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Ken Russell *presents*

'CLASSIC WIDOWS'

as featured on T.V.'s South Bank Show



CLASSIC WIDOWS

British music of the 20th century

- | | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 1 | WILLIAM WALTON (1902-1983): 'Long Steel Grass' (Façade) | (2:22) |
| | Susana Walton (narrator) / City of London Sinfonia members | |
| 2 | BERNARD STEVENS (1916-1983) arr. A. Williams: Mark of Cain, extract | (3:19) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 3 | BERNARD STEVENS: A Symphony of Liberation, Movt. II | (3:49) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 4 | BENJAMIN FRANKEL (1906-1973): Symphony No. 5, Movt. I | (7:29) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 5 | HUMPHREY SEARLE (1915-1982): Symphony No. 2, Movt. I | (7:18) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 6 | BENJAMIN FRANKEL: Carriage and Pair | (2:42) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 7 | WILLIAM WALTON: 'Old Sir Faulk' (Façade) | (2:02) |
| | Susana Walton (narrator) / City of London Sinfonia members | |
| 8 | WILLIAM WALTON: 'Touch her soft lips and part' (Henry V) | (1:28) |
| | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | |
| 9 | WILLIAM WALTON: Gloria (Christopher Columbus) | (2:35) |
| | Arthur Davies (tenor) / Westminster Singers / City of London Sinfonia | |
| 10 | WILLIAM ALWYN (1905-1985): Lyra Angelica - Concerto for Harp & String Orchestra, Movt. I | (8:02) |
| | Rachel Masters (harp) / City of London Sinfonia | |
| 11 | WILLIAM ALWYN: Odd Man Out, Prelude | (3:54) |
| | London Symphony Orchestra | |
| 12 | ARTHUR BLISS (1891-1975): 'The Pigeon Song' (Pastoral - 'Lie strewn the white flocks') | (4:37) |
| | Flute soloist: David Haslam | |
| | Della Jones (mezzo-soprano) / Northern Sinfonia | |

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|----|---|---------|
| 13 | RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958): The Lark Ascending | (15:25) |
| | Michael Davis (violin) / London Symphony Orchestra* | |
| 14 | KENNETH LEIGHTON (1929-1988): Symphony No. 3 'Laudes musicae' for Tenor Solo & Orchestra Op. 90, Movt. III | (10:39) |
| | Neil Mackie (tenor) / Royal Scottish National Orchestra* | |

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TT = 73:50

Bryden Thomson*
RICHARD HICKOX, Conductors

Daniel Meadows, © Russell Films



RICHARD HICKOX

In his film 'Classic Widows' for London Weekend Television's *The South Bank Show*, Ken Russell aimed to delve into the music of four composers — William Walton, Humphrey Searle, Benjamin Finkel and Bernard Stevens — through the eyes of their widows, and, in particular, to investigate the ways they had nurtured the work of their husbands in the years since their deaths. Complementing the interviews with Susana Walton, Xenia Frankel, Bertha Stevens and Fiona Searle were performances of their husband's works specially recorded for the programme by Richard Hickox conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. These pieces have been gathered for this disc together with music already in the Chandos catalogue by Walton, Arthur Bliss, Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Alwyn and Kenneth Leighton all of whose widows are still alive. A further aspect brought out both in the film and on this CD is that all of the composers represented, Leighton apart, exploited the opportunities to bring their music before a large public through the burgeoning medium of film.

Façade launched Walton's career in notorious fashion in 1922 with Edith Sitwell declaiming her experimental poems through a megaphone to the accompaniment of an ensemble conducted by the composer, who, like her, were hidden behind a painted screen. According to Osbert Sitwell, his sister had been attempting to create 'through the medium of words, the rhythm of dance measures such as waltzes, polkas and foxtrots... Some of the resulting poems were sad and serious... others were mocking and gay'. **Long Steel Grass**, subtitled 'Noche Espagnola' has a Spanish flavour, and appropriately for this recording is performed by Lady Walton.

Bernard Stevens's legacy includes two symphonies, concertos for violin and cello, the Dance Suite for orchestra as well as chamber music and songs. Amongst his film scores is **Mark of Cain**, released in 1948, which was a Victorian murder melodrama starring Eric Portman and Sally Gray. The extract recorded is taken from a new symphonic suite from the film, arranged by the composer Adrian Williams at the behest of Bertha Stevens. It includes a quotation from the French folksong *Bailero*, well-known through Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne*.

Stevens had established his name with **A Symphony of Liberation**, composed during the Blitz and finished in 1945, when it won first prize in the *Daily Express*'s 'Victory Music' competition. It was dedicated to the memory of a painter and poet friend, Clive Branson, who was killed in action. 'Resistance' is the second movement, a forthright scherzo, portraying a spirit of courage in adversity.

At the outset of his career Benjamin Frankel was a jazz violinist as well as an orchestrator and musical director of West End shows which included Noel Coward's *Operette*. Today he is still best remembered for his light music; however, after the war he wrote an impressive cycle of eight symphonies composed between 1958 and 1972, as well as a substantial body of other orchestral

and chamber music and an opera *Marching Song*. The **Fifth Symphony** was written in 1967; Frankel described the first movement as 'essentially lyrical... the underlying feeling is pastoral with the atmosphere romantic in sentiment'.

Humphrey Searle was one of the first British composers to adopt Schoenberg's serial techniques having studied with his disciple Anton Webern in Vienna in the late 1930s. His music was also influenced by Liszt; he was a leading authority on the composer, writing a book as well as a brilliant essay about him for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Searle's compositions include three operas, for example *Hamlet*, cantatas like *Gold Coast Customs*, five symphonies and three ballets. The **Second Symphony**, composed between 1956 and 1958, is dedicated to his first wife who died on Christmas Day 1957. Searle described it as 'a tribute rather than an elegy' and the material for the whole symphony is derived from the 12-note series heard in the Maestoso introduction.

The wholly delightful **Carriage and Pair** shows the other side of Frankel as a master of light music as well as film music. It was extracted from the film *So long at the Fair* (1950) a mystery thriller set in late-19th century Paris, which starred Dirk Bogarde and Jean Simmons.

Another excerpt from *Façade*, **Old Sir Faulk** (which Walton underpins with foxtrot rhythms), is followed by examples of his music for film and radio. The first is from Sir Laurence Olivier's renowned 1944 version of *Henry V*, for which Walton wrote what is deemed by many to be his finest film score and for which he was nominated for an Academy Award. The tender **Touch her soft lips and part** accompanies Pistol's farewell to Mistress Quickly outside the Boar's Head Tavern before he leaves to join in King Harry's adventure to France. In 1942, to mark the 450th anniversary of Columbus's landing in the New World, the BBC commissioned a radio play from Louis MacNiece which had incidental music by Walton and Olivier in the title role. The **Gloria** occurs at the point when Columbus triumphantly returns to Spain to a hero's welcome.

Although best-known for his music, William Alwyn, was also an accomplished poet and painter. His **Lyra Angelica** is a harp concerto composed in 1954 and given its premiere by Sidonie Goosens on the opening night of the Promenade Concerts the same year. Of it Alwyn wrote, 'Lyra Angelica (Angel's Songs) was inspired by my intense love of 17th century English metaphysical poets, particularly Giles Fletcher'. Each elegiac movement is assigned a quotation from Fletcher's epic poem *Christ's Victorie and Triumph* (1610); the first movement is headed 'I looke for angel's songs, and hear Him crie', and in his interpretation of the lines Alwyn tried to 'capture in musical terms the sensuous imagery and mystical fervour of the poem as a whole'.

In 1958 Alwyn received a rare honour by his election to a Fellowship of the British Film Academy

for his 'outstanding contribution to the art of the British film'. His prolific work in this genre included over 200 film scores ranging from documentaries like the war propaganda documentary *Desert Victory*, to feature films, such as Carol Reed's **Odd Man Out** screened in 1946 which featured James Mason as an IRA gunman on the run. The Prelude aptly sets the scene for the drama and ultimate tragedy that follows.

Arthur Bliss's **Pastoral** was composed in 1928, its inspiration arising from a holiday that he and his wife had spent in Sicily. During it he read the Idylls of the classical Sicilian poet Theocritus who had established the pastoral as a poetic genre. In his autobiography *As I Remember*, Bliss recalled that his memories of the island, 'the southern light, the goat herds, the sound of the pipe', all evoking, 'the image of some classical pastoral scene', gave him the idea for a work in the form of an anthology of poems depicting a Sicilian day from dawn to evening'. In **The Pigeon Song** the soloist describes a girl sharing her thoughts of love with her tame pigeon which she then sends as a messenger to her lover.

The Lark Ascending is one of Ralph Vaughan Williams's most exquisite miniatures, inspired by a poem of George Meredith. It was largely completed in 1914, set aside at the outbreak of war and revised in 1920. Out of the opening orchestral chord, itself instantly evoking a hot, languid summer's afternoon with its incessant hum of insects, the melismas of the lark's song emerge suggestive of the first lines of the poem:

He rises and begins to round
He drops the silver chain of sound

Kenneth Leighton's **Third Symphony**, 'Laudes Musicae', for tenor and orchestra, was completed in 1984 and sets a group of texts in praise of the art of music. The final movement is slow in tempo; in the first purely orchestral section a long-breathed lyrical melody beginning on the cellos is developed to a passionate climax. The setting of Shelley's 'Music, when soft voices die, Vibrates in the memory', brings a lull in the heightened emotion created. This returns after the tenor's solo as a dissonant orchestral climax is reached, giving way to a surging, passionate outpouring, and a long drawn out affirmation.

Leighton prefaced the work with words of his own, which in their sentiment act equally well as an envoi to all the music gathered on this disc, to its composers and the partners who supported and nurtured their muse.

For all music is singing,
And in music there is praise of life.

© 1995 Andrew Burn

1 **William Walton:**
Long Steel Grass (Façade)
Long steel grass —
The white soldiers pass —
The light is braying like an ass.
See
The tall Spanish jade
With hair black as nightshade
Worn as a cockade!
Flee
Her eyes' gasconade
And her gown's parade
(As stiff as a brigade).
Tee-hee!
The hard and braying light
Is zebra'd black and white
It will take away the slight
And free,
Tinge of the mouth-organ sound,
(Oyster-stall notes) oozing round
Her flounces as they sweep the ground
The

Trumpet and the drum
And the martial cornet come
To make the people dumb —
But we
Won't wait for sly-foot night
(Moonlight, watered milk-white, bright)
To make clear the declaration
Or our Paphian vocation,
Beside the castanetted sea,
Where stalks Il Capitaneo
Swaggart braggadocio
Sword and moustachio —
He
Is green as a cassada
And his hair is an armada.
To the jade 'Come kiss me harder'
He called across the battlements as she
Heard our voices thin and shrill
As the steely grasses' thrill,
Or the sound of the onycha
When the phoca has the pica
In the palace of the Queen Chineel

Edith Sitwell

7 **William Walton:**
Fox-Trot 'Old Sir Faulk' (Façade)
Old
Sir
Faulk
Tall as a stork,
Before the honeyed fruits of dawn were ripe, would walk,
And stalk with a gun
The reynard-coloured sun,
Among the pheasant-feathered corn the unicorn has torn, forlorn
the
Smock-faced sheep

Sit
And
Sleep;
Periwigged as William and Mary, weep...
'Sally, Mary, Mattie, what's the matter, why cry?'
The huntsman and the reynard-coloured sun and I sigh;
'Oh, the nursery-maid Meg
With a leg like a peg
Chased the feathered dreams like hens, and when they laid
an egg
In the sheepskin
Meadows
Where
The serene King James would steer
Horse and hounds, then he
From the shade of a tree
Picked it up as spoil to boil for nursery tea', said the mourners.
In the
Corn, towers strain,
Feathered tall as a crane,
And whistling down the feathered rain, old Noah goes again —
An old dull mome
With a head like a pome
Seeing the world as a bare egg,
Laid by the feathered air; Meg
Would beg three of these
For the nursery teas
Of Japhet, Shem, and Ham; she gave it
Underneath the trees,
Where the boiling
Water,
Hissed,
Like the goose-king's feathered daughter — kissed,
Pot and pan and copper kettle
Put upon their proper mettle,
Lest the Flood — the Flood — the Flood begin again through these!

Edith Sitwell

**9 William Walton:
Gloria (Christopher Columbus)**

SOLO TENOR:

Glory, glory to God.
Joy in the land of Spain.
They sailed away to the West,
Now they are here again.

CHORUS:

Glory, glory to God.
Joy in the land of Spain.

SOLO:

They sailed away to the West,
Now they are here again.

They tracked the sun to his lair,
They found the Golden Main.

CHORUS:

They sailed away to the West,
Now they are here again.

SOLO:

The world that we have found
Shall ne'er be lost again.
The voyage that we made —
We made it not in vain.

CHORUS:

The world that we have found
Shall ne'er be lost again.

Louis MacNeice

**12 Arthur Bliss:
The Pigeon Song (Pastoral)**

Little pigeon, grave and fleet,
Eye-of-fire, sweet Snowy-wings,
Think you that you can discover
On what great green down my lover
Lies by his sunny sheep and sings?

If you can, O go and greet
Him from me; say: She is waiting...
Not for him, O no! but, sweet,
Say June's nigh and doves, remating,
Fill the dancing noontide heat
With melodious debating.

Say the swift swoops from the beam;
Soon the cuckoo must cease calling;
Kingcups flare beside the stream,
That not glides now but runs brawling;
That wet roses are asteam
In the sun and will be falling.

Say the chestnut sheds his bloom;
Honey from straw hivings oozes;
There's a night-jar in the coombe;
Venus nightly burns, and chooses
Most to blaze above my room;
That the laggard 'tis that loses.

Say the nights are warm and free,
And the great stars swarm above him;
But soon starless night must be.
Yet if all these do not move him,
Tell, O tell — but not too plainly! —
That I long for him and love him.

Robert Nichols

**14 Kenneth Leighton:
Symphony No. 3**

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou hast gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley



Hulton Deutsch

**Dame Edith Sitwell with Sir William Walton and Lady Walton
at a Royal Society of Literature Garden Party, London 1953**

Eight tracks on this disc are taken from existing Chandos recordings:

- 1 & 7 **CHAN 8869 - WALTON: Façade 1 & 2**
with Richard Baker, Narrator
- 9 **CHAN 8824 - WALTON: Christopher Columbus Suite · Songs after Edith Sitwell
Anon in Love · A Song for the Lord Mayor's Table · The Twelve**
with Jill Gomez, Linda Finnie, Martyn Hill
- 10 **CHAN 9065 - ALWYN: Lyra Angelica · Autumn Legend · Pastoral Fantasia
Tragic Interlude**
with Stephen Tees & Nicholas Daniel
- 11 **CHAN 9243 - ALWYN: FILM MUSIC SUITES**
Odd Man Out · The History of Mr Polly · The Fallen Idol
'Calypso' from 'The Rake's Progress'

- 12 **CHAN 8886 - BLISS: Music for Strings · Pastoral 'Lie Strewn the white flocks'**
with The Sinfonia Chorus
- 13 **CHAN 8554 - VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Symphony No. 5 · The Lark Ascending**
- 14 **CHAN 8741 - LEIGHTON: Cello Concerto · Symphony No. 3 'Laudes musicae'**
with Raphael Wallfisch

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This recording is made in co-operation with Russell Films and
LWTP'S 'The South Bank Show'. Film written and directed by Ken
Russell, produced by Maureen Murray, and edited by Xavier Russell.

Tracks 13 and 14 are dedicated to Mary Thomson, the widow of
Bryden Thomson, in honour of his outstanding contribution to the
promotion of British music.

Brian Couzens,
Chief Record Producer

BOURNEMOUTH
ORCHESTRAS



• **A Chandos Digital Recording**

- Recording Producers: Tim Oldham (Bliss) & Brian Couzens (other works)
- Sound Engineers: Richard Lee (Alwyn - Lyra Angelica) & Ralph Couzens (other works)
- Recorded at The Winter Gardens, Bournemouth on 7-8 September 1994 (tracks 2-6, 8) and at various venues between 1989 and 1993 (other tracks)
- Front Cover Photographs of (clockwise) Fiona Searle, Susana Walton, Bertha Stevens and Xenia Frankel by Daniel Meadows, © Russell Films
- Back Cover Photograph: Ken Russell filming 'Classic Widows' with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, 8 September 1994. Photograph by Daniel Meadows. © Russell Films
- Sleeve Design: Penny Lee • Art Direction: Steven John

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