade to Music** (1938)

*William Shakespeare*

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st,  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Come ho! and wake Diana with a hymn;  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,  
And draw her home with music.

I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

The reason is, your spirits are attentive:  
The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are as dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus;  
Let no such man be trusted.  
Music! Hark!

It is your music of the house.

Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

Silence bestows that virtue on it.

How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection!  
Peace ho! The moon sleeps with Endymion,  
And would not be awak'd.

Soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.