

Classical Meditation



2CDs



CD1

Pools of Sacred Calm

- 1 **Pärt:** De Profundis **5:56**
Jurgen Petrenko (organ), Elora Festival Orchestra, Elora Festival Singers,
Noel Edison (conductor)
- 2 **Tavener:** The Lamb **3:47**
St. John's College Choir, Cambridge, Christopher Robinson (conductor)
- 3 **Barber:** Four Songs, Op. 13 – No. 1 Heaven-haven **1:43**
Ormond College Choir, Douglas Lawrence (conductor)
- 4 **Tavener:** The Lord's Prayer **3:30**
St. John's College Choir, Cambridge, Christopher Robinson (conductor)
- 5 **Barber:** Agnus Dei, Op. 11 (vocal arr. of Adagio for Strings, Op. 11) **5:55**
Ormond College Choir, Douglas Lawrence (conductor)
- 6 **Tavener:** Song for Athene **5:43**
St. John's College Choir, Cambridge, Christopher Robinson (conductor)
- 7 **Pärt:** Berliner Messe – Veni Sancte Spiritus **5:06**
Elora Festival Orchestra, Elora Festival Singers, Noel Edison (conductor)

Pure Stillness

- 8 **Tallis:** Missa Salve intemerata – Agnus Dei **5:25**
Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly
- 9 **Tallis:** Missa Salve intemerata – Sanctus **7:47**
Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly
- 10 **Tallis:** Salve intemerata **23:14**
Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly

CD1 playing time 68 minutes

CD2

Soaring Spirit

- 1 **Delius:** Two Pieces for Small Orchestra – I. On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring **5:53**
Royal Scottish National Orchestra, David Lloyd-Jones (conductor)
- 2 **Vaughan Williams:** The Lark Ascending **15:03**
David Greed (violin), English Northern Philharmonia, David Lloyd-Jones (conductor)

On the Wing

- 3 **Bliss:** Conversations for Flute, Oboe, Violin, Viola and Cello
– No. 2 In the Wood: Adagio **3:24**
Maggini Quartet, Michael Cox (flute), Nicholas Daniel (oboe)
- Rautavaara:** Cantus Arcticus, Op. 61 (Concerto for Birds and Orchestra)
- 4 I. Suo (The Marsh) **7:05**
- 5 II. Melankolia (Melancholy) **4:19**
- 6 III. Joutsenet muuttavat (Swans Migrating) **7:31**
Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Hannu Lintu (conductor)

Soulsapes

- 7 **Sculthorpe:** Earth Cry **13:55**
William Barton (didgeridoo), New Zealand Symphony Orchestra,
James Judd (conductor)
- 8 **Pavlova:** Symphony No. 2, 'For the New Millennium' – Third Movement **8:13**
Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio, Vladimir Fedoseyev (conductor)
- 9 **Elgar:** Sospiri, Op. 70 **4:28**
English Northern Philharmonia, David Lloyd-Jones (conductor)

CD2 playing time 70 minutes

Total playing time 2 hours and 18 minutes

Classical Meditation: Journeys for the Mind, Body & Spirit

Many paths can lead you towards a sense of profound calm, well-being and self-knowledge. 'Meditation' is a deeply personal practice, which may mean different things to different people and at different times. Whether or not you follow a particular form of meditation, meditate for a specific reason, or simply need some quiet time to yourself, the music selected for Classical Meditation can help you to relax your mind and body, focus your thought, and refresh your spirit.

The music in this collection is grouped into 'sessions', each of which may take you on a different imaginative journey. You may wish to play a few tracks to enjoy a peaceful moment during a busy day, choose a specific session that appeals to you (each is between around 20 and 30 minutes), or listen to an entire disc to experience more than an hour of beautifully moving music.

The first disc features choral music of radiant beauty, which seems to float freely outside time and space, inviting you to enter a realm of inner peace. The second disc presents music inspired by natural landscapes from around the world, celebrating our place in the world.

Pools of Sacred Calm

In our troubled times, many composers have sought to express the human need for peace, love and spiritual nourishment. The choral works of three modern composers, the Estonian Arvo Pärt (b. 1935), Englishman John Tavener (b. 1944) and American Samuel Barber (1910-81), are much loved for their fluent melodies and sublime harmonies. The seven short compositions chosen here are like pools of clear water through which an almost supernatural light seems to shine. We begin with Pärt's *De Profundis*, a setting made in 1980 of the Psalm 'Out of the deep I have called to you, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice'. In the Divine Office of the Catholic Church *De Profundis* is sung every Wednesday at the Vespers service, as the sunshine fades and night falls. It is a prayer for hope which rises from earth to the heavens. Tavener's *The Lamb* (1985) sets a poem by the mystic artist/poet William Blake (1757-1827) in which a child muses on the young creature's miraculous innocence. The text of *Heaven-haven* is by another English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), and Barber's choral setting from 1961 perfectly captures the poet's desire to relinquish the outside world: 'I have desired to go/Where springs not fail,/To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail/And a few lilies blow./And I have asked to be/Where no storms come,/Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,/And out of the swing of the sea.' Tavener's

gently lilting *The Lord's Prayer* (1999) is dedicated to a friend's new-born daughter; it glows with compassionate love and future hopes. Barber wrote his *Agnus Dei* in 1967, using the music from his famous *Adagio for Strings*, itself an arrangement of the slow movement from his String Quartet. The Latin text asks the Lamb of God to show mercy and grant us peace. In *Song for Athene* (1993), Tavener gently contrasts 'the wellspring of life and door of paradise' with earthly existence – 'a shadow and a dream' – interspersing poignant thoughts on mortality with joyous calls of 'Alleluia'. With the final piece we return to Pärt whose setting of *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (1992) completes our journey with a call for spiritual inspiration: 'Sweet refreshment...Cool in the heat...O most blessed light, Fill the inner heart...Grant eternal joy.'

Pure Stillness

During his long life, Thomas Tallis (c.1505-85) served under four Tudor monarchs, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I, and experienced first-hand the political and religious turmoils of the English Reformation, the brief resurgence of Catholicism and the final consolidation of the Anglican Church. Despite – or perhaps because of – this, he wrote some of the most luminous sacred music of the sixteenth century, among which is his immense setting of the prayer *Salve intemerata, Virgo Maria*. The words are recorded in a Book of Hours (a personal prayer book) that appeared in 1527, so it is likely that he composed this work at around the same time. The text sings the praises of the Virgin Mary as 'most incorruptible, and most immaculate in body and spirit' and expresses the hope that 'we may be worthy always to rejoice in the kingdom of heaven, and to praise without end'. You don't need to be religious to feel the overflowing of love that infuses this remarkable composition, which is one of the longest and most radiant single-movement choral works of the 1600s. As was common at the time, when composers would frequently borrow from their own or others' pieces, Tallis also wrote a Mass based on the music of *Salve intemerata*, probably around 1577. We commence this session with the movements *Agnus Dei* and *Sanctus*, the latter of which praises the holiness of the 'Lord God of Hosts' whose glory fills heaven and earth.

Soaring Spirit

Frederick Delius (1862-1934) and Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) belonged to a century of burgeoning cultural, aesthetic and spiritual diversity, as well as political tension culminating in the two World Wars, from the heyday of the British Empire to the establishment of the

Commonwealth. Each was deeply moved by the landscape of the fast-dwindling countryside and the folk music of its people, as the two works included here attest. Born and buried in England, Delius spent much of his life overseas in Florida, Germany, Norway and France where his music became enriched with local influences. *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, from *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra* (1911-12) takes as its starting point a Norwegian folk song that Percy Grainger brought to his attention. This rhapsodic work, with its haunting tune and shimmering harmonies, conjures up an idyllic, almost pantheistic vision of the natural environment. The score of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* (written in 1914 and revised in 1920) is prefaced by excerpts from a poem of the same name by George Meredith (1828-1909): 'He rises and begins to round./He drops the silver chain of sound,/Of many links without a break,/In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake./For singing till his heaven fills,/Tis love of earth that he instils,/And ever winging up and up./Our valley is his golden cup,/And he the wine which overflows/to lift us with him as he goes...Till lost on his aerial rings/In light, and then the fancy sings'. The music perfectly captures the lay of the land as the small bird flies ever upwards, vanishing into the infinite blue sky.

On the Wing

Arthur Bliss (1897-1975) titled the *Adagio* movement from his *Conversations for Flute, Oboe, Violin and Cello* (1920) 'In the Wood'. In this delightful reminiscence of a peaceful forest scene, Bliss creates a sound painting in which the various instruments converse like birds. It is a fitting introduction to *Cantus Arcticus* by Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928). Subtitled 'Concerto for Birds and Orchestra' and composed in 1972 for the University of Oulu, this 'Arctic Song' weaves together recordings of birds with lines of instrumental melody into an ever-unfolding sonic tapestry. The first movement depicts a solitary figure slowly walking across the wild marshlands during Spring. In the second movement, a melancholy atmosphere is created: 'Think of Autumn and Tchaikovsky', the composer has remarked. The final movement takes wing with the haunting noises of migrating swans – the end of this musical journey is merely the beginning of another journey over the horizon...

Soulsapes

From the Northern Hemisphere we travel, as if by magic, to the great southern continent. Tasmanian-born composer Peter Sculthorpe (b. 1929) has described Australia as 'one of the few places on Earth where one can honestly write quick and joyous music'. *Earth Cry* (1986) is, once

again in the composer's own words, 'a straightforward and melodious work. Its four parts are made up of a quick ritualistic music framed by slower music of a supplicatory nature, and an extended coda...in order to summon up broader feelings and a broader landscape I have added a part for didgeridoo'. It is easy to imagine the vast landscape bathed in bright sunlight or perhaps swept by wind as a great storm gathers and bursts, only to recede into the distance. While certainly evocative of the Australian environment, *Earth Cry* has a universal appeal. So does Alla Pavlova's Symphony no 2 'For the New Millennium' (written in 1997-8 and revised in 2002). In this work, the Russian-born composer who now resides in America explores the relationship between humanity and the Universe on the threshold of the new millennium. 'The essence of the symphony in its entirety,' remarks Pavlova, 'is the necessity of human striving toward Light and Love, no matter how tragic the reality may be.' We conclude our musical journey with a short piece by the 'most English of composers', Edward Elgar (1857-1934). Originally conceived as *Soupir d'amour* (French for 'Love's Sigh'), Elgar eventually settled on the shorter and more enigmatic Italian title *Sospiri*, or 'Sighs'. Written in 1914, it is a heartfelt Adagio scored for string orchestra, harp and organ.

'Music is well said to be the speech of angels,' wrote the essayist, historian and atheist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). 'In fact, nothing among the utterances allowed to man is felt to be so divine. It brings us near to the infinite.' It may seem strange that an atheist should invoke angels, but it is part of music's mysterious power to move us in ways which seem supernatural and difficult to express. Indeed, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) declared that 'all the things that, to the human spirit, are most profoundly significant can only be experienced, not expressed. The rest is always and everywhere silence. After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.' But perhaps most profound are the words of American composer Frank Zappa (1940-1993): 'Remember, information is not knowledge; knowledge is not wisdom; wisdom is not truth; truth is not beauty; beauty is not love; love is not music; music is the best.' Now there's food for thought.

Stephen Schafer

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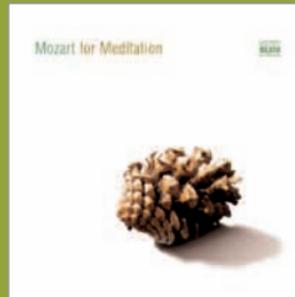
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