English Folk Songs

ARRANGED BY RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The Purcell Singers conducted by Imogen Holst
ENGLISH FOLK SONGS

Arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams

The Purcell Singers conducted by Imogen Holst, with Rosamond Strode, soprano;
Patrick Shuldharm Shaw, baritone; Jean Stewart, viola; Daphne Ibbott, piano

SIDE 1
Just as the tide was flowing
The captain's apprentice
The lark in the morning
An acre of land
The unquiet grave
The carter
As I walked out
On Christmas night

SIDE 2
Six studies in English folk song
for viola and piano
1. Lovely on the water
2. Spurn Point
3. Van Dieman's Land
4. She borrowed some of her mother's gold
5. The Lady and the Dragoon
6. As I walked over London Bridge
Dives and Lazarus
The cuckoo and the nightingale
Bushes and briars
Wassail song

The songs on this record belong to the centuries when few people in country places could read or write: they were taught to each generation by their forebears and, as they were handed down by oral tradition, they were changed and modified by different singers until many versions of each tune existed. The words were sometimes changed or different words were sung to a tune that was widely known. Such songs were the common riches of the peasant before the Industrial Revolution and the Education Acts changed the face of England and the life of the people.

When the earliest collectors started work nearly all the singers from whom they took down songs were elderly, for the younger people had started to despise these tunes and to turn to printed music and popular songs. Lucy Broadwood, E. D. Hammond, Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams as well as many others noted down tunes and words and they published the best examples from their collections and so gave back to the people of England the songs that belong to them.

SIDE 1
Just as the tide was flowing was collected at Rollesby, Norfolk, where Mr. Locke sang it to R.W.V. in 1908. Several other versions are known and the tune is also used for a Morris dance. (Unaccompanied chorus.)
The Captain's Apprentice. This tragic ballad was sung to R.W.V. by Mr. Carter, a fisherman, at King's Lynn in 1905. It must have been a common story when young children were apprenticed on the high seas. The word "pocket" means the small cords used to fasten the sails to the rigging. (Tenor and piano.)
The Lark in the Morning, a happy, lyrical song, was collected from Mrs. Kemp of Herongate, Essex in 1904. (Soprano and piano.)
An Acre of Land is a riddle song with a cheerful chorus. It was sung to R.W.V. by Mr. Frank Bailey, an ex-soldier, at Coombe Bissett near Salisbury, in 1904. (Unaccompanied chorus.)
The Unquiet Grave is the final fragment of a ballad which appears in many forms. The dead lover returns to his mourning sweetheart whose tears, falling on his shroud, break the sleep of death. This arrangement of the tune was made by R.W.V. in 1949 for the National Federation of Women's Institutes, and it is one of the three songs that make the autumn group in his Cantata Folk Songs of Four Seasons. (Soloists from the Purcell Singers: Barbara Elsy, Noreen Willett, Pauline Stevens.)
The Carter is a farm worker's song from the days before mechanised agriculture. A carter and his horse, like a shepherd and his dog and sheepdog, were friends who relied on each other. (Tenor and piano.)
As I walked out is one of the many sad songs in which a girl accuses her lover of deserting her for a rival. It was sung to R.W.V. by Mr. Broomfield of East Horndon, Essex, in 1904. (Soprano and piano.)
On Christmas Night is one of the best-known English carols. It was handed down by oral tradition, it from Mrs. Verrall of Monks Gate, Horsham, in 1904 and used it in his Fantasia on Christmas Carols. (Unaccompanied chorus.)

SIDE 2
Six Studies in English Folk Song (1927) originally written for cello and piano and dedicated to the cellist May Mukle, with alternative versions for violin, viola or clarinet.
The songs are:
1. Lovely on the water.
2. Spurn Point.
3. Van Dieman's Land.
4. She borrowed some of her mother's gold.
5. The Lady and the Dragoon.
6. As I walked over London Bridge.
(Wi and piano.)
Dives and Lazarus was one of R.V.W.'s favourite tunes. It exists in many versions and he used some of them in his work for strings and harp: Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus (1939). (Unaccompanied male voice chorus.)
The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, a country idyll with a happy ending, sung accompanied. R.V.W. collected this tune in 1907 at Cottenham, Cambridge, from someone whose name may have been Mrs. Darn, but the writing in the notebook is not very clear. (Soprano.)
Bushes and Briars, a love song where the young man overhears his girl singing, is sung unaccompanied with the free rhythm of the traditional singer. It was the first song R.V.W. collected and it was given to him by Mr. Pottipher of Ingrave in Essex in 1903. When R.V.W. asked him where he got the song from Mr. Pottipher replied: "If you can get the words the Almighty will send you the tune." (Tenor.)
Wassail Song was collected near Hooton Roberts, a small Yorkshire village where R.V.W. often stayed with friends. The "mouldy cheese" referred to in verse five was probably Stilton. (Unaccompanied chorus.)

URSULA VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Rosamond Strode is the leading soprano of the Purcell Singers, she used to join other musicians in the informal madrigal group conducted by R.W.V. in his own house. She is now cataloguing the several hundred tunes in the manuscript books he used for collecting folk music.

Patrick Shuldharm Shaw's mother was a founder member of the English Folk Song Society so he was born into the world of folk music. He is himself a collector of folk songs and has broadcast traditional music in several languages. He also sang madrigals at R.V.W.'s house.

Imogen Holst is now a member of the Beaufort Trio and of The New Music Chamber Ensemble.
The Purcell Singers are a small professional choir formed by Imogen Holst in 1953. They sing early music, going back as far as the 12th century, and they have recorded some of Britten's music under the composer. Their first professional engagement was a concert of folk music at Cecil Sharp House at which R.V.W. was present.
VAUGHN WILLIAMS
ENGLISH FOLK SONGS

Rosamund Strade, Soprano; Patrick Shulldham-Steele, Tenor; Stephen Robson, Piano; The Purcell Singers

Directed by Imogen Holst

1. Just As The Tide 2:10
2. Captain's Apprentice 2:42
3. Lack In The Moon 1:48
4. An Arm of Land 1:37
5. The Unquiet Grave 4:49
6. The Center 2:49
7. As I Walked Out 1:34
8. On Xmas Night 1:34
VAUGHN WILLIAMS
ENGLISH FOLK SONGS

Jean Stewart, Violin; Rosamund Strade, Soprano;
Patrick Sheldrake-Gray, Tenor; Daphne Ager, Piano;
The Purcell Singers

Directed by Imogen Holst

1. Six Studies In Folk Song For Violin
   And Piano  9:31
2. Dives and Lazarus  2:12
3. Cuckoo And The Nightingale  1:43
4. Rustic And Bristle  3:02
5. Wassail Song  2:42