

NAXOS

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The Lark Ascending

Suite of Six Short Pieces

The Solent

Fantasia



Jennifer Pike, Violin

Sina Kloke, Piano

Chamber Orchestra of New York

Salvatore Di Vittorio

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958): The Lark Ascending The Solent · Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra · Suite of Six Short Pieces

Vaughan Williams' earliest compositions, which date from 1895, when he left the Royal College of Music, to 1908, the year he went to Paris to study with Ravel, reveal a young creative artist attempting to establish his own personal musical language. He withdrew or destroyed many works from that period, with the notable exception of songs such as *Linden Lea* (1901), *Silent Noon* (1903) and the Robert Louis Stevenson settings, *Songs of Travel* (1904) and two orchestral works – the 'symphonic impression' *In the Fen Country* (1904, revised 1905, 1907 and 1935), and the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* of 1906.

During these crucial formative years he produced several substantial works, later suppressed or set aside, and none of which was published in his lifetime. These include *The Garden of Proserpine*, for soprano, chorus and orchestra (1901) and chamber works such as a *String Quartet in C minor* (1898), a *Piano Quintet in C minor* (1903, rev. 1904 and 1905) and the *Quintet in D* for clarinet, horn, violin, cello and piano (1898).

However, the lion's share of Vaughan Williams' creative output in this exploratory period was given over to orchestral pieces described by the composer in a letter written in June 1903 to the music critic Edwin Evans (1871-1945) as 'my most important works'. They include the *Serenade for Small Orchestra* (1898), *Bucolic Suite* (1900), *Heroic Elegy and Triumphal Epilogue* (1901), *Fantasia* for piano and orchestra (1896-1902, rev. 1904), *Willow Wood*, for baritone and orchestra (1902-03) and *The Solent* (1902-03), all of which have recently been revived for publication, performance and recording.

Premiered on 18th June 1903, *The Solent* was originally intended as the second of four 'Impressions for Orchestra' to be titled *In the New Forest*. The score is prefaced by two lines from the poet Philip Bourke Marston (1850-87):

Passion and sorrow in the deep sea's voice,
A mighty mystery saddening all the wind

The opening phrase of *The Solent* held a deep significance for the composer, who returned to it several times throughout his long creative life. Near the start of *A Sea Symphony* (begun in the same year *The Solent* was written), it appears imposingly to the line 'And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships'. In 1955 it can be heard accompanying images of Tintern Abbey for the film documentary *The England of Elizabeth*. Its final, most affecting manifestation is in the slow movement of *Symphony No. 9* (1956-58) where the calm of *The Solent* theme is disturbed by the baleful interjections of 'the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain'.

In its original incarnation this haunting principal idea is introduced by unaccompanied clarinet, after which it is repeated by hushed, richly divided strings, foreshadowing in their luminous polyphonic textures the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910, rev. 1919). A second phrase is also stated first by solo clarinet and subsequently harmonised by muted strings. The brass introduce a more agitated, fanfare-like motif. In the lively central section the main material derives from an intense, recitative-like figure given initially to solo oboe. In the aftermath of a powerful climax, the 'Solent' theme is stated by the solo horn accompanied by muted violins, divided into three parts. The coda is centred on the 'Solent' theme and its complementary phrase, not heard since the opening. This most compelling of Vaughan Williams' early works ends with the clarinet solo joined by lower strings fading into the distance.

In October 1896 Vaughan Williams began work on the *Fantasia*, his earliest known piece for a solo instrument with orchestra. It was not completed until 9th February 1902 and underwent further revision two years later. There is no dedication on the score and it appears not to have been written for a particular pianist. Apart from its appearance in the list of works the composer sent to Edwin Evans in June 1903 (thus before its final revision), there are no further references to it in his correspondence.

The *Fantasia* is cast in one movement subdivided into several segments. It contains some of the composer's most *bravura* writing. In the dramatic, cadenza-like opening bars

a flinty, tenebrous theme for the soloist is succeeded by an orchestral statement of a chorale-like melody. The rest of the work offers variants upon these initial ideas, which are rigorously developed. Various contrasting sections, including a scherzo-like passage, are heralded by rhetorical statements from the soloist before the coda recalls the chorale-like theme in a virtuosic manner.

Vaughan Williams' mastery of the piano is evident in this *Fantasia* and in the concerto he wrote for the instrument which was completed in 1931, yet he wrote few keyboard works. Nevertheless, those isolated examples scattered among his considerable output ably demonstrate that his naturally expansive musical style was sufficiently flexible to encompass small forms.

A collection of miniatures entitled *Suite of Six Short Pieces for Piano* was composed in 1920 and published the following year. Under the direction of the composer, musicologist James Brown arranged the work for string orchestra, after which it was given the title of *Charterhouse Suite* and published in 1923.

Though eminently suitable for teaching purposes, this sequence of little studies has enough intrinsic interest to transcend a purely pedagogical function. There is poetry as well as technique behind the genial and graceful demeanour of a score that anticipates the neo-classicism of the *Concerto Accademico* for violin and string orchestra (1924-25). The gentle opening *Prelude* establishes a relaxed mood. There follows a *Slow dance* in a lilting, *siciliano* rhythm and a bustling *Quick dance*. Entitled *Slow air*, the attractive theme of the fourth movement has a classical restraint. A gentle *Rondo* is quietly dominated by its expressive main theme. The droll *Pezzo ostinato* is the most substantial and texturally varied movement and its delicate, elusive ending rounds off the set with charm and elegance.

Vaughan Williams composed the first draft of *The Lark Ascending* for solo violin and small orchestra in 1914, calling it a 'romance', a term he also applied to some of his most profoundly lyrical utterances such as the slow movements of the *Piano Concerto* and the *Fifth Symphony*. The title comes from the poem of the same name by George Meredith (1828-1909). The composer prefaced his published score with these twelve lines from Meredith's poem:

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 Lark Ascending is thought to have existed only in a version for violin and piano before Vaughan Williams set it aside when he enlisted in the Army in 1914 after the outbreak of the First World War. When he returned to composition in 1919, it was among the first pieces he revised. The first performance was given in the Public Hall at Shirehampton, Gloucestershire, on 15th December 1920. The performers were the violinist Marie Hall, to whom the score is dedicated, and the pianist Geoffrey Mendham. Marie Hall was again the soloist in the first performance of the orchestral version in the Queen's Hall, London, on 14th June 1921, in which Adrian Boult conducted the British Symphony Orchestra.

The Lark Ascending depicts a pastoral scene with the violin imitating the titular songbird and the orchestra (consisting of just two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, triangle and strings) representing the landscape beneath. It is in one continuously evolving movement with each theme introduced and linked by the violinist's eloquent soliloquies. In the closing bars, as the soloist returns to the ascending reiterated phrases with which the work began, the lark's song dies away, 'lost on aerial rings'.

Paul Conway

Jennifer Pike



The violinist Jennifer Pike has taken the musical world by storm with her unique artistry and compelling insight into music from the Baroque to the present day. She gained international recognition in 2002 when, aged twelve, she became the youngest ever winner of the BBC Young Musician of the Year and youngest major prizewinner in the Menuhin Competition. At fifteen she made acclaimed débuts at the BBC Proms and Wigmore Hall, and soon after she became a BBC New Generation Artist, winner of the International London Music Masters Award and the *South Bank Show/The Times* Breakthrough Award. In demand as soloist with major orchestras worldwide and appearing frequently on radio and television, she has performed concertos with all the BBC orchestras, the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Rheinische Philharmonie, Strasbourg Philharmonic, Brussels Philharmonic, Malmö Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Prague Symphony and Singapore Symphony orchestras. She recently performed Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* in Westminster Abbey live on BBC TV and at Carnegie Hall with the Chamber Orchestra of New York. Her prolific and widely acclaimed discography on Chandos, Sony and ABC Classics includes concertos by Sibelius with the Bergen Philharmonic and Sir Andrew Davis, Rózsa with the BBC Philharmonic, and Mendelssohn with the City of Birmingham Symphony and Edward Gardner. She plays a 1708 violin by Matteo Goffriller.

Sina Kloke



Award-winning pianist Sina Kloke performs as soloist and chamber music partner at renowned festivals and stages worldwide. Appearances include concerts at the Tonhalle, Düsseldorf, Steinway Hall, London, Semperopera, Dresden, the Eilat Festival, Israel, the Schleswig Holstein Festival, Carnegie Hall and the Kraków Philharmonic. Especially praised for her deep insight into the music of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Scriabin, in recent years Sina Kloke has diversified her repertoire with focus on the music of twentieth-century composers as well as unknown works by late romantics such as Friedrich Gernsheim, Felix Draeseke and George Enescu. Born in Detmold, Germany, Sina Kloke studied in Cologne with Pavel Gililov as well as with Matti Raekallio in New York.

Chamber Orchestra of New York

Salvatore Di Vittorio, Music Director and Conductor

Established in 2006, the Chamber Orchestra of New York is devoted entirely to leading young professional musicians. Its début was held on 11th October 2007 at Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York. The orchestra's masterworks concert series takes place at Carnegie Hall, and its programming presents great works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including film scores and rarely performed works, as well as earlier music. The orchestra is also the leading ensemble in the United States devoted to Italian repertoire. Under Music Director Salvatore Di Vittorio, who was specially commissioned by the Respighi family and archive to promote Respighi's music, the Chamber Orchestra of New York launched the annual international Respighi Prize competition for composers and soloists, held in New York. Other recordings include albums of the music of Respighi (8.572332 and 8.573168) and Di Vittorio (8.572333).



VIOLIN 1

Kelly Hall-Tompkins, concertmaster
Nicholas Pappone
Bela Horvath
Lavinia Pavlish

VIOLIN 2

Russell Kotcher, principal
Jennifer Ahn
Carrie Krause
David Bouso

VIOLA

Maggie Snyder, principal
Santa Maria Pecoraro
Colin Brooks

CELLO

Adrian Daurov, principal
Joanne Choi
Miho Zaitsumi

DOUBLE BASS

Christopher Johnson, principal
Kyle Colina

FLUTE

Christina Hughes, principal
Mira Magrill

OBOE

Merideth Hite, principal
Scott Bartucca

CLARINET

Paul Won Jin Cho, principal
Mark Dover

BASSOON

Natalie Pilla, principal
Pierre Lidar

FRENCH HORN

Bert Hill, principal
Taylor Peterson
Erin Paul
Lauren Hosford

TRUMPET

Thomas Boulton, principal
Christopher Scanlon

TROMBONE

Burt Mason, principal
Tim Solinger
Cameron Smith

TUBA

Ben Vokits

PERCUSSION

Christopher Thompson, principal and timpani
David Stevens

Santa Maria Pecoraro, orchestra manager
Shanan Estreicher, operations manager

Salvatore Di Vittorio



Photo: Nick Granito

Born in Italy, Salvatore Di Vittorio has achieved international recognition as both a composer and conductor. He gained considerable attention with his orchestration and completion of Respighi's rediscovered *First Violin Concerto* (Naxos 8.573168) commissioned by Respighi's great nieces and archive curator. In 2010, with the endorsement of the Comune di Bologna, the city of the composer's birth, Di Vittorio and the noted musicologist Luigi Verdi founded the annual international Respighi Prize for composers and soloists. As a composer, Di Vittorio first came to attention when Italian chamber orchestras premiered his early compositions, often in programmes with Respighi's music. The world première of his *Symphony No. 3 'Templi di Sicilia'* with the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana in 2012 won critical praise in the *Giornale di Sicilia* and *La Repubblica*, and in an interview on RAI evening news. In recognition of his work in promoting his native Palermo around the world, he received the city medal from Mayor Leoluca Orlando. In 2015, the San Diego Symphony gave the world premiere of his orchestral *Fanfara del Mare 'Su un Tema di Monteverdi'*, commissioned for the centennial of Balboa Park and the Organ Pavilion at Copley Symphony Hall. In 2016, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia premiered his *Venere e Adone*. "Di Vittorio's Venus and Adonis was an orchestral song, and often a beautiful one, with a finale that felt like the sound track to an absent movie." (*Philadelphia Inquirer*). Salvatore Di Vittorio's works are published by Panastudio/Casa Ricordi (Universal Music), recorded on Naxos (*Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2; Overtura Respighiana; Clarinet Sonata No. 1; Ave Maria*), and listed in David Daniels's catalogue *Orchestral Music*. With La Villa d'Este a Tivoli in 2016, Di Vittorio reached a significant milestone when he became the first composer to dedicate a work to The Morgan Library & Museum, and the first Italian composer during his lifetime to be invited to donate an autograph manuscript to the museum's world-renowned music archive.

salvatoredivittorio.com

Vaughan Williams withdrew or destroyed many works from his earliest period, but he considered *The Solent*, with its haunting opening and luminous polyphonic textures, as among his 'most important works'. The *Fantasia* is his earliest known piece for solo instrument with orchestra and contains some of his most *bravura* writing, contrasting with the graceful geniality of the *Suite*. Depicting a sublimely pastoral scene and now one of the best loved pieces ever written, Vaughan Williams called *The Lark Ascending* a 'romance', a term reserved for his most profoundly lyrical works.

Ralph
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
(1872-1958)

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|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | The Solent (1902-03) | 11:23 |
| 2 | Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra (1896-1902, rev. 1904) | 20:27 |
| | Suite of Six Short Pieces for Piano (1920)* | 14:09 |
| 3 | No. 1. Prelude | 2:16 |
| 4 | No. 2. Slow dance | 1:37 |
| 5 | No. 3. Quick dance | 2:08 |
| 6 | No. 4. Slow air | 3:36 |
| 7 | No. 5. Rondo | 2:16 |
| 8 | No. 6. Pezzo ostinato | 2:16 |
| 9 | The Lark Ascending (1914, rev. 1920) | 16:27 |

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

Jennifer Pike, Violin 9 • Sina Kloke, Piano 2-8
Chamber Orchestra of New York 1 2 9
Salvatore Di Vittorio

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