



The Best of **ARNOLD**



Tam O'Shanter Overture

English Dances, Set 1

Cello Concerto

David Copperfield

Symphonies Nos. 5 & 6

Saxophone Concerto

Grand Fantasia

Fantasy for Clarinet

String Quartet No. 2

Piano Trio

3 Shanties

**The Best of
SIR MALCOLM ARNOLD**
(1921–2006)

1	Tam O'Shanter Overture, Op. 51 (1955) (8.553981 – track 11)	8:30
	English Dances, Set 1, Op. 27 (1950) (8.553526 – tracks 1–4)	8:32
2	I. Andantino	2:51
3	II. Vivace	1:43
4	III. Mesto	2:24
5	IV. Allegro risoluto	1:31
	Cello Concerto, Op. 136 (1988) (performing edition rev. David Ellis, 2000) *	
6	I. Allegro (8.572640 – track 1)	6:40
	David Copperfield (1969) (restored by John Morgan)	
7	Mr Micawber (8.573366 – track 25)	2:10
	Symphony No. 6, Op. 95 (1967)	
8	I. Energico (8.552000 – track 5)	8:12
	Saxophone Concerto (1942/1994) (arrangement and orchestration by David Ellis of the <i>Piano Sonata</i>) *	
9	III. Alla marcia (8.572640 – track 14)	2:33
10	Grand Fantasia, Op. 973 (1940) * (8.570294 – track 9)	9:58
11	Fantasy for Clarinet, Op. 87 (1966) (8.570294 – track 20)	4:03
	String Quartet No. 2, Op. 118 (1975)	
12	I. Allegro (8.557762 – track 5)	6:05
	Piano Trio, Op. 54 (1956)	
13	III. Vivace energico (8.554237 – track 3)	2:03

	Symphony No. 5, Op. 74 (1961)	
14	I. Tempestuoso (8.552000 – track 1)	10:33
	3 Shanties, Op. 4 (1942) (8.570294 – tracks 28–30)	6:45
15	I. Allegro con brio	2:21
16	II. Allegretto semplice	1:41
17	III. Allegro vivace	2:40

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

English Northern Sinfonia • Paul Daniel 1

Queensland Symphony Orchestra 2–5
National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland 8–14 • Andrew Penny 2–5 8 14

Raphael Wallfisch, Cello 6
Northern Chamber Orchestra • Nicholas Ward 6

Moscow Symphony Orchestra • William T. Stromberg 7

Carl Raven, Alto saxophone 9 • Manchester Sinfonia • Richard Howarth 9

East Winds

Judith Treggor, Flute 10 15–17, Joseph Sanders, Oboe 15–17,
Victoria Soames Samek, Clarinet 10 11 15–17, Jonathan Hassan, Horn 15–17,
Lizbeth Elliott, Bassoon 15–17, Paul Chilvers, Piano 10

Maggini Quartet 12

Laurence Jackson, Violin I • David Angel, Violin II
Martin Outram, Viola • Michal Kaznowski, Cello

English Piano Trio 13

Jane Faulkner, Violin • Justin Pearson, Cello
Timothy Ravenscroft, Piano

The Best of Sir Malcolm Arnold (1921–2006)

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One of the most gifted composers of his generation, Sir Malcolm Arnold wrote music that communicates directly with listeners. His wide-ranging output reveals an instinctive talent for melody and characterisation. In every bar he is recognisably himself, yet such is the largeness and complexity of his inimitable musical personality that he is able to reveal different facets of it in each of his works.

He was born on 21 October 1921 in Northampton. There was music in the family, both from his father, a successful shoe manufacturer, and from his mother, a descendant of William Hawes, former head of all music for the Chapels Royal and St Paul's. He was educated privately at home, with the help of his aunts. At the age of twelve he found a new interest in jazz and the trumpet after hearing Louis Armstrong, and three years later he was able to study the instrument in London under Ernest Hall. He subsequently won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, where his composition teacher was Gordon Jacob. Two years later he left the College to join the London Philharmonic Orchestra as second trumpet. Promotion to principal trumpet soon followed and he quickly won a reputation as one of the finest trumpeters of the age.

In 1948 Arnold left the LPO and from this point onwards earned his living as a composer. Commissions poured in and he found himself in demand as a conductor, mostly of his own works, both in the concert hall and in the film studio. In the mid-1960s he settled in Cornwall, where he became closely involved with the county's musical life. He was made a Bard of the Cornish Gorsedd in 1968 and was awarded the CBE two years later. In 1972 he moved with his family to Dublin, his home for the next five years. In 1977 he returned to England. His music from this period is often dark, reflecting a difficult life experience, shadowed by mental

illness, hospitalisation and marital breakdown. His health improved after a move to Norfolk in 1984, where he wrote his final pieces, chief among them the spare and desolate *Ninth Symphony*. This, his final contribution to the genre he revered above all others, was completed in 1986 but not performed until 1992, by which time Arnold had ceased composing. In the year of his death in 2006, concert halls throughout Britain were preparing to mark his 85th birthday. The tributes and accolades he garnered during his final decades, including the Ivor Novello Award for 'Outstanding Services to British Music' in 1986 and a knighthood in 1993, were in stark contrast to the indifference, incomprehension and hostility his music received from critics in his younger days.

Arnold was a prolific composer and often wrote music at phenomenal speed, yet the results were never facile or superficial. He wrote straight into full score and never needed to revise his completed works, which are models of clarity and effectiveness. His music was sufficiently versatile and flexible to embrace all the traditional forms. At the heart of his catalogue stand the nine symphonies. There are also over 20 concertos, two string quartets, and music for brass band and wind band. Of note among his vocal and choral works are the *5 William Blake Songs* for contralto and strings and the nativity masque *The Song of Simeon* (both 1959). His music for the stage includes the coronation ballet *Homage to the Queen* (1953) and a one-act opera, *The Dancing Master* (1952). He wrote over one hundred film scores, drawing upon his talents as a melodist and orchestrator, as well as his firm grasp of narrative and structure. Among his most famous examples are *The Sound Barrier*, *Hobson's Choice*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, for which he won an Oscar, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, *Whistle Down the Wind* and four of the *St Trinian's* comedy series.

Celebrating Arnold's centenary year, this release offers illustrations of his music in various forms spanning his long creative life. A fine tunesmith, he had a natural command of popular idiom. Yet he was also acutely aware of human frailty and the tragic aspects of life and the exuberance and the *joie de vivre* in his music became increasingly qualified and disrupted.

One of Arnold's most often performed works, *Tam O'Shanter, Op. 51* (1955), narrates Robert Burns's tale of the outcast who leaves an inn, much the worse for drink, late one stormy night to ride his mare Meg home. On the way he stumbles on a ruined, haunted kirk, where he witnesses a Black Sabbath being celebrated by a coven of witches and warlocks dancing reels, hornpipes and strathspeys. After unwisely crying out, Tam finds himself being chased home by the ghoulish mob. The *Overture* closely follows the narrative of Burns's poem. An atmospheric, Scottish-sounding introduction that uncannily conjures up the sound of bagpipes, sets the scene at the inn, with two wozy bassoons portraying the inebriated Tam. Then the music gains momentum as he rides through the night, with thunder and lightning effects from the percussion and the sound of Tam's whip as horse and rider gallop along. The central section, describing the events at the kirk, comprises a group of Scottish dances, punctuated by whooping horns. After the frantic pursuit homewards, three bars of solemn church music provide a moment of sober reflection before the concluding grand flourish. Though designated an overture, this evocative piece of programme music has the breadth of characterisation of a symphonic poem.

Arnold's two sets of *English Dances, Op. 27* (1950) and *Op. 33* (1951) find the composer at his most tuneful and warmly lyrical. They originated in a suggestion from his publisher at the time that he should attempt an English equivalent of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*. Both sets are full of variety and inventiveness and form a well-balanced sequence.

They are not conventional dances, but rather a series of colourful vignettes that capture the flavour of English folk music without using any traditional tunes, the material being all Arnold's own. The lilting, spontaneous-sounding opening dance from the first set is graced by a beguiling string tune, typical of the composer. The vibrant, light-hearted second dance is over in the blink of an eye. By contrast, the following folk-like dance, initiated by an eloquent bassoon, is wistful and introspective. With brass to the fore, the final dance in the set is raucous, irrepressible and crowned by whooping horns.

Nowhere in his catalogue is Arnold's definition of music as 'an act of friendship' more ably demonstrated than in his substantial series of concertos. Many were written as presents for, or tributes to, distinguished players and friends. His *Cello Concerto, Op. 136* was composed in 1988 for Julian Lloyd Webber, who premiered it in March of the following year. The current performing edition, as featured on this release, was prepared by David Ellis in 2000. Cast in the traditional three-movement design, the *Allegro* first movement presents, without preamble, three key ideas consisting of a heavily accented descending figure, a veiled, undulating phrase and a sunnier, more rhythmically intricate motif given out by the soloist. The rocking phrase soon blossoms into the songlike second subject and the movement unfolds concisely as the main ideas are heard separately and combined.

David Copperfield was Arnold's final film score. The project gave him the chance to work on an adaptation of Charles Dickens, whom he regarded as England's finest writer. He completed the score in October 1969 and recorded the music at London's Anvil studios early the following month. Surprisingly, Arnold's memorable, quirky theme for Mr Micawber (played by Ralph Richardson in the film) was never heard in its complete form on the screen. The version presented here in a restoration of the score by John Morgan has been recorded in its entirety, so we can enjoy its ebullient,

capering character to the full. Arnold's whimsical, bustling theme, given to the clarinet, captures the idiosyncrasies of Dickens's eternal optimist, buffeted by life's exigencies.

Arnold regarded the symphony as the highest form of music and it is arguably in his cycle of nine symphonies that the popular and the more 'serious' sides of his musical voice are most revealingly encountered, often presented in stark juxtaposition, but invariably throwing new light upon each other. His *Symphony No. 6, Op. 95* (1967) was premiered by the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra under his baton at Sheffield City Hall in June 1968. Jazz appealed strongly to Arnold and he cited it as one of the major influences on his music, together with Berlioz, Mahler and Sibelius. According to the composer, the starting point of the toccata-like first movement of the *Sixth Symphony* was the playing of the saxophonist Charlie Parker. Marked *Energico*, it is compact and tightly organised, opening with a series of striking ideas: a cascade of woodwind arpeggios with jazzy harmonies, a bass ostinato, and a lively, swirling theme for flutes and clarinets inspired by Parker's improvisations. A long-breathed, lyrical theme first heard on upper woodwind completes the basic material for the movement which moves towards a shattering climax. Arnold builds an intricately constructed movement from the simplest of means, notably two alternating chords, heard at their most primal and devastating in the strings as an implacable repeated figure that generates a massive crescendo of fearsome intensity.

The *Saxophone Concerto* is an arrangement made by David Ellis in 1994 of Arnold's *Piano Sonata* of 1942. Marked *Alla marcia*, the finale is a sardonic march which drives the music onwards. Arnold's wit is to the fore, yet there also is a steely, neo-Classical feel to the material, which he would exploit further in the *Symphony for Strings* of 1946.

Written under the pseudonym of 'A. Youngman' and given the opus number 973, Arnold's *Grand*

Fantasia, for flute, trumpet and piano, was composed in the summer of 1940. The three instruments are handled with considerable style as Arnold provides a series of delightful variants on his insouciant, ornate theme. These include a fiery *czardas*, a sultry tango and a florid waltz, as well as forays into the worlds of jazz and opera. In the third variant the piano's deftly ornamented presentation of the main theme gives us a tiny pre-echo of the splendid school song of the *St Trinian's* films. This cheerfully eclectic score is the product of a self-confident young composer, safe in the knowledge that he has already found his own voice.

The *Fantasy for unaccompanied clarinet, Op. 87*, was commissioned by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as a test piece for the Birmingham International Wind Competition in May 1966. The declamatory and wide-ranging opening theme is later converted into an *Alla marcia* before re-emerging in the closing section, now hushed and contemplative. Arnold explores to advantage both the mellifluous and, in the main *Vivace* section, the more vigorous aspects of the clarinet's character.

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 118 was written in 1975 for the Allegri Quartet, who gave the first performance in Dublin in June 1976. This sombre, introverted score is dedicated to the first violinist of the quartet, Hugh Maguire. The first movement contrasts imposing, deeply expressive music with swift, overwrought material that acts as a disruptive element. Both sets of ideas are united in their struggles with internal conflict. There is doubt and anger in this movement, which ends disconcertingly as a previously anguished theme is treated with tenderness before it fades away into silence. In this unsettling score, the clarity and concision inherent in Arnold's writing has mutated into an unsparing austerity. Arnold singled out this uncompromising piece as a favourite among his own works.

Written in 1956, the *Piano Trio, Op. 54*, was premiered at an International Music Association

concert in April of that year. With a purposeful, sharply defined main theme, the spirited last movement takes the form of a chaconne. The seven-bar theme, often varied, returns a semitone higher each time, passing through twelve tonalities, before finally reaching the work's home key of D. In the midst of a predominantly sinewy and sweeping movement, a still and lyrical variation initiated by the piano is both effective and characteristic.

One of Arnold's greatest and most emotionally powerful works, the *Symphony No. 5, Op. 74* was written in 1961 for that year's Cheltenham Festival. It commemorates four friends of the composer who died young: horn player Dennis Brain and clarinetist Frederick 'Jack' Thurston, ballet dancer and choreographer David Paltenghi and the humourist and cartoonist Gerard Hoffnung for whose anarchic music festival Arnold wrote several witty pieces. Brain and Thurston are both evoked by long, idiomatically written solos for horn and clarinet, respectively, in the symphony's opening movement. This begins with a lonely oboe giving out a wistful, angular melody, tonally ambiguous. The movement's more tempestuous passages are quelled by a graceful arpeggio theme of ethereal tenderness played by celesta, harp and glockenspiel. In this closely argued movement, much of the material is derived from a series of symmetrical four-note chords. After two outbursts, the first in the form of a hostile, threatening waltz and the second dominated by clamorous ringing bells, the movement ends uneasily and without resolution.

3 Shanties for Wind Quintet, Op. 4 (1942) were written as a diversion for Arnold's fellow LPO members, who premiered the work at Filton Aerodrome, near Bristol in 1943. The first movement is an irreverent treatment of *What shall we do with the drunken sailor*, and at one point Arnold parades his inebriate in the context of a doleful tango. The gentle slow movement is based on *Boney was a warrior*, and the noble tune is presented six times unvaried over the lightest of accompaniments gravely and simply, without irony. The lively finale features *Johnny Comes Down to Hilo*, the tune shared out between the three instruments and at one point breaking out irresistibly into a rumba. Full of humour and humanity, with a miraculous blend of earthiness and sophistication, these shanties are a quintessential example of Arnold's unique talent to amuse.

Paul Conway

Paul Conway is a freelance writer specialising in 20th-century and contemporary British music. He has reviewed frequently for The Independent, Tempo and Musical Opinion, provided programme notes for The Proms and the Edinburgh, Brighton and Three Choirs Festivals and contributed chapters to books on the composers John McCabe and Robert Simpson.

Sir Malcolm Arnold was one of the most gifted British composers of his generation. His music communicates directly with listeners through its rhythmic vitality and brilliant orchestration, with melodies that are eloquent, memorable and catchy. Spanning his long creative life, Arnold's output has nine symphonies at its heart, but also ranges from the popular overture *Tam O'Shanter* and the lyrical *English Dances*, to film scores, deeply personal chamber music, and concertos composed for distinguished musical colleagues. This comprehensive introduction to Arnold's legacy celebrates his centenary year with a rich selection of acclaimed recordings.

The Best of ARNOLD (1921–2006)

<p>1 Tam O'Shanter Overture, Op. 51 (1955) 8:30</p> <p>English Dances, Set 1, Op. 27 (1950) 8:32</p> <p>2 I. Andantino 2:51</p> <p>3 II. Vivace 1:43</p> <p>4 III. Mesto 2:24</p> <p>5 IV. Allegro risoluto 1:31</p> <p>Cello Concerto, Op. 136 (1988) (performing edition rev. David Ellis, 2000) *</p> <p>6 I. Allegro 6:40</p> <p>David Copperfield (1969) (restored by John Morgan)</p> <p>7 Mr Micawber 2:10</p> <p>Symphony No. 6, Op. 95 (1967)</p> <p>8 I. Energico 8:12</p>	<p>Saxophone Concerto (1942/1994) (arrangement and orchestration by David Ellis of the <i>Piano Sonata</i>) *</p> <p>9 III. Alla marcia 2:33</p> <p>10 Grand Fantasia, Op. 973 (1940) * 9:58</p> <p>11 Fantasy for Clarinet, Op. 87 (1966) 4:03</p> <p>String Quartet No. 2, Op. 118 (1975)</p> <p>12 I. Allegro 6:05</p> <p>Piano Trio, Op. 54 (1956)</p> <p>13 III. Vivace energico 2:03</p> <p>Symphony No. 5, Op. 74 (1961)</p> <p>14 I. Tempestuoso 10:33</p> <p>3 Shanties, Op. 4 (1942) 6:45</p> <p>15 I. Allegro con brio 2:21</p> <p>16 II. Allegretto semplice 1:41</p> <p>17 III. Allegro vivace 2:40</p>
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* WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

A full track list and artist details can be found inside the booklet.

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