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# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

## Fantasia on Greensleeves

## Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis

Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 • Concerto Grosso

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • James Judd



## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

### Fantasia on Greensleeves • Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis

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

In 1897 Vaughan Williams married and took the opportunity to visit Berlin, where he had lessons from Max Bruch and widened his musical experience. In England he turned his attention to the collection of folk-music in various regions of the country, an interest that materially influenced the shape of his musical language. In 1908 he went to Paris to take lessons, particularly in orchestration, from Ravel, and had by now begun to make a reputation for himself as a composer, not least with the first performance in 1910 of his first symphony, *A Sea Symphony*, setting words by Walt Whitman, and his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* in the same year. The even tenor of his life was interrupted by the war, when he enlisted at once in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. 1914 was also

the year of the *London Symphony* and of his rhapsodic work for violin and orchestra, *The Lark Ascending*. Three years later, after service in Salonica that seemed to him ineffective, he took a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery and was posted to France. There he was also able to make some use of his abilities as a musician.

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

*In the Fen Country*, described as a *Symphonic Impression*, was completed in April 1904 and revised in 1905 and 1907, to be given its first performance in London in 1909 under Sir Thomas Beecham. Vaughan Williams revised the work again in 1935 and it was published in 1969. Opening with a characteristic melody for the solo cor anglais, the work reflects the composer's current interest in folk-music, which helps to form the shape of the thematic material. The cor anglais is followed by a solo viola, an instrument that adds the final bars to music that suggests something of the course that the composer's music was to take.

*The Norfolk Rhapsody*, first heard in a London performance by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Henry Wood in 1906, was revised in 1914. It makes use

of three folk-songs collected by Vaughan Williams in King's Lynn, *The Captain's Apprentice*, *A Bold Young Sailor* and *On Board a Ninety-Eight*, and was the first of three such works, although the other two were later withdrawn. The first of the three folk-songs is introduced by a solo viola, *freely as if improvising*, after lightly sketched evocations of the Norfolk landscape, and it is this theme that serves as a frame-work for the other folk-songs, introduced respectively by the cor anglais and bassoons and cellos. *The Captain's Apprentice* returns as the work draws to a close, ending in the countryside where it had started.

The *Concerto Grosso* was written for the 21st anniversary of the Rural Music Schools Association in 1950 and first heard at the Royal Albert Hall in London in November of that year, played by a string orchestra of some four hundred players. The work was designed for three levels of technical skill, a *concertino* of twenty or so skilled players, a *tutti* for those who could play in third position and manage simple double stops, and an *ad lib* part, including sections that only called for open strings. The imposing *Intrada* is followed by a humorous *Burlesca Ostinata*, starting with open strings. There is a relatively subtle use of accompanying open strings in the *Sarabande*, hints of folk-song in the *Scherzo* and a rousing *March* to start the last movement.

The opera *Sir John in Love*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and incorporating folk-songs, where these seemed appropriate, had been completed in 1928. The *Fantasia on Greensleeves*,

drawn from the introduction to the third act of the opera, was arranged in 1934 by Ralph Greaves for string orchestra, harp and one or two optional flutes. The work starts with the familiar melody, used to frame a lively contrasting folk-dance.

Vaughan Williams conducted the first performance of his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester in 1910. He revised the work in 1913 and 1919. The *Fantasia* takes a theme by the Elizabethan composer Thomas Tallis that Vaughan Williams had included in his own *English Hymnal*, and is scored for double string orchestra and string quartet. It marks the true emergence of the composer's own distinctive musical voice. After a short introductory phrase, the opening motif of the theme is heard in the lower strings, before it is stated in full, to be repeated in more elaborate form, followed by a return to the opening. A solo viola introduces a melody derived from the original theme, then taken up by the first violin, and treated by the quartet more or less in the imitative contrapuntal manner of an Elizabethan fantasia. The music moves forward to a passage for the solo violin and, in counterpoint to it, the solo viola, delicately accompanied by the orchestra, skilfully deployed. The solo violin is heard again, ascending to the height, as the coda draws to a close.

**Keith Anderson**

## The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is the country's national orchestra and enjoys a lively profile both inside and outside New Zealand. International quality concerts performed by major artists to well-filled halls are testament to the orchestra's developing reputation, with programmes of traditional and contemporary repertoire. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra gave its first public performance in March 1947 and its first (and current) Music Director was appointed in 1999. The orchestra gives more than a hundred performances each year; these include seasons of major symphonic repertoire in seven centres and also a wide range of special programmes. The orchestra is involved in educational projects, performs family and schools concerts, accompanies opera and ballet productions and records for television, films (including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Fellowship of the Ring*) and radio. It commissions and performs New Zealand music and has a long recording history which has seen it move into the world market and win international awards. The orchestra also administers the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Chamber Orchestra, which has its own series, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra National Youth Orchestra. Highlights of the orchestra's tours outside New Zealand are the much-celebrated visit to Seville to perform at the 1992 Expo with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa under the baton of Conductor Laureate Franz-Paul Decker. More recently there have been the performances at the Summer Sydney Olympic Arts Festival in 2000, the televised Millennium Concert with Kiri Te Kanawa at Gisborne, which was screened world-wide, and recent recordings such as the high-flying Lilburn *Three Symphonies* (Naxos 8.555862). The orchestra continues to collaborate with conductors and soloists of the highest international distinction.

## James Judd

Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the British-born conductor James Judd stands at the forefront of a new period of artistic growth for his orchestra. In addition to embarking on a sizable series of recordings with the orchestra for Naxos, including the complete orchestral works of Leonard Bernstein, he has brought the orchestra recent international acclaim through appearances with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra at the 2000 Summer Sydney Olympic Arts Festival as well as a specially televised Millennium Concert with Kiri Te Kanawa as soloist. A graduate of London's Trinity College of Music, James Judd came to international attention as the Assistant Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, a post he accepted at the invitation of Lorin Maazel. Four years later, he returned to Europe after being appointed Associate Music Director of the European Community Youth Orchestra by Claudio Abbado, an ensemble with which he continues to serve as an honorary Artistic Director. Since that time he has led the Berlin Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and conducted in the great concert halls of Europe, including the Salzburg Mozarteum and Vienna's Musikverein, making guest appearances with such prestigious ensembles as the Vienna Symphony, the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Prague Symphony Orchestras, the Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Monte Carlo Symphony Orchestra and the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg. As an opera conductor, he has appeared with the English National Opera conducting productions of *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, and at the Glyndebourne Opera Festival Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. He continues to conduct all of the major British ensembles, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, the Hallé Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra. He was co-founder of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which he has led on tours throughout the United States, the Far East and Europe. In North and South America he is a frequent and much-admired guest conductor, having appeared with the orchestras of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Utah, Vancouver and Ottawa. For fourteen years he has been Music Director of the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, and has made many acclaimed recordings with this and other orchestras.

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One of the leading English composers of his generation, Vaughan Williams' work went some way towards creating a specifically English musical idiom. He was highly influenced by folk-song, as represented here most clearly in both the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* and in the *Fantasia on Greensleeves*. These are far more than just direct quotations of familiar tunes, however, and are coloured by his own inimitable personal vision and language, establishing them along with the other works on this disc as perennial orchestral favourites of the twentieth century.

Ralph  
**VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**  
(1872-1958)

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|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis | 15:11 |
| 2 | Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1               | 11:35 |
| 3 | In the Fen Country                   | 15:29 |
| 4 | Fantasia on Greensleeves             | 4:30  |
|   | Concerto Grosso                      | 13:35 |
| 5 | Intrada                              | 1:52  |
| 6 | Burlesca Ostinata                    | 2:36  |
| 7 | Sarabande                            | 3:34  |
| 8 | Scherzo                              | 1:51  |
| 9 | March & Reprise                      | 3:43  |

**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • James Judd**

Recorded at the Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington, New Zealand, 28th - 30th June 2001  
Producer and Engineer: Tim Handley • Booklet Notes: Keith Anderson  
Cover Picture: *The Norfolk Coast* by Albert Goodwin (1845-1932)  
(Bonhams, London / Bridgeman Art Library)

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Playing Time  
60:20



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Booklet notes in English  
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