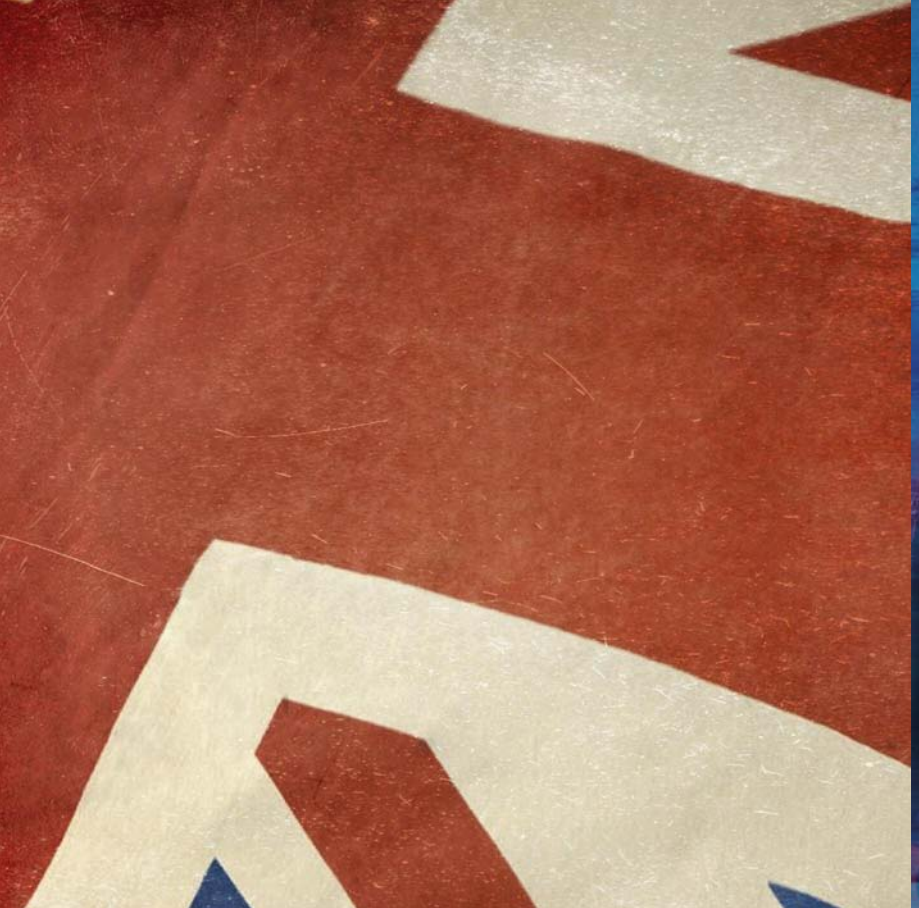
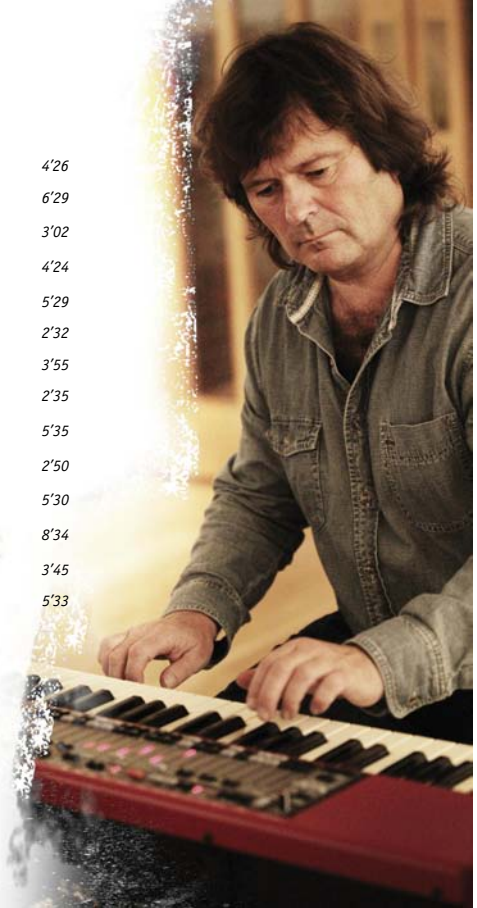


CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS
FULL ENGLISH
David Rees-Williams
solo piano & organ

1	**COUNTRY SONG**	*4'26*
2	**GREENSLEEVES**	*6'29*
3	**BRITISH GRENADIERS**	*3'02*
4	**ENIGMA (D. R-W)**	*4'24*
5	**JERUSALEM**	*5'29*
6	**ALMAND**	*2'32*
7	**LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY**	*3'55*
8	**BOBBY SHAFTOE**	*2'35*
9	**NIMROD**	*5'35*
10	**LINCOLNSHIRE POACHER**	*2'50*
11	**SCARBOROUGH FAYRE**	*5'30*
12	**TALLIS'S CANON**	*8'34*
13	**MY OLD MAN (DON'T DILLY DALLY)**	*3'45*
14	**TEN GREEN BOTTLES**	*5'33*

Total playing time: 64'45



FOREWORD

On many occasions it has been suggested that I should produce a solo piano disc to accompany those of the David Rees-Williams Trio, and David and Mary Bowerman were kind enough to invite me to record this latest venture for the Champs Hill Records label. With 2012 producing a strong sense of British patriotism with both the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games, I decided to compile a set of highly provocative English tunes, including an original of my own, and give them treatments from the soporific to the humorous. The approach was to capture largely improvised versions to which, in some cases, organ could be added. The Hammond organ has much to offer other than the sterotypical jazz, rock or blues uses for which it is known, with a cloying, persuasive character, which can draw on or accompany a strong melody with a flexibility different from a pipe organ. By contrast, the 'church' organ speaks for itself as a collection of individual instruments brought together in one place, here with the flute's 'chiff' heard in Alcock's *Almand*; masquerading humorously as the marching army's funky piper (!) in *British Grenadiers*; and featuring a healthy 'full-to-mixture' at the climax of Tallis's *Canon* with gentle celestes at the close.

Recording at Champs Hill on the wonderful Steinway, in such beautiful and very English surroundings, is always a pleasure, while the hospitality is second to none. In fact, it was while partaking of yet another delicious breakfast, that having been asked by Mary what I was going to call this latest venture, I answered without hesitation, 'Why, "Full English" of course!'.

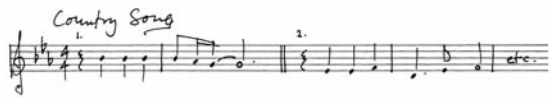
It was Constant Lambert – a composer with a strong interest in, and affinity for, the world of jazz – who in his classic *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (1934) made the famous remark that 'To put it vulgarly, the whole trouble with a folk song is that once you have played it through there is nothing much you can do except play it over again and play it rather louder'. (This pronouncement has passed into common currency in the rather pithier form, not always ascribed to its proper author, 'All you can do with a folk song is to play it once and play it again, louder'.) But *Music Ho!* is a 250-page act of provocation, and Lambert's aperçu is not, in fact, true.

Already in the 19th century there were several successful sets of 'folksong variations', and in England folksong – or the manner of it – provided the basis for many orchestral and instrumental works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Arthur Butterworth, Cyril Scott and others. Percy Grainger, to look no further, carved a good half of his immense output from British folk songs and dances, treated in innumerable ingenious ways. Some of those ways involved repetition, true, but always marrying the melody to changing harmony and colouring: but there are also the strategies of breaking the tune up into smaller, independently-developing units; using its harmonic progressions as the basis for new melodic ideas; playing hide-and-seek with it, now revealing and now concealing its phrases; changing its character and varying its rhythms.

And none of this adds up to a phenomenon confined to the early 20th century, either. The advent of jazz gave those composers who were willing to learn from it a new rhythmic-harmonic weapon in their armoury, and it taught them new, 'improvisatory' techniques of making a well-known tune the stepping-off point for more distant and more fantastical reveries. One could cite the 'swung' versions of Billy Mayerl, or many of the haunting folksong settings in the late Trevor Hold's admirable collection *The Lilford Owl*. And with the developing piano styles of Art Tatum and Chick Corea – made truly international by the way they have been assimilated by the contemporary Russian master Nikolai Kapustin – jazz's contribution to the variational arts has continued to grow.

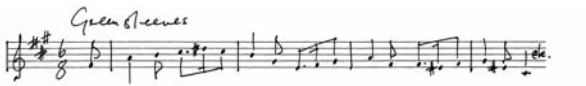
All of which goes to show that David Rees-Williams, placing before us his 'Full English' fare, is part of a long and distinguished, but seldom solemn, tradition. But several of his ingredients are not folk songs per se – songs, that is, whose origins are lost in the mists of time and which are therefore commonly ascribed to that prolific composer Anon – but tunes, some of them comparatively recent, with well-attested composers that have nevertheless become so ubiquitous as to be elements in our collective musical unconscious. Remember it was Elgar who, when asked why he didn't use folk tunes in his works, magisterially retorted: 'I am the folk music of this country!'

Country Song



Is Rees-Williams' Percy Grainger-like name for the British National Anthem, *God Seave the Queen* (or, should it be appropriate, King). His reflective arrangement treats this universally known tune, which is almost always sung in a fairly rigid, monumental style on public occasions, to a contrastingly flexible, 'floaty', musing treatment.

Greensleeves



This beautiful and perennially popular modal melody, the most famous of all Tudor songs, is first found in William Ballet's lute book (preserved in Trinity College, Dublin) of around 1580, which was also the year in which Richard Jones registered a broadside ballad entitled 'A Newe Northen Dittye of ye Ladye Green Sleves'. The enduring legend that the tune and words were in fact composed by King Henry VIII while wooing Anne Boleyn is probably just that – a legend – but the tune itself has the stuff of immortality about it. Rees-Williams gives it a rather unorthodox harmonic treatment that he uses as the basis for a free improvisation.

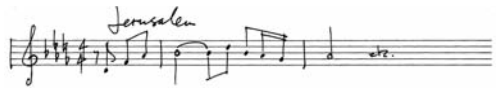
British Grenadiers

The *British Grenadiers* is a traditional marching song for units of the British and Commonwealth armies whose badge of identification carries the grenade: since 1716 it has been the regimental quick march of the Royal Artillery, and has been adopted by many regiments since. The tune itself is of late 17th-century origin, and was possibly a Dutch tune introduced in the reign of King William III, originally the Prince of Orange in Holland. Rees-Williams contributes an appropriately rumbustious, funky version updated to a contemporary beat.

Enigma

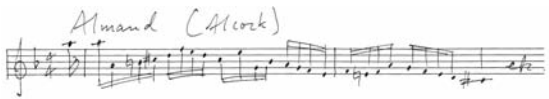
This *Enigma* turns out not to be the theme of Elgar's famous set of orchestral Variations, nor yet of its most familiar and best-loved variation, 'Nimrod' – that will come later in this recital – but an original idea of Rees-Williams' own, a 'dreamy melody perhaps reflecting a soporific summer's afternoon somewhere secluded (perhaps with a glass of white wine) on a very warm English day'. Maybe in the Buckinghamshire countryside near Bletchley Park?

Jerusalem



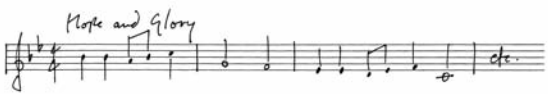
Hubert Parry's great tune, almost the unofficial second National Anthem along with Elgar's 'Land of Hope and Glory', was written on 10 March 1916 for a concert mounted by 'Fight for the Right', an organization founded to counteract German war propaganda and instil a sense of mission into the British war-effort. Parry's friend, the poet Robert Bridges, had asked for 'suitable simple music to Blake's stanzas – music that an audience could take up and join in', and this was certainly what Parry provided. The song was an instant success, and gained enormously wide currency in Elgar's orchestral version (which rather overshadowed Parry's own orchestration). Rees-Williams' version, with its intimate key change, creates an impression of great warmth.

Almand



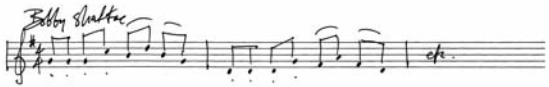
This charming little piece was written by John Alcock (1715-1806), a pupil of John Stanley who subsequently became organist of Lichfield Cathedral; he also published a semi-autobiographical novel. Cast as a baroque dance, *Almand* has a rhythmic natural bounce and a satisfying use of harmonic sequences. Rees-Williams' version features the organ flutes in duet with the Steinway piano for what he terms 'some humorous sparring'.

Land of Hope and Glory



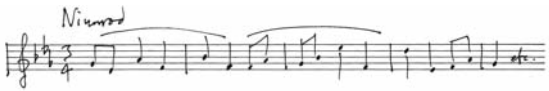
Probably the winner of any contest for unofficial second National Anthem, this magnificent tune is the trio-section of the first of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches (1901). It was so popular that, at the request of King Edward VII, he adapted it soon afterwards for the finale of his *Coronation Ode*, with words by A. C. Benson, and made a song arrangement for Clara Butt. The practice soon arose of it being sung in performances of the march – often by the audience, as at the Royal Albert Hall Proms – though Elgar himself came to hate the words, if not the tune. Here Rees-Williams gets away from any hint of jingoistic grandiosity, offering instead a kind of late-in-the-evening, romantic ramble that makes one idea from the march-section of *Pomp and Circumstance No. 1* function as a flowing accompaniment.

Bobby Shaftoe



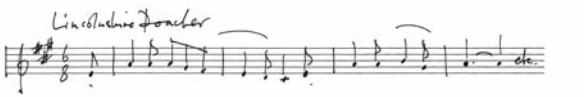
This playful, even gleeful song, originally an electioneering ballad, is about the Member of Parliament for Durham of 1760, Robert Shafto (c. 1732-1797). As he is said to have 'gone to sea' (abandoning a girl in the process), one or two nautical references may be heard in Rees-Williams' lively, up-tempo rendering.

Nimrod



The famous ninth variation from Elgar's *Enigma Variations* is here played off against a highly irreverent counterpart – namely the children's nursery rhyme and singing-game 'Pop goes the Weasel', already referred to in the 1850s as 'an old English Dance' before it crossed the Atlantic and became naturalized in the USA. The kinship between the two tunes is illustrated in Rees-Williams' treatment in which, at first opposed in character, they draw ever closer to each other.

Lincolnshire Poacher

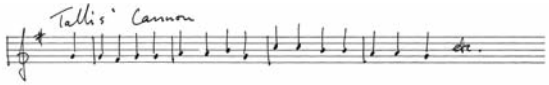


A jolly tune celebrating the joys of poaching was first printed around 1775, and has become the unofficial anthem of the county of Lincolnshire. In this setting, driving ostinato rhythms power the music forward, with relaxations into jazz, cakewalk and pop music idioms.

Scarborough Fayre

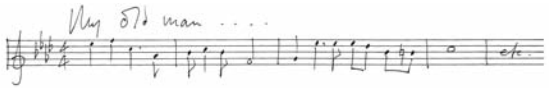
A haunting melody typical of the middle English period, though the lyric (with its refrain 'parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme') seems to date from the mid-19th century. It has been a favourite with folk singers and musicians alike for decades, if not centuries, and got a new lease of life in the 1960s from the versions of Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan's adaptation and Johnny Cash ('Girl from the North Country'). It offers endless opportunities for improvisation, as Rees-Williams demonstrates.

Tallis's Canon



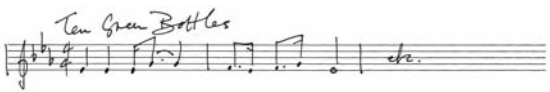
A famous tune, written originally to Psalm 67, 'God Grant we Grace', and written in 1567 for inclusion in Archbishop Parker's Psalter. Because of the construction of the melody it can easily be sung as a round in two or even four parts. Rees-Williams here works in plenty of bell-imitations, such as the chimes of Big Ben, along with a famous Ground by Purcell, to create a little anthology of Englishness.

My Old Man (Don't Dilly Dally)



The famous music hall song written by Fred W. Leigh and Charles Collins, and made popular by Marie Lloyd, which reflects humorously but with some poignancy on the hard aspects of working-class life in London at the beginning of the 20th century, such as moving the household lock, stock and barrel in the middle of the night because you can't pay the rent. Rees-Williams comments: 'This still remains a powerful heartfelt melody. This gentle treatment sees the inclusion of a light, jazz-style middle chorus improvisation'.

Ten Green Bottles



This popular children's counting rhyme has, of course, ten verses, and as an ingenious round-up to this programme Rees-Williams presents them as ten short variations which revisit some of the ideas found in the other pieces – notably *British Grenadiers*, *Nimrod* and *Pomp and Circumstance No. 1*. It makes for an entertaining send-off, as well as providing another sparkling display of improvisatory resourcefulness.

Malcolm MacDonald

Produced by David Rees-Williams, Alexander Van Ingen (piano sessions), Richard Sutcliffe (organ sessions)
Engineered by Alexander Van Ingen (piano sessions), Richard Sutcliffe (organ sessions)
Edited & Mixed by Richard Sutcliffe
All for SIX Music Productions (www.sixmp.net)

Piano tracks recorded at the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK, 7th - 9th November 2011
Piano: Steinway Model D

Organ recorded at Clyde Street, Canterbury, UK, 16th - 17th April 2012
Organs: Hammond RT3 Concert and Nord C2

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

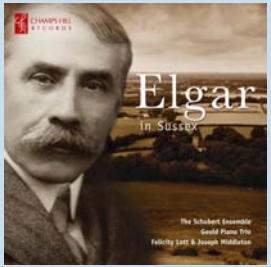
DAVID REES-WILLIAMS

David began his musical education as a chorister at New College, Oxford where he was also a piano student of Paul Drayton and Christopher Headington. He went on to life as a music scholar at Cranleigh School in Surrey where he studied piano, organ and oboe, and from there continued musical studies at The Royal College of Music, studying organ with Nicholas Danby, graduating with a BMus (Hons, London) in 1981.

Over the years he has become best known as leader and musical arranger of The David Rees-Williams Trio, which was formed in 1988 while he was co-owner of a well-known music venue in Canterbury, Kent.

The Trio first caught the imagination of listeners to BBC Radio 3 in 2001 when David's arrangement of Purcell's *When I am Laid in Earth* was played on the 'Morning on 3' programme. The BBC was inundated with listeners' calls, wanting to know how they could get hold of the music, and as a result, the Trio was invited to record a disc for the BBC on their new 'Late Junction' label. *Hidden Colours* was released in 2002, receiving excellent press reviews and reaching No.2 in the top ten of that year's HMV Choice. This was followed by *Time Scape* in 2004, *Thinking Allowed* in 2007, and *Back From Before* in 2010, all of which received four and five star reviews in the National Press. Both *Thinking Allowed* and *Back From Before*, released on the Depaean label, were actually recorded at Champs Hill thanks to the generosity of David and Mary Bowerman, and it was a natural progression for David to record for Champs Hill Records. David and the David Rees-Williams Trio perform in a wide variety of festivals, venues ranging from jazz clubs to cathedrals, and are regularly heard on national radio.

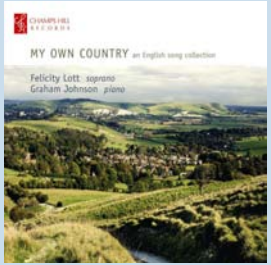
ALSO ON CHAMPS HILL RECORDS



ELGAR IN SUSSEX

PIANO QUINTET IN A MINOR, OP.84
The Schubert Ensemble
SEVEN SONGS
Felicity Lott ~ soprano,
Joseph Middleton ~ piano
THREE MOVEMENTS FOR PIANOFORTE TRIO
Gould Piano Trio

This collection of works celebrates the time Elgar spent living at Brinkwells in Sussex, and the inspirations that he gleaned from his home surroundings. Including the *Three Movements* for pianoforte trio which was unfinished, and completed in 2007 by composer Paul Adrian Rooke.



MY OWN COUNTRY
Felicity Lott and Graham Johnson

Felicity Lott brings her delicacy and rich understanding to a collection of English song, inspired by the idyllic Sussex countryside.
This charming – and occasionally surprising – disc includes songs by Quilter, Elgar, Parry, Ireland, Bax and Holst, together with a selection of Harold Fraser-Simpson's songs based on verses from A.A. Milne's *The Hums of Pooh*, and settings by Liza Lehmann.

"a lovingly planned programme by Graham Johnson, beautifully sung by Dame Felicity" Gramophone Magazine