The Compact Disc Digital Audio System offers the best possible sound reproduction - on a par with comparable source-stereo. The system is based on the principle of optical scanning of a laser diode, a result of laser-optical scanning combined with digital playback. This means that any Compact Disc audio system reproduces the sound quality of the original recording, which is expected in the musical recording. This recording process is identified on the back cover by a three-letter code.

COD = digital tape recorder used during session recording, mixing and/or editing, and mastering (transcription)
CDD = analogue tape recorder used during session recording, digital tape recorder used during subsequent mixing and/or editing and during mastering (transcription)
CDDA = analogue tape recorder used during session recording, mix, submixing and/or mixing, editing, digital tape recorder used during mastering (transcription).

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CDD = analoger Tonträger; bei der Aufnahme, bei Schnitt und/oder Abmischung bei der Überspielung.
CDDA = digitaler Tonträger; bei der Aufnahme, bei Schnitt und/oder Abmischung; digitaler Tonträger bei der Überspielung.


Bei Beachtung dieser Vorschriften wird die Compact Disc ihre Qualität dauerhaft behalten.

Le système Compact Disc Digital Audio permet la meilleure reproduction comme possible à partir d’un support de son de haute qualité et conservant la qualité du son de la trace initiale. Sur le compact disc, le meilleur rendement possible du système numérique et de l’optique laser optique est indépendamment des différentes spécifications de l’enregistrement. Ces techniques sont identifiées sur l’enveloppe par un code à trois lettres.

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CDDA = utilisation d’un magnétoscope analogique pendant l’enregistrement, utilisation d’un magnétoscope numérique pendant le mixage et/ou le montage et la gravure.

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COD = identification de l’enregistrement numérique au moment de l’enregistrement, au moment de l’enregistrement numérique et au moment de la gravure.
CDD = identification de l’enregistrement numérique au moment de l’enregistrement et au moment de la gravure.
CDDA = identification de l’enregistrement numérique au moment de l’enregistrement et au moment de la gravure.

Ralph Vaughan Williams
PHANTASY QUINTET
STRING QUARTETS Nos 1 & 2
THE ENGLISH STRING QUARTET

DKP (CD) 9076
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
(1872 – 1958)

PHANTASY QUINTET*
STRING QUARTET No. 2 in A MINOR
(For Jean on Her Birthday)
STRING QUARTET No. 1 in G MINOR

THE ENGLISH STRING QUARTET
DIANA CUMMINGS and COLIN CALLOW violins
LUCIANO IORIO viola
GEOFFREY THOMAS viola
* NORBERT BLUME 2nd viola

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PHANTASY QUINTET

STRING QUARTET No. 2 in A MINOR
(for Jean on Her Birthday)
    Andante sostenuto ........................................... 3:39

STRING QUARTET No. 1 in G MINOR

Total duration: 60:57

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Chamber music is not the first medium with which one associates Vaughan Williams, yet he wrote more of it than is perhaps realised. The high quality of the invention in the works on this disc and the skilled and sympathetic writing for the instruments are enough to themselves to cause wonder why they are not performed more frequently.

The Phantasy Quintet, for two violins, two violas and cello, completed in 1912, owes its name to the enthusiasm of a wealthy businessman, Walter W. Cobbe (1847–1937), who was a generous benefactor to English chamber music. He had a fondness for the English chamber form of Fantasy (or, in the spelling he preferred, Phantasy) and in 1905 instituted a series of competitions as well as directly commissioning chamber works. Thus there are many trios, quartets and quintets, bearing the prefix Phantasy by such composers as Elgar, Holbrooke, John Ireland, Bax, Howells and Britten. Cobbe, through the Worshipful Company of Musicians, commissioned a string quartet from Vaughan Williams. Many composers, including Vaughan Williams, interpreted the term Phantasy loosely, often writing a four-movement work in which the movements are played without a break rather than a one-movement piece.

Vaughan Williams’s love for the viola was a feature of his music throughout his life although, oddly, he never wrote a solo or chamber concerto for the instrument. It is the thin-boned tone of the viola that dominates this exquisite and neglected quartet. The solo viola announces the penatonic tune that becomes a motto-theme for the whole work. The violins do not enter until the eleventh bar, with a chord of F, and the first violins have a solo inversion of the motto. The movement, which is slow meditative and poetic, ends with the theme back with the solo viola. Solo cello begins the Scherzo as an ostinato, but this is not sustained. It is the longest movement and its melodious lines seem like reminiscences of folk-dances without ever becoming direct quotations. It subsides gently, by way of the solo cello’s legato version of its opening theme, into the Alla Sarabanda, a very characteristic and poetic movement in which solo viola renews the motto theme in a haze of pastoral ostinatos. For Finale, there is a lively Barcarole, its theme based on the motto but, halfway through, the motto-theme returns in the Presto, with the cello prominent. Although the bouncy rhythm returns, the slow music quietly, with a final reminiscence of the motto. In the andante section of the Finale, and indeed elsewhere in the work, we hear anticipations of later Vaughan Williams works—the lady begins to astir and the other themes find their way up the Deterable Mountains. The quartet was first performed in London on 23 March 1914, four weeks before the first performance of the composer’s A London Symphony.

The viola also plays the leading role in the Second String Quartet. This work bears a dedicatory sub-title which the composer insisted must always be printed in programme, For Jean on Her Birthday. Jean is Jean Stewart (Mrs George Hadley), who in 1942 was violinist in the Mengset String Quartet. Miss Stewart was a friend of Vaughan Williams, who sent her the first two movements for her 29th birthday in February 1943 with a letter saying: ‘I alas the scheme refuses to materialise and I have to wait for next birthday’. The Scherzo and Epilogue were completed in 1943–4 and the whole work had its first and second performances in the same National Gallery concert by the Mengset Quartet on Vaughan Williams’s 72nd birthday, 12 October 1944.

The Second Quartet has greater significance than it has often been accorded. It belongs to the wartime period when Vaughan Williams was beginning his Sixth Symphony (1944–7) and its first three movements share the larger work’s restless, anxious mood. There is the same conflict between the keys of F minor and G minor and in the Romanza the strange effect is fixated on a single motive, as at the end of the third movement of the symphony. Quarters and symphony also share a common inspiration, in that certain of the themes in both works originated in music Vaughan Williams composed for films.

In each movement the principal theme is announced by the viola, which virtually becomes leader of the quartet. The Presto begins allegro appassionato and the second subject, also introduced by the viola, has a syncopated accompaniment figure. These two themes form the basis of a complex sonata-form structure, but it is not until near the end that the key of A minor is established for the time in the whole work. G minor is the key of the Romanza, a term which does not imply love or yearning in Vaughan Williams scores but always indicates a movement of a deeply personal, sometimes visionary, nature (as in the Piano Concerto and the Fifth Symphony). The bleak and comfortable theme is taken up from the viola by each of the other instruments in turn, the resulting sound harking back to the days of the concerto, its fragmentary thematic content, and there is a new solo theme, again for the instruments in turn, which sounds like a variant of the first subject. The viola leads the way out of the enclosing gloom to a lyrical and impassioned climax but the mass closes in at the end.

The rhythmical first theme of the Scherzo was taken from the music for the film 49th Parallel (about a German U-boat crew on the loose in Canada). Only the viola plays unmuted in this atmospheric movement, where much use is made of tremolandi and accented pizzicato. If this second subject sounds familiar, it is because it is a reconstruction of the theme of the epilogue of the Sixth Symphony. There is no conventional trio section and the recapitulation barely concerns itself with anything except the tremolandi of the Scherzo. The Finale is a short Epilogue, sub-titled 'Greetings from Jean to Jean', a reference to the first subject’s origin in music for an abandoned film about Jean of Arc. Here Vaughan Williams changes to the clear, radiant texture and mood of the Finale of the Fifth Symphony. The ending is in a tranquil D major, but it is the most of the earlier movements that persists in the mind.

The First String Quartet dates from 1908, the year in which Vaughan Williams had an intensive course of study in Paris with Ravel. I came home with a bad attack of French fever',
he said, 'and wrote a string quartet which caused a friend to say that I must have been having tea with Debussy'. Where the slow movement (another Romance) is concemed, that is true enough, but some English folk-singers and dancers were also invited to the tea-party. The first movement, where the opening theme is given to the viola, is a sophisticated structure, virtually monothematic and covering a wide emotional range. The Minuet and Trio, as the title implies, nods to the direction of Haydn, and the Romance, for all its Debussyan inflections, is the Vaughan Williams who was soon to compose the Tallis Fantasia. The Finale is a high-spirited Rondo. This most attractive quartet was first performed in 1909 and revised in 1921.

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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
(1872 – 1958)

- PHANTASY QUINTET* 15:12
- STRING QUARTET No. 2 IN A MINOR (For Jean on Her Birthday) 19:23
- STRING QUARTET No. 1 IN G MINOR 26:08

THE ENGLISH STRING QUARTET

DIANA CUMMINGS and COLIN CALLOW violin
GEOFFREY THOMAS cello LUCIANO IORIO viola
* NORBERT BLUME: 2nd viola

Made in UK