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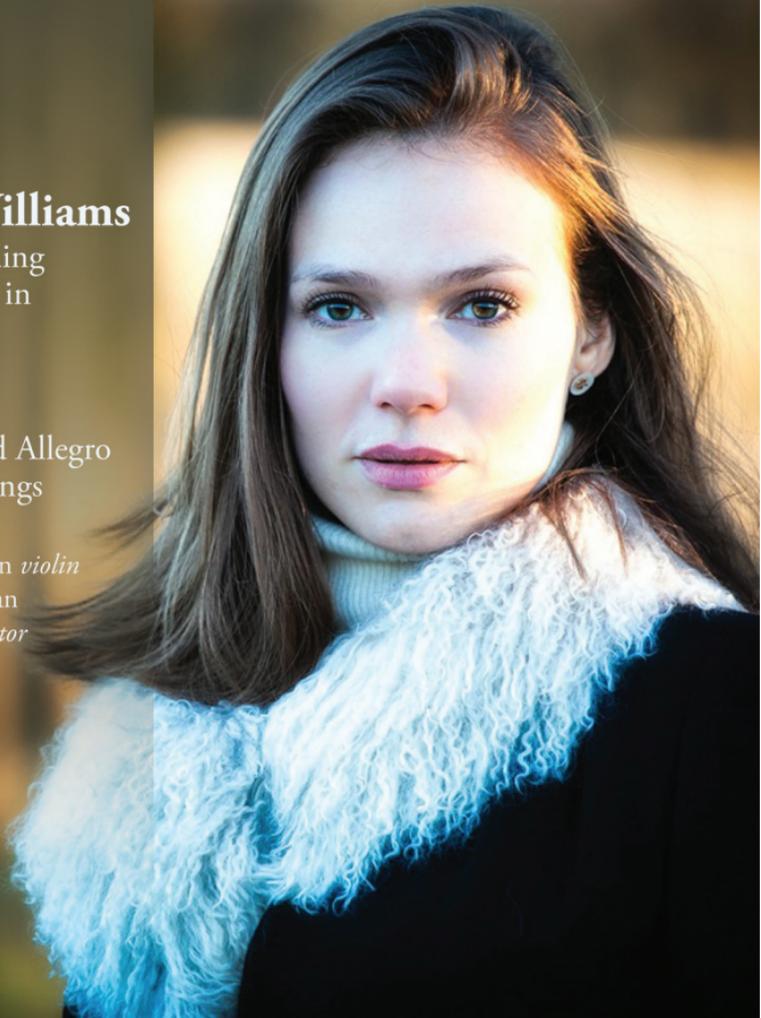
## Vaughan Williams

The Lark Ascending  
Violin Concerto in  
D minor

## Elgar

Introduction and Allegro  
Serenade for Strings

Tamsin Waley-Cohen *violin*  
Orchestra of the Swan  
David Curtis *conductor*



# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN & STRING ORCHESTRA • THE LARK ASCENDING

## ELGAR

INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO • SERENADE FOR STRINGS

	<b>Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra</b>	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)	
1	I. Allegro pesante		[6.35]
2	II. Adagio – Tranquillo		[6.40]
3	III. Presto		[4.58]
4	<b>Introduction and Allegro, Op.47</b>	Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	[13.50]
	<b>Serenade for Strings, Op.20</b>	Edward Elgar	
5	I. Allegro piacevole		[3.16]
6	II. Larghetto		[4.35]
7	III. Allegretto		[2.43]
8	<b>The Lark Ascending</b>	Ralph Vaughan Williams	[16.48]
	Total timings:		[59.28]

TAMSIN WALEY-COHEN VIOLIN  
ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN  
DAVID CURTIS CONDUCTOR

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### Thoughts on recording Vaughan Williams' *Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra* and *The Lark Ascending*

I was very happy when the opportunity arose to record the Vaughan-Williams *Violin Concerto* and *The Lark Ascending* with the Orchestra of the Swan and David Curtis, as they were the first works we played together and we have performed them many times since.

Whilst the *Lark* is one of the best loved and most famous works in the repertoire, the *Concerto* is, rather unfairly, hardly known. It is a true "chamber" concerto, full of humour, eloquence and imbued with a rustic spirit. The outer movements have a playful wildness about them, the music darting and dancing, that make them great fun to play, and I find the slow movement a jewel of beauty and expressivity.

The slow passages, both in the second movement of the *Concerto* and the *Lark* contain a poignant nostalgia, filled with longing for remembered times. There is a strong sense of narrative, not unlike the English folk stories and older Celtic sagas which are so cyclical and rooted in the power of nature. Larks are heard so rarely now, yet I have many childhood memories of their

song, and indeed too of the magisterial beauty of the English countryside. I have spent so much time on Exmoor, where my family home still is, and love the raw wildness of the moors and the lush rolling hills, always changing with the light.

When we came to record the *Lark* in particular, the improvisatory qualities presented more of a challenge for me than usual in the recording process. I don't think I have ever played it, and in particular the Cadenzas, the same way twice, which is part of the constant joy of performance. Therefore, what is captured here is the feeling and story of one moment in time, told through the truthful simplicity of Vaughan-Williams' beautiful music.

Perhaps the *Lark* is Vaughan-Williams' contribution to one of literature's universal themes; we hope that nature, in its beauty and perfection, is eternal, whatever mess we are creating.

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### Thoughts on recording Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* and *Serenade for Strings*

As a string player these works have been in my consciousness as violist and now conductor for nearly 50 years so the opportunity to record these very contrasting masterpieces was welcomed and, I admit, an opportunity that brought a certain degree of trepidation. As with any iconic work many have their own favourite recording and perhaps there is a sense of 'what can I add to the canon'.

That said these works always reveal something new and for me one of the most revelatory performances of the *Introduction and Allegro* I have taken part in or heard, was conducted by Michael Tippett. Michael was 70 at the time but for me this music had an energy and vigour that I'd never previously encountered – this wasn't portentous music composed by an old man, this was music of an incredible vitality, written by someone who enjoyed striding across the Malvern Hills. If we have revealed a little more of this aspect of the music to the listener perhaps that is a useful contribution.

The *Serenade* is a work I've probably conducted more than any other yet such is Elgar's genius that this exquisite musical 'cameo' is always fresh, always delicate and, despite its brevity and simplicity, for me always deeply moving, expressing great sentiment but never sentimental.

I once asked one of our players if they ever tired of rehearsing and performing this gem, he paused for a moment and thought, then replied "David, do you ever weary of meeting any of your oldest and dearest friends".

I hope this recording does these old musical friends some justice.

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Vaughan Williams wrote his *Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra* in 1924-5 and dedicated it to Jelly d'Aranyi, Hungarian violinist and grand-niece of Joseph Joachim. She gave the premiere in November 1925. The composer originally entitled the work *Concerto Accademico*, a name he subsequently disliked, withdrawing it before a Menuhin performance

in September 1952. The work reveals a less familiar aspect of Vaughan Williams' musical personality, its relative emotional detachment possibly suggesting a reaction to the horrors of the First World War. The opening movement, marked *Allegro pesante*, begins with a robust idea based on rising fifths. Neo-baroque tendencies – equally evident in many other works of this period, not least the *Fugal Overture* and *Fugal Concerto* by Vaughan Williams' friend and confidant Gustav Holst – are here incorporated within Vaughan Williams' personal language. In no way do they submerge his assimilated folk-song characteristics, while occasional suggestions of bitonality add pungency. Semiquaver passage-work for the soloist gives way to a cadenza (in strict time) before the time-signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4, with some bars of 6/8. The main theme here, with light pizzicato accompaniment, is derived from the second part of the opening subject. A new lyrical melody emerges during the development section, in accord with the violin's change to legato semiquavers. A dialogue between *fortissimo* strings and the soloist's chunky double-stopping leads to another brief cadenza with chordal accompaniment, before a general intensification which includes rapid arpeggiated string-crossing

for the violin and some playful cross-rhythms. This culminates in a brief final *Presto* with an emphatic cadence (*Molto allargando*). The intimate central *Adagio*, scored for muted strings, begins with a solo cello (unmuted) before the violin enters with even more decorative melodic lines. The key having changed to G major, the second violins initiate a little sighing motif which becomes an almost permanent feature while Vaughan Williams shows how expressive a rising scale can be. Following an eloquent climax the movement relaxes into a passage marked *Tranquillo* which includes a short cadenza. The finale is dominated by jig rhythm, its main theme adapted from the composer's opera *Hugh the Drover*. Subsequent material includes a new violin theme marked *scherzando* and a *cantabile* melody in more sustained notes, and thereafter legato and staccato elements are effectively combined and contrasted. The concerto – a work which has suffered unreasonable neglect – has a delightfully understated ending, as the soloist's rhythm runs out of steam before the final chord marked *ppp*. A violin and piano arrangement by Vaughan Williams' ex-pupil Constant Lambert was published in 1927.

Elgar completed his *Introduction and Allegro* in February 1905. In this much more ambitious work than the *Serenade for Strings* of 1892 his consummate mastery of the string orchestra's capabilities and wide range of tone-colours is wonderfully evident, with the addition of a string quartet offering further potential. Elgar effectively deploys the quartet in varying roles – as a contrasting texture in itself, in dialogue with the string orchestra, and in combination with the tutti group. The opening gambit is immediately arresting, the first dozen bars covering a surprising expressive range to which tempo fluctuations and textural variety contribute. This richness dissolves into what Elgar called a “Welsh theme” on solo viola, the inspiration for which dates from 1901 when he heard the distant singing of a choir across Cardigan Bay. One common feature of all their songs, which Elgar assumed to be a specifically Welsh characteristic, was a falling third. Three years later he heard: “far down our own Valley of the Wye, a song similar to those so pleasantly heard on Ynys Lochtyn” ... “Although there may be a Welsh feeling in the one theme ... the work is really a tribute to that sweet borderland where I have made my home”. The splendid Introduction gives way to the main *Allegro*, in which the

ascending melody originally played by the quartet in bar 5 is treated more purposefully. Other melodic material from the Introduction reappears, as well as a new idea in staccato semiquavers initiated by the solo quartet, before the Welsh theme returns on solo violin and viola with new, beautifully enhanced accompaniment. A renewal of the *Allegro* tempo brings, in Elgar's words, “no working-out part but a devil of a fugue instead”. This builds to a climax of extraordinary intensity before ebbing away, and now fragments of the staccato semiquaver idea return, creating a smooth transition to the reprise of the original *Allegro* section. A final, glorious restatement of the Welsh theme – marked “*molto sostenuto*” then “*con fuoco*” – leads to an exhilarating conclusion, the final *sforzando* pizzicato chord being one of many imaginative touches throughout the work. Asked about his superbly idiomatic string-writing, Elgar advised: “Study old Handel. I went to him years ago.” *The Introduction and Allegro* was premiered in London's Queen's Hall on 8th March 1905, with the composer conducting the LSO. Although it took about forty years to become established, it is now recognised as one of the greatest works in the string-orchestra repertoire.

Although Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*, composed in 1892, is a less imposing work than his *Introduction and Allegro*, it would be a mistake to underestimate this relative miniature. Elgar's feeling for effective string-writing is already obvious and his comment to his friend Jaeger – “Really stringy in effect” – expresses his personal satisfaction. A rhythmic figure heard on the violas in the opening bars recurs as a neat unifying thread throughout a movement which exudes natural charm and tenderness. Its emotional effect is enhanced by restraint and understatement. Ernest Newman aptly described the central *Larghetto* as “a pure song-without-words”. The depth of its poignancy is perhaps surprising in the context of a serenade, a genre more usually associated with diversion than emotional engagement. Midway through the amiable 12/8 *Finale*, the viola figure from the opening of the piece unobtrusively returns and a tiny element of its distinctive rhythm subtly pervades the gentle coda. Apparently this serenade was originally conceived as *Three Pieces for String Orchestra – Spring Song, Elegy and Finale* – first performed in 1888. The manuscript was subsequently lost but the serenade as we know it today probably represents Elgar's revision of these *Three Pieces*. The *Serenade*

for *Strings* was included in the very last of Elgar's numerous recordings of his own music, made on 29th August, 1933 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Vaughan Williams composed *The Lark Ascending* soon after his *London Symphony*, and just before the outbreak of World War I. Therefore the premiere was delayed until 1921, by which time the composer had revised the work. It was the first of his several compositions for solo instrument and orchestra, a motley collection including concertos for piano, violin, oboe and tuba, and other works featuring solo viola, viola with wordless chorus, and harmonica. The score of *The Lark Ascending* is prefaced by lines which the composer selected from the poem of the same name by his near-neighbour George Meredith (1828-1909), reproduced in full on page 4 of this booklet:

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 aërial rings  
In light, and then the fancy sings.

*The Lark Ascending* is imbued with a profound sense of communion with nature. Rather than scorning English pastoralism – as Elisabeth Lutyens and others did with observations such as “the cowpat school” – we should value this rare quality expressed so perfectly by Vaughan Williams in particular. Like Bartók, he assimilated folk-song characteristics so thoroughly that his own melodic invention became indistinguishable – there is no actual folk-song borrowing in *The Lark Ascending*.

Following a brief introduction for woodwind and muted strings, the soloist enters with a poetic cadenza marked *pianissimo* and *sur la touche*. The solo violin part, with its gently animated flurries, impressionistically evokes the actual song of the skylark, which in nature consists of rapturous outpourings sometimes lasting unbroken for several minutes. At the re-entry of the orchestra the solo violin takes up the 6/8 melody introduced towards the end of the

cadenza, but occasional arabesques continue to recall the characteristic abandon of the skylark song. Another cadenza leads to a contrasting episode (*Allegretto tranquillo*) with a new melody for flutes. A subsequent episode (*Allegro tranquillo*) begins with solo violin trills and arabesques now punctuated by off-beat triangle, before the oboe plays a further new melody marked *scherzando*. In each episode the solo violin part generally assumes greater melodic definition while retaining some elements of the skylark song. Both the flute melody (now on solo violin and *Allegretto molto tranquillo*) and the earlier 6/8 section return and the work ends with the unaccompanied violin once more in skylark mode. Vaughan Williams dedicated *The Lark Ascending* to Marie Hall, the soloist in the first performance in June 1921.

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### The Lark Ascending

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,  
All intervolv'd and spreading wide,  
Like water-dimples down a tide  
Where ripple ripple overcurls  
And eddy into eddy whirls;  
A press of hurried notes that run  
So fleet they scarce are more than one,  
Yet changingly the trills repeat  
And linger ringing while they fleet,  
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear  
To her beyond the handmaid ear,  
Who sits beside our inner springs,  
Too often dry for this he brings,  
Which seems the very jet of earth  
At sight of sun, her musci's mirth,  
As up he wings the spiral stair,  
A song of light, and pierces air  
With fountain ardor, fountain play,  
To reach the shining tops of day,  
And drink in everything discern'd  
An ecstasy to music turn'd,  
Impell'd by what his happy bill  
Disperses; drinking, showering still,

Unthinking save that he may give  
His voice the outlet, there to live  
Renew'd in endless notes of glee,  
So thirsty of his voice is he,  
For all to hear and all to know  
That he is joy, awake, aglow,  
The tumult of the heart to hear  
Through pureness filter'd crystal-clear,  
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright  
By simple singing of delight,  
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrain'd,  
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustain'd  
Without a break, without a fall,  
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,  
Perennial, quavering up the chord  
Like myriad dews of sunny sward  
That trembling into fulness shine,  
And sparkle dropping argentine;  
Such wooing as the ear receives  
From zephyr caught in choric leaves  
Of aspens when their chattering net  
Is flush'd to white with shivers wet;  
And such the water-spirit's chime  
On mountain heights in morning's prime,  
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,  
Too animate to need a stress;  
But wider over many heads  
The starry voice ascending spreads,  
Awakening, as it waxes thin,

The best in us to him akin;  
And every face to watch him rais'd,  
Puts on the light of children prais'd,  
So rich our human pleasure ripens  
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,  
Though nought be promis'd from the seas,  
But only a soft-ruffling breeze  
Sweep glittering on a still content,  
Serenity in ravishment.

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:  
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine  
He is, the hills, the human line,  
The meadows green, the fallows brown,  
The dreams of labor in the town;  
He sings the sap, the quicken'd veins;  
The wedding song of sun and rains  
He is, the dance of children, thanks  
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,  
And eye of violets while they breathe;  
All these the circling song will wreathe,  
And you shall hear the herb and tree,  
The better heart of men shall see,  
Shall feel celestially, as long

As you crave nothing save the song.  
Was never voice of ours could say  
Our inmost in the sweetest way,  
Like yonder voice aloft, and link  
All hearers in the song they drink:  
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,  
Our passion is too full in flood,  
We want the key of his wild note  
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,  
The song seraphically free  
Of taint of personality,  
So pure that it salutes the suns  
The voice of one for millions,  
In whom the millions rejoice  
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,  
Now names, and men still housing here,  
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint  
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,  
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet  
For song our highest heaven to greet:  
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,  
Ensperses them brilliant in our blue,  
From firmest base to farthest leap,  
Because their love of Earth is deep,  
And they are warriors in accord  
With life to serve and pass reward,  
So touching purest and so heard

In the brain's reflex of yon bird;  
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,  
Through self-forgetfulness divine,  
In them, that song aloft maintains,  
To fill the sky and thrill the plains  
With showerings drawn from human stores,  
As he to silence nearer soars,  
Extends the world at wings and dome,  
More spacious making more our home,  
Till lost on his aerial rings  
In light, and then the fancy sings.

## TAMSIN WALEY-COHEN

Described by The Times as a violinist "who held us rapt in daring and undaunted performances" and by The Guardian as a performer of "fearless intensity", Tamsin Waley-Cohen enjoys an adventurous and varied career. In addition to concerts with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, and others, she has been associate artist with Orchestra of the Swan, and works with conductors including Andrew Litton, Jose Serebrier and Tamas Vasary. Performances have taken her across Europe and to the USA and NZ, playing venues such as the Barbican, Wigmore Hall, Symphony Hall Birmingham, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester and the Great

Hall, Liszt Academy. She has been artist in residence at festivals including Frome and Roman River.

She enjoys a duo partnership with Huw Watkins, whose "Concertino" she premiered, and together they have recorded for Champs Hill and Signum Records, for whom she is a "Signum Classics Artist". She has also premiered works, many written for her, by composers including Joseph Phibbs, Richard Causton, and Torsten Rasch. Her love of chamber music led her to start the Honeymeade Festival, now in its 8th year. She



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is the violinist of the acclaimed London Bridge Ensemble, with whom she performs regularly. Tamsin is also Artistic Director of the Sunday Series at London's Tricycle Theatre, for which she was named one of Evening Standards 1000 most influential Londoners.

Her teachers included Ruggiero Ricci, Andras Keller, and Schmuël Ashkenasi, and she studied with Itzhak Rashkovsky at the Royal College of Music, where she won all available prizes.

Since 2007 she has played the 1721 ex-Fenyves Stradivarius violin.

## ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN

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Orchestra of the Swan is from Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon and is Associate Orchestra at Town Hall Birmingham. In addition to its core programme of orchestral concerts recently OOTS performed a series of sell-out concerts with Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel in Symphony Hall Birmingham, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, The Sage, Gateshead and the Royal Albert Hall.

In 2013-14 OOTS undertook a highly successful tour to China and now has plans to tour Mexico, Brazil, the USA and Turkey as well as a return tour to China in 2016.

OOTS records for Avie, Naxos, Nimbus, Signum, MSR and Somm including repertoire by Barber, Bax, Berlioz, Brahms, Copland, Debussy, Finzi, Hans Gal, Ireland, Mahler, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schumann and Strauss and several world premiere recordings including Philip Sawyers symphonies and works for trumpet and orchestra by John McCabe, Robert Saxton and Deborah Pritchard. The complete recordings of the Hans Gal symphonies has had considerable critical acclaim in the UK and USA.

David Curtis **Conductor**  
Charlotte Hunt **Manager**

OOTS Associate Artists include Tasmin Little, Julian Lloyd Webber, Benjamin Grosvenor and Tamsin Waley-Cohen and Peter Donohoe will be Associate Artist 2014-15. For 2014-16 OOTS will receive \$60,000 from the Sorel Organisation, New York – appointing the Grammy nominated composer Dobrinka Tabakova as Resident Composer.

TV appearances include the South Bank Show and CDs have been Gramophone Choice, CD of the Week on Classic FM and Washington Public Radio and the top 20 Classical Albums on Chicago Public Radio. OOTS is regularly featured on USA Performance Today networked to 260 radio stations and numerous Canadian Public Radio Stations.

OOTS is a major champion of new music and OOTS has commissioned work from Joe Cutler, Tansy Davies, Joe Duddell, Alexander Goehr, Roxanna Panufnik, Paul Patterson, Joseph Phibbs, Julian Philips, Dobrinka Tabakova, Errollyn Wallen, John Woolrich and many others.

**DAVID CURTIS**  
**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**  
**PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR**

David Curtis is Artistic Director of Orchestra of the Swan, one of the most exciting, innovative and accessible chamber orchestras in the UK.

His thought-provoking programming, infectious enthusiasm and refreshing interpretations see David working in Belgium, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Sweden and the USA with orchestras such as the Academy of St Martin's-in-the-Field, the Prague Chamber Orchestra, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and North Hungarian Symphony Orchestra.

He appears as soloist and conductor in Finland with the Mikkeli City Orchestra, the Roveniemi Chamber and Yvaskyla Symphony Orchestras in the concert hall and on Finnish Radio and has conducted the North Hungarian Symphony and Festival Chorus in the prestigious annual Olomouc Dvorak's Festival and the Policka Martinu Festival.

David champions new work and has premiered least 50 works by British, Bulgarian, Chinese, Nordic and American composers including Oscar i Bosch, Douglas Cuomo, Joe Cutler, Tansy Davies, Joseph Duddell, Daron Hagen, Peter Lieuwen, Paul Patterson, Joe Phibbs, Julian Philips, Dobrinka Tabakova, Param Vir, Andrew Waggoner, Errollyn Wallen, Shu Wang and John Woolrich.

For Icelandic Radio he conducted premieres by Snorri Sigfús Birgisson, Lars-Petter Hagen, Thuridur Jónsdóttir and Marie Samuelsson in the Nordic Music Days Festival and gave the world premiere of a new work by Sampo Haapamäki with the Mikkeli City Orchestra.

*Serenade for Strings and Introduction and Allegro* recorded in St Augustine's, Kilburn, UK on 24th March 2014.

Producer – Tim Oldham  
Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch  
Recording Assistant – Robin Hawkins

*Concerto and The Lark Ascending* recorded in Cheltenham Town Hall, UK on 28th March 2014.

Producer – Chris Hazell  
Recording Engineer – Andrew Mellor  
Recording Assistant – Craig Jenkins

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