

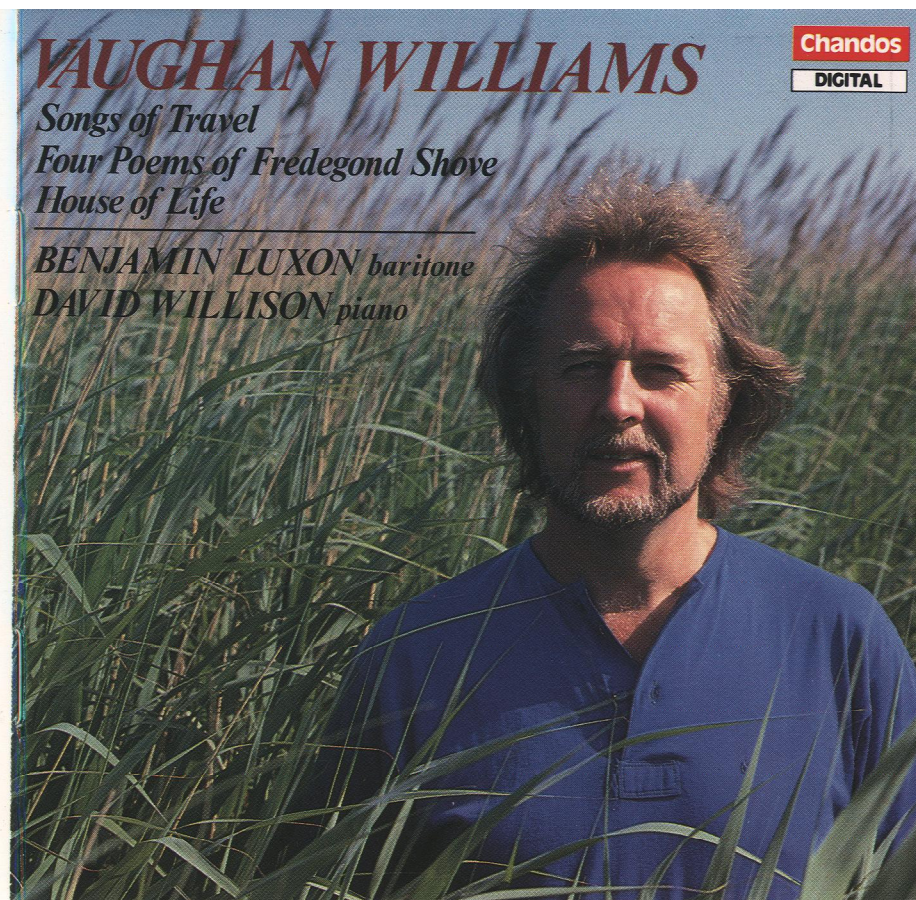
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VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Chandos

DIGITAL

Songs of Travel
Four Poems of Fredegond Shove
House of Life

BENJAMIN LUXON baritone
DAVID WILLISON piano

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872-1958)

BENJAMIN LUXON *baritone*

DAVID WILLISON *piano*

"SONGS OF TRAVEL"

Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson

- 1 No. 1 "The Vagabond" (3:10)
- 2 No. 2 "Let Beauty Awake" (2:51)
- 3 No. 3 "The Roadside Fire" (2:16)
- 4 No. 4 "Youth and Love" (3:33)
- 5 No. 5 "In Dreams" (2:15)
- 6 No. 6 "The Infinite Shining Heavens" (2:30)
- 7 No. 7 "Whither must I Wander?" (4:08)
- 8 No. 8 "Bright is the Ring of Words" (1:57)
- 9 No. 9 "I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope" (2:10)

10 "TIRED" (1956) (2:01)

Poem by Ursula Vaughan Williams

TWO POEMS OF W. BARNES

- 11 No. 1 "In the Spring" (2:41)
- 12 No. 2 "Linden Lea" (2:19)

FOUR POEMS BY FREDEGOND SHOVE

- 13 No. 1 "Motion and Stillness" (1:44)
- 14 No. 2 "Four Nights" (3:12)
- 15 No. 3 "The New Ghost" (5:35)
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"HOUSE OF LIFE"

Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

- 17 No. 1 "Love-Sight" (3:30)
- 18 No. 2 "Silent Noon" (4:24)
- 19 No. 3 "Love's Minstrels" (3:28)
- 20 No. 4 "Heart's Haven" (2:30)
- 21 No. 5 "Death in Love" (4:00)
- 22 No. 6 "Love's Last Gift" (3:46)

TT = 67:08 DDD

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and the Maltings, Snape by David Usill.

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Songs appeared throughout Ralph Vaughan Williams's creative life, though chiefly in the earlier decades. The first extant is dated 1894, and the final ones came shortly before his death. These were *Four Last Songs* from 1954-8 on poems by his wife, Ursula, a group represented here by *Tired* (1956). He possessed a fertile melodic gift and the ability to set words aptly. For his greatest music we must look elsewhere, but many of these songs are extremely attractive, and the best known is *Linden Lea* (1901).

This has a text by William Barnes, who wrote in the Dorset dialect; he probably took the words of a local song and tidied them up. Vaughan William's virtually hexatonic melody is more in traditional than folk style. He returned to Barnes over fifty years later for *In the Spring* (1952), which he dedicated to the Barnes Society. Here, as in *Linden Lea*, is the atmosphere of the English countryside at it used to be.

The most significant of the early songs are in three cycles, *The House of Life* and *Songs of Travel* included here, plus the *Five Mystical Songs*. Earliest is the Dante Gabriel Rossetti sequence, *The House of Life*, published in 1903. Not many composers have attempted Rossetti, and he is not an easy poet to set. As might be expected of one who was a painter, he deals in images that appeal to other senses than that of hearing. 'Silent Noon' is the best known of this group, and here the imagery of the poem is well realised in the music, for the shimmer of summer, and its stillness, are in the accompaniment.

In general Vaughan Williams does not indulge in impressionistic word-painting in *The House of Life*, but considerable imagination is evident in both the voice and keyboard parts. So also is a vein of rich lyrical melody, in simple forms. Yet there is some variety. 'Lovesight' has an elaborate prelude and postlude, 'Heart's Haven' is dramatic, 'Death-in-Love' an essay in the grandiose.

The authentic Vaughan Williams appears, though, with *Songs of Travel*. This cycle, which could perhaps more properly be called a collection, had a somewhat chequered history so far as publication is concerned. Seven of these songs appeared in two sets, of three and four items, in 1905 and 1907 respectively. These groupings do have identities of their own, the first, despite passages like the middle section of 'The Roadside Fire', being mainly vigorous, extrovert; the second set is notably more chromatic, lyrical, introverted. When performed together each emphasises the qualities of the other.

There are two other Robert Louis Stevenson settings, however, that Vaughan Williams evidently intended to go with the above. First is 'Whither Must I Wander?', composed in 1894, printed in a magazine called *The Vocalist* in 1902, then separately in 1912. Also, 'I Have Trod the Upward and Downward Slope', found among the composer's papers after his death, was designed as an epilogue; it quotes 'The Vagabond' and 'Bright is the Ring of Words'. The full sequence of nine songs is performed here.

Songwriting decreased after Vaughan Williams's middle years, and the *Four Poems of Fredegond Shove*, published in 1925, were part of a last sizeable batch that also included settings of Whitman and Seamus O'Sullivan. Fredegond Shove (1889-1949) was a Georgian poetess and her verses pose the composer some interesting problems of imagery, as in 'Motion and Stillness', with its clouds like a "wasted wreath" and ships "like evanescent hopes". Hollow fourths and fifths are prominent in the accompaniment, the effect more static than in Vaughan Williams's Pastoral Symphony.

The poem of 'Four Nights' divides into allusions to the four seasons and this again invited an illustrative setting, as does 'The Water Mill'. This latter is a Theocritan idyll with a Schubertian accompaniment of wheel and water; slowing the speed of the verse, it increases the listener's curiosity. It has also been compared to a Dutch painting because of its loving attention to small details of the scene portrayed. 'The New Ghost' is a kind of English *Doppelgänger*, though far less grim. There is, however, a dramatic suggestion of the soul's flight after death, and the final cadence reaches out into remoteness.

Max Harrison 1986

Born in Cornwall, **BENJAMIN LUXON** studied at the Guildhall School of Music where he won the School's Gold Medal.

He is a regular visitor to both Covent Garden and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. His appearances at Covent Garden include the title role in *Eugene Onegin*, Wolfram in *Tannhauser*, Marcello in *La Bohème* and Falke in a new production of *Fledermaus* which was televised throughout Western Europe and the USA; he reappeared in this opera at Covent Garden during the Christmas season of 1983. He has sung three major Mozart roles in new Peter Hall productions at Glyndebourne - Don Giovanni, Papageno and the Count in *Figaro*. He is a regular guest at the Frankfurt and Holland Opera companies and has appeared in various productions at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, following his debut there singing *Onegin*.

During the past few seasons, Benjamin Luxon has appeared with all the major U.S. orchestras; and has made many appearances at the South Bank.

Benjamin Luxon has made well over eighty recordings with all the major companies, including RCA, Decca, Philips and Argo, and with such conductors as Solti, Haitink, Dorati, Leinsdorf, Previn and Ozawa. Amongst recent releases can be numbered Mahler's Eighth Symphony with Ozawa and the Boston Symphony, and the second in a series of three RCA records devoted to songs from the musicals, which have proved extremely popular.

David Willison has come to the fore by his work with such distinguished musicians as Galway, Luxon, Palmer, Rolfe Johnson, Schwarzkopf and Tear. His principal partnership has been with Benjamin Luxon, a collaboration that now extends to twenty five years of recital giving, over 150 broadcasts with much television, including the BBC Schubert anniversary tribute performing "Winterreise", and travelling worldwide to the leading musical centres and festivals. Together they have given many first performances as well as the standard lieder and song repertoire.

David Willison also plays in the family piano trio with his brothers John and Peter. He devotes much of his time to students at the Royal Academy of Music, London in his role as Professor of Piano Chamber Music. He is a director of the music publishers Alfred Lengnick & Co.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
"SONGS OF TRAVEL"

No. 1: "THE VAGABOND"

GIVE me the life I love.
Let the lave go by me.
Give the jolly heaven above,
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river -
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.
Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road below me.
Or let autumn fall on me -
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field -
Warm the fireside haven -
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even.
Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Owe the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I ask, the heaven above,
And the road below me.

No. 2: "LET BEAUTY AWAKE"

LET Beauty awake in the morn from beautiful dreams,
Beauty awake from rest!
Let Beauty awake
For Beauty's sake
In the hour when birds awake in the brake
And the stars are bright in the west!
Let Beauty awake in the eve from the slumber of day,
Awake in the crimson eve!
In the day's dusk end
When the shades ascend,
Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend
To tender again and receive!

No. 3: "THE ROADSIDE FIRE"

I Will make you brooches and toys for your delight,
Of bird-song at morning and starshine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me,
Of green days in forests, and blue days at sea.
I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom.
And you shall wash your linen, and keep your body white,
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.
And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

No. 4: "YOUTH AND LOVE"

TO the heart of Youth the world is a highwyside,
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either land,
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land
Call him with lighted lamp in the eve-side.

Thick as the stars at night when the moon is down,
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate,
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

No. 5: "IN DREAMS"

IN dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand
As heretofore.
The unremembered tokens in your hand
Avali no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace,
Enshrines, endears.
Cold beats the light of time upon your face
And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept a while
And then forgot.
Ah me! but he that left you with a smile
Forgets you not.

No. 6: "THE INFINITE SHINING HEAVENS"

THE infinite shining heavens
Rose and I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars
Showering sorrow and light.

I saw them distant as heaven,
Dumb and shining and dead,
And the idle stars of the night
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow
The stars looked over the sea,
Till lo! I looked in the dusk
And a star had come down to me.

No. 7: "WHITHER MUST I WANDER?"

HOME no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather,
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree.
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door -
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child,
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood -
Fair shine the day on the house with open door:
Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney -
But I go for ever and come again no more.

No. 8: "BRIGHT IS THE RING OF WORDS"

BRIGHT is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.
Still they are carolled and said -
On wings they are carried -
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
The swains together.
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,
The lover liners and sings
And the maid remembers.

No. 9: "I HAVE TROD THE UPWARD AND THE DOWNWARD SLOPE"

I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before,
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

POEM BY URSULA VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

"TIRED" (1956)

SLEEP and I'll be still as another sleeper
Holding you in my arms,
Glad that you lie so near at last.
This sheltering midnight is our meeting place,
No passion or despair
Or hope divide me from your side.
I shall remember fire light on your
sleeping face,
I shall remember shadows growing
deeper as the fire fell to ashes
and the minutes passed.

TWO POEMS OF W. BARNES

No. 1: "IN THE SPRING"

MY love is the maid of all maidens,
Though all may be comely,
Her skin's like the Jessamine blossom
A-spread in the Spring.

Her smile is so sweet as a baby's
Young smile on his mother,
Her eyes be as bright as the dew drop
A-shed in the Spring.

O grey-leafy pinks o' the garden,
Now bear her sweet blossoms;
Now deck with a rosebud, O briar,
Her head in the Spring.

O light-rolling wind blow me hither,
The voice of her talking,
O bring from her feet the light dust,
She do tread in the Spring.

O sun make the king-cups all glitter -
In gold all around her,
And make of daisies white flowers
A bed in the Spring.

O whistle gay birds, up beside her,
In pathway and woodlands,
O sing, swinging lark, now the clouds
Be a-fled in the Spring.

An' who, you may ask, be my praises
A making so much of,
An' oh! 'tis the maid I'm a-hoping
To wed in the Spring.

No. 2: "LINDEN LEA"

WITHIN the woodlands, flow'ry gladed,
By the oak tree's mossy moot,
The shining grass blades, timber shaded,
Now do quiver under foot;
And birds do whistle overhead,
And water's bubbling in its bed;
And there for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

When leaves that lately were a springing,
Now do fade within the copse,
And painted birds do hush their singing,
Up upon the timber tops;
An' brown-leaved fruit's a-turning red,
In cloudless sunshine overhead,
With fruit for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other folk make money faster,
In the air of dark-room'd towns,
I don't dread a peevish master,
Though no man may heed my frowns.
I be free to go abroad,
Or take again my homeward road,
To where, for me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

FOUR POEMS BY
FREDEGOND SHOYE

No. 1: "MOTION AND STILLNESS"

THE sea shells lie as cold as death
Under the sea;
The clouds move in a wasted wreath
Eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes
Above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes
Vanish away.

No. 2 "FOUR NIGHTS"

O when I shut my eyes in spring
A choir of heaven's swans I see,
They sail on lakes of blue, and sing
Or shelter in a willow tree:
They sing of peace in heart and mind
Such as on earth you may not find.

When I lie down in summer-time
I still can hear the scythes that smite
The ripened flowers in their prime,
And still can see the meadows white.
In summer-time my rest is small,
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn when my eyes I close
I see the yellow stars ablaze
Among the tangled winds that rose
At sunset in a circled maze;
Like armoured knights, they ride the skies
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in winter-time I sleep
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;
The angels in my spirit keep
A silent watch and, being there,
They cause my soul to lie as dead -
A stream enchanted in her bed.

No. 3: "THE NEW GHOST"

AND he cast it down, down, on the green grass,
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was -
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,
And the gattolis hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see
That He kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free -
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word -
As on a wild, April day, springs a small bird -
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,
Over the young crocuses, under the green may
That was not quite in flower yet - to a far-distant land,
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud holding the sun's hand.

No. 4: "THE WATER MILL"

THERE is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it
And in July the swallows fit
To and fro, in and out,

Round the windows, all about,
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
and the plovers in the garden beds

Turn red, turn gray,
With the time of day,
And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.
The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft, where the sunbeams stroke
The sacks fat backs, and beetles choke
In the floury dust. The wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.

There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall, and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows crouch,
Or showers make the windows white,
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.
The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook, while the mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilight pool:
Bare-foot, bare-head,
Till the day is dead,

And their mother calls them in to bed.
The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord.
The young men come for his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take:
She drives her needle, and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold, and the lamp shines buff.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

"HOUSE OF LIFE"

No. 1: "LOVE - SIGHT"

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours (we two alone),
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! If I should no more see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring -
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

No. 2: "SILENT NOON"

YOUR hands lie open in the long fresh grass,
The finger points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden king-cup fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky, -
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love, the
song of love.

No. 3: "LOVE'S MINSTRELS"

ONE flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player
Even where my lady and I lay all alone;
Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:
Only my songs are to Love's dear ones dear."
Then said I: "Through thine haughty's
rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
And still she deems the cadence deep and clear".

Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of Love,
And this Love's worship: both he plights to me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:
But where wan water trembles in the grove,
And wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its voluntary".

No. 4: "HEART'S HAVEN"

SOMETIMES she is a child within mine arms,
Cowering beneath dark wings that love must chase, -
With still tears show'ring and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms.
And oft from mine own spirit's hurtling harms
I crave the refuge of her deep embrace, -
Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sov'reign counter-charms.

And Love, our light at night and shade at noon,
Iulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
All shafts of shelterless tumultuous day.
Like the moon's growth, his face gleams through his tune;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
Our answering spirits chime one roundelay.

No. 5: "DEATH IN LOVE"

THERE came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new.

But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling, -
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stired it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no breath:
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

No. 6: "LOVE'S LAST GIFT"

LOVE to his singer held a glistening leaf,
And said: "The rose-tree and the apple-tree
Have fruits to want or flowers to lure the bee;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest-marsai, the years chieft,
Victorious Summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea
Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.

All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love
To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang;
But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
Take my last gift: thy heart hath sung my praise."

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erhältlich sind von Chandos Records Ltd,
93, Shepperton Road, London, N1 3DF.

Ralph Vaughan Williams composa des chants durant toute sa carrière, mais principalement durant ses premières décennies; les plus anciens qu'on connaisse datent de 1891, et les plus récents précéderont de peu son décès. Il possédait un don mélodique très poussé et savait admirablement mettre les mots en musique. S'il faut bien admettre toutefois que ses œuvres les meilleures optent pour une forme musicale autre que celle du chant, en revanche, nombre de ces morceaux isolés sont extrêmement séduisants. Les premiers chants les plus significatifs sont regroupés en trois cycles, *La Maison de la vie* et *Chants de voyage*, qui figurent sur le présent enregistrement, ainsi que les *Cinq Chants mystiques*.

La Maison de la vie, qui s'appuie sur une série de sonnets dus à Dante Gabriel Rossetti, est le cycle le plus ancien. Il fut publié en 1903. Rares sont les compositeurs qui affrontèrent les œuvres de Rossetti, difficiles à mettre en musique. Comme l'on pouvait s'y attendre de la part d'un peintre, l'auteur utilise des images qui font appel à d'autres sens qu'à l'ouïe. "Midi silencieux" est le morceau le plus connu de ce cycle; dans cette œuvre, la musique reproduit très bien les images du poème, et le chatoulement comme l'immobilité de l'été sont présents dans l'accompagnement.

En règle générale, Vaughan Williams ne se contente pas, dans *La Maison de la vie*, de peindre les mots à la manière d'un impressionniste: une part considérable d'imagination est évidente tant dans la partie lyrique que dans la partie pour clavier. Une mélodie lyrique riche, mais aux formes simples, orne également ces chants, qui ne sont pourtant pas dépourvus de variété. "Le regard de l'amour" renferme un prélude et un postlude complexes, "Le refuge du cœur" est un morceau dramatique, et "La mort dans l'amour" un essai dans le style grandiose.

Cependant, c'est dans les *Chants de voyage* qu'apparaît le véritable Vaughan Williams. Ce cycle, qui est à proprement parler une réunion de textes, eut une histoire quelque peu mouvementée en ce qui concerne sa publication. Sept de ces chants parurent en deux séries, l'une de trois morceaux et l'autre de quatre, en 1905 et 1907 respectivement. Chacune possède sa propre identité, la première étant principalement vigoureuse et extravertie, en dépit de certains passages tels que la section centrale de "L'incendie au bord du chemin", et la seconde remarquablement plus chromatique, lyrique et introvertie. Ces deux séries ont tout intérêt à être jouées ensemble, car chacune fait alors ressortir les qualités de l'autre.

Il existe toutefois deux autres mises en musique de poèmes de Robert Louis Stevenson, que Vaughan Williams se proposait sans aucun doute de joindre aux précédentes. "Où dois-je diriger mes pas?" fut composée en 1894 et imprimée en 1902 dans un magazine appelé *The Vocalist*, puis séparément en 1912. "J'ai monté et descendu la côte aride" fut découverte quant à elle parmi les papiers du compositeur après sa mort; elle devait servir d'épilogue et cite "Le vagabond" et "Clair est le son des mots". C'est la séquence entière de neuf chants qui figure sur le présent enregistrement.

Durant sa maturité, Vaughan Williams écrivit moins de chants, et les *Quatre poèmes de Fredegond Shove*, publiés en 1925, faisaient partie d'une dernière série assez volumineuse qui comprenait également des mises en musique de poèmes de Whitman et de Seamus O'Wullivan. Fredegond Shove (1889-1949) était une poétesse dont les vers posèrent au compositeur d'intéressants problèmes de reproduction des images, comme c'est le cas dans "Mouvement et immobilité", avec ses nuages semblables à une "couronne déchirée" et ses bateaux rappelant des "espoirs évanescents". L'accompagnement regorge de quarts et de quintes cavernueuses, qui produisent un effet plus statique que dans la Symphonie pastorale de Vaughan Williams.

Le poème des "Quatre nuits" renferme diverses allusions aux saisons, ce qui donne lieu là encore à une illustration musicale. Il en va de même pour "Le moulin", idylle dans le style de Théocrite assortie d'un accompagnement schubertien illustrant le bruit de la roue et de l'eau; là, le compositeur ralentit le rythme

de la poésie afin de mieux éveiller la curiosité de l'auditeur. Ce poème a parfois été comparé à un tableau hollandais du fait de son goût marqué pour les détails de la scène décrite. "Le nouveau fantôme" est une sorte de *Doppelgänger* anglais, mais en bien moins sinistre; ce poème suggère pourtant de manière spectaculaire la fuite de l'âme après la mort, et la cadence finale s'estompe dans le lointain.

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Traduction de Madeline Jay

Né en Cornouailles, **Benjamin Luxon** fit ses études à la Guildhall School of Music de Londres, où il remporta la médaille d'or de l'établissement. Il se produit régulièrement tant à Covent Garden qu'au festival de Glyndebourne. À Covent Garden, il a eu l'occasion de chanter le rôle-titre d'*Eugène Onéguine*, Wolfram dans *Tannhäuser*, Marcello dans *La Bohème*, et Falke dans une nouvelle mise en scène de *La Chauve-souris* retransmise sur les écrans de télévision en Europe occidentale et aux États-Unis; puis il reparut dans cet opéra à Covent Garden durant la saison de Noël 1983. Il a également interprété trois des principaux rôles mozartiens dans de nouvelles mises en scène de Peter Hall données à Glyndebourne: Don Giovanni, Papageno et le comte des *Noces de Figaro*. Il est invité régulièrement par les compagnies lyriques de Francfort et de Hollande et chante dans diverses productions au Metropolitan Opera de New York, où il a débuté en interprétant Eugène Onéguine.

Durant ces dernières saisons, Benjamin Luxon a été accompagné par tous les grands orchestres des États-Unis et il a réalisé plus de quatre-vingts enregistrements avec toutes les grandes maisons de disques (dont RCA, Decca, Philips et Argo) sous la baguette de chefs tels que Solti, Haitink, Dorati, Leinsdorf, Prévin et Ozawa. Parmi ses récents enregistrements figurent la Huitième symphonie de Mahler avec Osawa et l'Orchestre symphonique de Boston, ainsi que le deuxième d'une série de trois disques de RCA consacrés à des chants extraits de comédies musicales et qui ont remporté un grand succès.

David Willison a su attirer l'attention grâce à sa collaboration avec des musiciens aussi célèbres que James Galway, Benjamin Luxon, Felicity Palmer, Antony Rolfe Johnson, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf et Robert Tear. Son principal partenaire est Benjamin Luxon, auquel l'unissent vingt-cinq années de récitals, plus de 150 émissions de radio, de nombreuses émissions de télévision (dont *Le voyage d'hiver* dans le cadre d'un programme donné par la BBC à la mémoire de Schubert) et des déplacements dans les principaux festivals et centres musicaux du monde.

David Willison joue également en trio avec ses frères John et Peter. Il consacre une bonne partie de son temps aux étudiants de la Royal Academy of Music de Londres, où il occupe un poste de professeur de musique de chambre pour piano, et travaille en tant que directeur dans la maison d'édition musicale Alfred Lengnick & Co.

Lieder spielten während des ganzen schöpferischen Lebens von Ralph Vaughan Williams eine bedeutende Rolle, vor allem aber in seinen früheren Jahrzehnten. Sein erster Beitrag zu diesem Genre stammt von 1894, und der letzte entstand kurz vor dem Tod des Komponisten. Vaughan Williams verfügte über eine fruchtbare melodische Begabung und hatte ein natürliches Gespür für die Vertonung von Texten. Seine bedeutendste Musik schrieb er auf anderen Gebieten, aber viele seiner Lieder sind nichtsdestoweniger ungemein reizvoll. Seine wichtigsten frühen Liedkompositionen sind in drei Zyklen zusammengefaßt, die beiden hier eingespielten Sammlungen *The House of Life* und *Songs of Travel* sowie die *Five Mystical Songs*.

Den frühesten Zyklus bilden die 1903 veröffentlichten Vertonungen von sechs Sonetten aus Dante Gabriel Rossettis *The House of Life*. Nur wenige Komponisten haben sich an den präraffaelitischen Dichter gewagt, denn seine Poesie ist nicht leicht in Musik umzusetzen. Rossetti war nebenher ein wichtiger Maler, und seine dichterischen Bilder sprechen auch andere Sinne an als nur das Ohr. "Silent Noon" ist das bekannteste Sonett aus dieser Gruppe; hier hat der Komponist eine überzeugende Entsprechung für die Bildwelt des Gedichtes gefunden, denn der schimmernde Glanz und die Stille des Sommers finden sich auch in der Liebegleitung.

Im großen und ganzen macht Vaughan Williams in *The House of Life* keinen übermäßigen Gebrauch von impressionistischer Klangmalerei, er erweist aber seine Vielseitigkeit und Phantasie in der Behandlung von Singstimme und Klavier ebenso wie in dem Reichtum an Melodien und ihren schlichten Formen.

Zugleich sind die einzelnen Lieder durch geschickte Kontrastwirkungen voneinander abgesetzt: "Lovesight" hat ein komplexes Vor- und Nachspiel, und "Heart's Haven" ist eher dramatisch angelegt, während "Death-in-Love" sich an einer grandioseren Gestik versucht.

Der "echte" Vaughan Williams begegnet uns in den *Songs of Travel*. Der Zyklus, den man vielleicht besser als eine lose Sammlung von Liedern bezeichnen sollte, hat eine recht bewegte Geschichte, was seine Veröffentlichung angeht. Sieben dieser Lieder erschienen in zwei Gruppen von drei und vier Gedichten (1906 bzw. 1907) und haben in diesen Kombinationen durchaus ausgeprägte Eigenschaften – die erste ist (abgesehen von Passagen wie dem Mittelteil von "The Roadside Fire") überwiegend energisch und extrovertiert, die zweite zeichnet sich eher durch Chromatik, Lyrismen und eine verinnerlichte Haltung aus. Wenn beide Gruppen zusammen gegeben werden, betont jeweils die eine die Charakteristika der anderen.

Zwei weitere Stevenson-Vertonungen wollte der Komponist jedoch offenbar mit diesen Liedern verbunden sehen: "Whither Must I Wander?" (1894 komponiert, 1902 in einer Zeitschrift mit dem Titel *The Vocalist* abgedruckt und 1912 einzeln veröffentlicht) und "I Have Trod the Upward and Downward Slope" (aus dem Nachlaß; als Epilog gedacht und mit Zitaten aus "The Vagabond" und "Bright is the Ring of Words"). Alle neun Lieder wurden hier eingespielt.

Nach Vaughan Williams' mittlerer Periode entstanden immer weniger Lieder, und die 1925 veröffentlichten *Four Poems of Fredegond Shove* gehörten zu einer letzten, recht umfangreichen Reihe, die auch Vertonungen von Gedichten Walt Whitmans und Seamus O'Sullivans enthält. Die Texte der Dichterin Fredegond Shove (1889 – 1949) stellen einen Komponisten vor recht interessante Probleme mit der Metaphorik, etwa in "Motion and Stillness" mit dem "zerrissenen Kranz" der Wolken und den Schiffen als "flüchtige Hoffnungen". Hohl klingende Quartetten und Quintetten kennzeichnen die Begleitung; ihre Wirkung ist statischer als in Vaughan Williams' *Pastoral Symphony*.

Die vier Strophen von "Four Nights" entsprechen mit ihren jeweiligen Assoziationen den vier Jahreszeiten, was den Komponisten zu einer illustrierenden Musik anregte, ebenso wie "The Water Mill",

eine Theokritische Idylle mit Schubertscher Begleitung für Mühlenräder und –bach. Die Verlangsamung des Verschlusses steigert geschickt die Erwartungshaltung des Hörers; die sorgfältige Hervorhebung kleiner Details der Szene ist mit einem holländischen Genrebild verglichen worden. "The New Ghost" bringt eine Art englische Entsprechung zum romantischen Doppelgänger-Motiv, allerdings eine weniger dämonische. Das Entfliehen der Seele nach dem Tod ist jedoch auf durchaus dramatische Weise angedeutet, und die abschließende Kadenz scheint in entlegenste Bereiche führen zu wollen.

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Übersetzung: Christian Andresen

Benjamin Luxon wurde in Cornwall geboren und studierte an der Londoner Guildhall School of Music, wo er die Goldmedaille gewann. Er tritt regelmäßig am Covent Garden Opernhaus und bei den Glyndebourne-Festspielen auf und hat in London u.a. die Titelrolle in *Eugen Onegin*, Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, Marcello in *La Bohème* sowie Falke in einer (in Westeuropa und den USA im Fernsehen ausgestrahlten) Neuinszenierung der *Fledermaus* gesungen; in der Strauß-Operette war er auch Weihnachten 1983 wieder zu sehen. In Glyndebourne hat er unter der Regie von Peter Hall drei bedeutende Mozart-Partien gesungen: die Titelrolle in *Don Giovanni*, Papageno in der *Zauberflöte* und den Grafen im *Figaro*. Er ist regelmäßiger Gast in Frankfurt und bei der Niederländischen Oper und hat nach seinem Debüt als Onegin in mehreren Produktionen der New Yorker Metropolitan Opera gesungen.

Als Konzertsänger ist Benjamin Luxon mit allen führenden amerikanischen Orchestern aufgetreten und singt häufig in den Zentren des europäischen Musiklebens. Er hat mehr als 80 Schallplatten bei den wichtigsten Firmen eingespielt (darunter RCA, Decca, Philips und Argo) und dabei mit Dirigenten wie Solti, Haitink, Dorati, Leinsdorf, Previn und Ozawa zusammengearbeitet. Zu seinen wichtigsten Aufnahmen aus der jüngsten Zeit zählen Mahlers Sinfonie Nr. 8 mit Ozawa und dem Boston Symphony Orchestra und das zweite von drei RCA-Alben mit Musical-Songs, das besonders populär geworden ist.

David Willison hat sich durch seine Zusammenarbeit mit so bedeutenden Künstlern wie James Galway, Benjamin Luxon, Felicity Palmer, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf und Robert Tear einen Namen gemacht. Mit Benjamin Luxon verbinden ihn bereits 25 Jahre regelmäßiger Recital-Auftritte mit mehr als 150 Radiosendungen und zahlreichen Fernsehprogrammen (u.a. die *Winterreise* in einer Schubert-Gedenksendung der BBC) sowie häufigen Gastspielen im Ausland. Gemeinsam haben sie mehrere Uraufführungen gegeben und sich ein breites Liederrepertoire erarbeitet.

David Willison spielt außerdem mit seinen Brüdern John und Peter in einem Trio. Als Professor für Kammermusik mit Klavier an der Londoner Royal Academy of Music widmet er einen Großteil seiner Zeit der Ausbildung seiner Studenten und arbeitet außerdem als einer der Direktoren des Musikverlags Alfred Lengnick & Co.



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R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: SONGS LUXON/WILLISON

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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872-1958)



BENJAMIN LUXON *baritone*
DAVID WILLISON *piano*

"SONGS OF TRAVEL"

Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson

- 1 No. 1 "The Vagabond" (3:10)
- 2 No. 2 "Let Beauty Awake" (2:51)
- 3 No. 3 "The Roadside Fire" (2:16)
- 4 No. 4 "Youth and Love" (3:33)
- 5 No. 5 "In Dreams" (2:15)
- 6 No. 6 "The Infinite Shining Heavens" (2:30)
- 7 No. 7 "Whither must I Wander?" (4:08)
- 8 No. 8 "Bright is the Ring of Words" (1:57)
- 9 No. 9 "I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope" (2:10)

10 "TIRED" (1956) (2:01)

Poem by Ursula Vaughan Williams

TWO POEMS OF W. BARNES

- 11 No. 1 "In the Spring" (2:41)
- 12 No. 2 "Linden Lea" (2:19)

FOUR POEMS BY FREDEGOND SHOVE

- 13 No. 1 "Motion and Stillness" (1:44)
- 14 No. 2 "Four Nights" (3:12)
- 15 No. 3 "The New Ghost" (5:35)
- 16 No. 4 "The Water Mill" (2:56)

"HOUSE OF LIFE"

Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti

- 17 No. 1 "Love-Sight" (3:30)
- 18 No. 2 "Silent Noon" (4:24)
- 19 No. 3 "Love's Minstrels" (3:28)
- 20 No. 4 "Heart's Haven" (2:30)
- 21 No. 5 "Death in Love" (4:00)
- 22 No. 6 "Love's Last Gift" (3:46)

TT = 67:08 DDD

A Chandos Digital Recording

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