



Arthur **BENJAMIN** Edgar
BENJAMIN **BAINTON**

Songs

The Piper
Wind's Work
Shepherd's Holiday

The Twilight People
A Cradle Song
Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount

Susan Bickley, Mezzo-soprano • Christopher Gillett, Tenor
Wendy Hiscocks, Piano



Arthur Benjamin (1893–1960):

- 1 **The Piper (1923)**
(Words: Seumas O'Sullivan 1879–1958) 1:11
- 2 **Man and Woman (1918)**
(Words: Peter Anthony Motteux 1660–1718) 0:47
- 3 **To Phillis, Milking Her Flock (1924)**
(Words: William Drummond 1585–1649) 1:05
- 4 **Diaphenia (1924)**
(Words: Henry Constable 1562–1613) 2:07
- 5 **Hey Nonny No! (1923)**
(Words: Christchurch Manuscript, 16th c.) 1:10
- Three Greek Songs (1934)**
(Rendered into English by A.C. Benson 1862–1925)
- 6 **I. The Flower Girl**
(Words: Dionysius, 2nd c. BC) 0:59
- 7 **II. On Deck (Words: Theognis, 6th c. BC)** 2:19
- 8 **III. A Wine Jug (Words: Unknown)** 0:55
- Three Impressions (1925)**
(Words: William Sharp 1855–1905)
- 9 **I. Hedgerow (1924)** 1:06
- 10 **II. Calm Sea and Mist (1920)** 2:03
- 11 **III. The Wasp (1920)** 0:51
- 12 **The Mouse (1923)**
(Words: Hugh McCrae 1876–1958) 0:48
- 13 **The Moon (1923) (Words: Hugh McCrae)** 2:09
- 14 **Wind's Work (1935)**
(Words: T. Sturge Moore 1870–1944) 2:49
- 15 **Shepherd's Holiday (1936)**
(Words: Elinor Wylie 1885–1928) 2:32
- 16 **Before Dawn (1924)**
(Words: Walter de la Mare 1873–1956) 2:58
- 17 **Song of the Banana Carriers (1957)**
(Jamaican Folk Song) 3:20
- 18 **Jan (1947) (Creole Melody)** 2:28
- 19 **Linstead Market (1947) (Jamaican Folk Song)** 1:36

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Edgar Bainton (1880–1956):

- 20 **Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount (1920)**
(Words: Ben Jonson 1572–1637) 3:03
- 21 **The Joyous Wanderer (1925)**
(Words: Alice Meynell 1847–1922) 2:21
- 22 **Gifts (1924) (Words: James Thomson 1700–1748**
– by permission of P.J. and A.C. Dobell) 1:41
- 23 **The Little Waves of Breffny (1927)**
(Words: Eva Gore-Booth 1870–1926) 1:56
- 24 **Shooting Star**
(Words: Edmund Blunden 1896–1974) 2:30
- 25 **Strings in the Earth**
(Words: James Joyce 1882–1941) 1:36
- 26 **Dawn (1924) (Words: Gordon Bottomley 1874–1948)** 1:32
- 27 **Laughing Rose (1921)**
(Words: W.H. Davies 1871–1940) 1:04
- 28 **Roseen-Dhu (1912) (Words: Fiona Macleod 1855–1905**
– by permission of Mrs William Sharp) 1:51
- 29 **A Nosegay (1929) (Words: John Reynolds, 16th c.)** 2:09
- 30 **Young Love Lies Dreaming (1928)**
(Words: Christina Rossetti 1830–1894) 2:30
- 31 **To the Children (1923)**
(Words: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807–1882) 2:00
- 32 **Lullaby (1912) (Words: Fiona Macleod**
– by permission of Mrs William Sharp) 2:21
- 33 **Frolic (1920) (Words: 'A.E.' 1867–1935)** 0:57
- 34 **A Christmas Carol (1938)**
(Words: Robert Herrick 1591–1674) 2:04
- 35 **Love On My Heart From Heaven Fell (1928)**
(Words: Robert Bridges 1844–1930) 1:44
- 36 **Sanctuaries (1924) (Words: Gordon Bottomley)** 1:44
- 37 **A Cradle Song (1928)**
(Words: Padraic Colum 1881–1972) 2:37
- 38 **They Went Forth (1918) (Words: Eva Gore-Booth)** 2:01
- 39 **Twilight (1923) (Words: John Masfield 1878–1967)** 2:07
- 40 **A Casualty (1919)**
(Words: Wilfrid Wilson Gibson 1878–1962) 1:24
- 41 **The Triumph of Maeve (Words: Eva Gore-Booth)** 3:17
- 42 **The Twilight People (Words: Seumas O'Sullivan)** 2:34

All world premiere recordings except 21 and 22

Arthur Benjamin (1893–1960) • Edgar Bainton (1880–1956)

Songs

Arthur Benjamin and Edgar Bainton were essentially very different men but were linked by a genuine love of humanity. Both were curious about other cultures and even willing to make new lives for themselves in other parts of the Commonwealth that, between them, would encompass Britain, Australia and Canada. Music education played an important part of their work and their involvement as examiners for the Associated Board further opened up the world of travel. Last but certainly not least, both musicians were caught up in the trauma of the First World War for which their music was an essential voice for resolving complex issues. Such a process can already be heard in the songs of Bainton on this recording, but one needs to look beyond the song genre for Benjamin to works such as his *Symphony*, the *Viola Sonata* and the *Elegaic Mazurka* for solo piano.

Arthur Benjamin

The story of Arthur Benjamin's life and music navigates a fascinating path through the history of the British Empire and of Europe. Born in Sydney, Australia, Benjamin was, to a certain degree, self-taught with an innate musical ability aided by perfect pitch and remarkable powers of observation from an early age. Formal training as a pianist and composer was never to feature for any lengthy period of time in his life, his most influential teachers being the British organist, George Sampson, who taught him as a nine-year-old boy in Brisbane where Benjamin spent most of his childhood or during his scholarship years at the Royal College of Music (RCM) where his tutorage under Stanford was interrupted by the First World War.

Benjamin's musical career was all encompassing; he was a virtuoso pianist and highly regarded as a teacher of his instrument with the celebrated names of Lamar Crosson and Benjamin Britten having enrolled in his classes at the RCM. He was a music educator and conductor, roles that played an important part in the

musical life of Vancouver, Canada where he lived during the Second World War. A widely travelled individual for his time, Benjamin was known as a bon viveur and a gourmet cook possessed with a great love and zest for life. This was reflected in his composition which gradually evolved from the wide variety of music he heard and performed. Stylistic influences ranged from Bach to Debussy and Ravel, from African-American spirituals and folk music of different countries to jazz and the classics. His collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock in the early years of British sound pictures in the 1930s honed the Australian composer's concept of pace and musical drama, an important element in shaping his voice as a mature composer. Whether it was his international smash hit *Jamaican Rumba*, his large-scale *Symphony* or his three-act opera *A Tale of Two Cities*, Benjamin's music is imbued with a sense of beauty, expert craftsmanship and a rhythmic vitality delivered from the hands of a musician who was a master of improvisation at the piano.

The catalogue of songs composed by Benjamin is modest in length with much of the material pre-dating his forays into opera. The latter genre was initially fulfilled by two one-act operas *The Devil Take Her* (1931) and *Prima Donna* (1933), followed by *Mañana* (1954) – the first British television opera, and two three-act operas *A Tale of Two Cities* (1950) and *Tartuffe* (1960). From his infancy, he was surrounded by the sound of his father's singing with his mother accompanying at the piano. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that his first attempt at composition at the age of nine, was a song, which was then sent to Ada Crossley, the celebrated Australian contralto, who, at the height of her career was gracious enough to respond and express regret 'that the range was unsuitable for her voice'. Benjamin wrote his own account later in life:

The words were very sentimental and I set them very badly – I put some words on high notes which were unsingable at that dizzy altitude, and

I accented wrong syllables. But here and there a little twist in the harmony showed that *perhaps* the small boy who wrote it showed some talent, and the melody was not bad.

All the songs written before the First World War were destroyed by the composer's own hand before he left to fight with his battalion in front-line trench warfare. The earliest song to survive and find its way into publication was *Man and Woman* (1918) with words by Peter Anthony Motteux (1660–1718). Blending with the then current trend for reviving Elizabethan literature, Benjamin set the words to music with a modernist touch; it was an approach that came to signify his belief as a mature composer that music too should be a marriage of the old with the new. The subject matter of *Man and Woman* was also a reflection on his having had his first serious relationship with a young woman during the war, a one-off experience that was never to be repeated.

With his career and scholarship at the RCM in tatters, Benjamin returned to Australia after demobilisation. He found work teaching piano at the Sydney Conservatorium where he wrote the songs *Calm Sea and Mist* and *The Wasp* (1920); *Hedgerow* (1924) was added later and the set was published by J. Curwen the following year as *Three Impressions* with either piano or string quartet accompaniment. All three songs used the poetry of the Scottish writer William Sharp (1855–1905) and Benjamin's virtuosic piano parts provide imaginative sound paintings in response to the nature images in the text.

By 1923, he was settled back in England where he had taken a cottage in the peaceful countryside village of Beare Green in Surrey. It was here that many of his songs were composed and eventually published, the solitude of his new surroundings proving ideal for concentrated hours at the piano consolidating his technique and for creating new scores for voice, solo piano and chamber music. The first contracts were signed with Elkin & Co. Ltd. and J. Curwen who subsequently published *The Mouse and The Moon* in 1924; the words were by the Australian writer Hugh McCrae, a great friend of the artist Norman Lindsay whose Springwood studio the composer had visited in the

Blue Mountains west of Sydney. *Hey Nonny No!* was released the same year using words from a Christchurch 16th century manuscript and both *The Moon* and *Hey Nonny No!* were dedicated to one of the country's leading English tenors, John Coates, noted for his support of English composers such as Quilter and Elgar. Other songs published in 1924 were *The Piper* with words by Seumas O'Sullivan (1879–1958), *To Phillis, Milking Her Flock* using a poem by William Drummond (1585–1649), *Diaphenia* to a text by Henry Constable (1562–1613) and *Before Dawn* inspired by the words of Walter de la Mare (1873–1956). Benjamin's sound world at this time was a blend of Debussy's harmonies, vigorous Elizabethan dance rhythms and modes with a masterly sense of counterpoint between the voice and piano, *The Piper* being one display of such brilliance.

Between the wars, Benjamin found steady employment as a concert pianist and as a piano professor at the RCM while he built his career as a composer. The songs he composed during this time reflected his growing interest in opera and his work as a pioneering film composer. Evoking a scene and being able to sense the more subtle psychological nuances of a character is evident in the settings of A.C. Benson's English translations of ancient Greek texts in the *Three Greek Songs*. Beginning with *The Flower Girl* based on words by Dionysius (2nd century BC), the singer is an onlooker flirting with a pretty young woman who sells perhaps more than just her flowers. This is followed by *On Deck* from the writings of Theognis in the 6th century BC expressing sympathy with a homesick seafarer who longs to return to the land he once ploughed. *A Wine Jug* is a masculine drinking song with words by an anonymous author that can easily be linked to the world of Gil de Beaulieu, the French swordsman and hero portrayed by Conrad Veidt in the film *Under the Red Robe* (1937) that Benjamin composed music for a few years later.

Even more revealing of Benjamin's frame of mind at this time were the two songs *Wind's Work* (1935) and *Shepherd's Holiday* (1936). The words of the first song by the English writer Thomas Sturge Moore (1870–1944) appear to depict the innocent country life of Kate and Jack

until the first question arises: 'But who knows when the wind rose?' It is a question that returns in variation and the music to which it is set is akin to a passage from the storm scene in another of Benjamin's film scores, *Turn of the Tide*, composed the same year. Benjamin's own feelings of not belonging, whether they stemmed from his homosexuality, Jewish ancestry or from other sources, find a musical voice in *Shepherd's Holiday*. Written by the American poet Elinor Wylie (1885–1928) who was known for her beauty and a string of scandals, the words describe the love between a goose girl and a shepherd boy. The lovers don't really 'fit in' with the girl at one point saying: 'I'll teach your grey sheep to guard you from the steep, you'll catch me back from drowning where my dark lake lies deep.' Such darker more reflective moments are short lived in Benjamin's song output. He chose to face the world on an upbeat and his final efforts focused on the catchy rhythms and attractive melodies of Jamaican folk song settings. *Jan* and *Linstead Market* were published by Boosey & Hawkes in 1947 and *Song of the Banana Carriers* ten years later; they were all part of an untiring effort to provide a sequel to his ever popular – and lucrative – *Jamaican Rumba*, an endearing miniature which had afforded the composer the freedom to concentrate on more serious work.

Wendy Hiscocks

Edgar Bainton

Edgar Bainton was born in London in 1880, but his family moved to Coventry very early in his childhood. Edgar became a pupil at the Henry VIII Grammar School at eleven, and at sixteen he won a scholarship to study at the RCM, where he won the Hopkinson Gold and Tagore Medals. In 1901 he moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to teach at the Conservatoire of Music, becoming principal in 1912. There he met, and subsequently married in 1905, his wife Ethel – for whom quite a number of his songs were written. (Ethel Bainton was an excellent pianist, singer and a founder-member of the Newcastle Bach

Choir in 1915, and became by default the first woman director of a conservatoire owing to Edgar's imprisonment in Germany during the First World War). In 1934 the family emigrated to Australia upon Bainton's acceptance of the post of director of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, thereafter becoming a key figure in Australia's musical life until his death in December 1956. The majority of Bainton's songs date from the first forty years of the century, that is before his move to Australia and the manuscripts of the best of his unpublished songs travelled with him and are now part of the E.L. Bainton Papers in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. This recording features, in addition to songs published between 1912 and 1938, a selection of these unpublished musical gems – all being heard for the very first time.

One of the chief hallmarks of Bainton's composing style is his sensitive and imaginative piano writing, particularly in the flexibility of harmonic language. But in her biography of her father: *Remembered on Waking*, Helen Bainton singles out Bainton's approach to word-setting: 'A feature of his setting of words was his absolute devotion to the scansion of poetry. He set poetry with an artistic instinct for beauty that is quite outstanding. His melodic phrases were governed by the shape and contour of the words, and in no instance did he depart from the integrity of the poem. He used to say "You cannot set words until you *know* them. Read them out aloud; say them over and over, and *breathe* them. Let the melody go to the height of the phrase and if it is not singable, leave it and try again."

Helen Bainton also refers to Ethel's singing: 'Mother had a charming voice, and he loved to accompany her in all the Schubert, Schumann and Brahms Lieder, which they both enjoyed. She was a wonderful help to him in the songs he composed, and from the time they were married he always wrote one or two for her as a birthday gift. She would find them among her presents on the breakfast table; in the evening they would go through them together.' Of the twelve-plus songs dedicated 'To my Wife', five are included in this collection.

An avid and tireless reader, Bainton always carried several books in his luggage during his various trips

abroad as examiner and lecturer, and in his pockets during country walks, both in the North-East of England and later the Australian outback. The poets inspiring his song writing cover a wide chronological period – from the 16th and 17th centuries (Robert Herrick, Ben Jonson, John Reynolds), through the 19th (Longfellow) to contemporary writers of the so-called 'Georgian' period, such as W.H. Davies, James Thomson, Robert Bridges and the Irish poets James Joyce and 'A.E.' (George Russell). But it was Gordon Bottomley and Wilfred Wilson Gibson, who were personal friends who figured frequently in his output (in addition to their poems Bottomley wrote the libretto for Bainton's one-act opera *The Crier by Night* and Gibson the libretti for two of his choral works *The Dancing Seal* and *The Vindictive Staircase*). Of the other contemporary poets Eva Gore-Booth was a formidable social reformer and campaigner in the North of England; her collected poems were published in 1929, three years after her death. Bainton felt a strong connection to the libertarian impulses expressed in her work and all three settings: *The Triumph of Maevæ*, *They Went Forth* (both unpublished) and *The Little Waves of Breffny* are recorded here. Other women poets Bainton set are Alice Meynell's *The Joyous Wanderer* and Christina Rossetti's *Young Love Lies Dreaming*.

Bainton's very first published songs: *Lullaby* (dedicated to Bainton's two small daughters Guendolen and Helen) and *Roseen-Dhu* date from 1912. Their author,

Fiona Macleod, was the alter-ego of William Sharp, who also features under his real name in Arthur Benjamin's *Three Impressions*. The unpublished setting of John Masefield's *Twilight* has a special history. Reference was made earlier to Bainton's interment as a civilian prisoner of war – having been arrested en-route to the Bayreuth Festival of August 1914. He had to sit out the course of the War in Ruhleben Camp outside Berlin, but continued his composing (works include a *String Quartet* and *Three Pieces for Orchestra*). In spring 1918 the health of several internees had deteriorated to the point that they were invalided out to The Hague for convalescence and the manuscript of *Twilight* bears the endnote 'Scheveningen, July 30th 1918', revealing that for Bainton song-writing, indeed composing generally, proved to be essential therapy during this very traumatic period.

Both composers set Seumas O'Sullivan: *The Twilight People* dates from the same year, 1923, as Benjamin's *The Piper*, and Padraic Colum's *A Cradle Song* has always been a popular lyric for composers, Bainton's unpublished version dates from 1928. Finally, did Bainton ever produce a 'hit', as they say? The likeliest contender in this selection is Ben Jonson's *Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount*, published in 1920, which received occasional broadcasts and was relatively well known during Bainton's lifetime, possibly even rivalling Roger Quilter's more familiar version.

Michael Jones

Susan Bickley



Photo: Julie Kim

Susan Bickley is firmly established as one of the most accomplished mezzo-sopranos of her generation, with a wide repertoire covering the Baroque, the great 19th- and 20th-century dramatic roles as well as contemporary works. On the concert platform, Susan Bickley appears with many of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles. On the recital stage she performs regularly with such artists as Roger Vignoles, Iain Burnside and Julius Drake at such venues as St John's Smith Square, Wigmore Hall and the Oxford Lieder Festival. She has also recorded songs by Ivor Gurney, Reynaldo Hahn, George Benjamin, Thomas Adès and Simon Bainbridge amongst others. In May 2011 she received the prestigious Singer Award at the Royal Philharmonic Society Awards, the highest recognition for live classical music in the UK.

Christopher Gillett



In a career spanning 38 years the British tenor Christopher Gillett has sung in opera houses across the globe and with many of the world's finest orchestras and conductors. In the last few years he has sung at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Los Angeles Opera, the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Netherlands Opera, the Teatro alla Scala, the Theater an der Wien, the Aldeburgh Festival, La Monnaie in Brussels, the Peking Festival, the Teatro Real in Madrid, and at the Glyndebourne Festival, with conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Sir Andrew Davis, Plácido Domingo, John Nelson, Oliver Knussen, Mikko Franck and Robin Ticciati. Christopher Gillett has given many world premieres, including works by Menotti, Tan Dun, Alexander Goehr and Louis Andriesson. He has written two critically acclaimed books, *Who's My Bottom?* and *Scraping The Bottom* and is a regular contributor to the German magazine *Opernwelt*.

Wendy Hiscocks

Photo: Peter Nolan



Australian composer-pianist Wendy Hiscocks (b. 1963) studied in Sydney with Peter Sculthorpe before moving to London. Her music has been performed by major international artists and ensembles such as Piers Lane, Michael Collins, Elizabeth Connell, the Schubert Ensemble and the Jesus College Choir at a range of venues and festivals including the Amadeus Festival, the Geneva Festival and the Australian Chamber Music Festival, Townsville to London's Purcell Room and the Kusatsu International Summer Academy and Festival in Japan. Championing Australian music has been a lifelong interest; she is in the final stages of writing the first biography of Arthur Benjamin, and is the artistic director of CAM (Celebrating Australian Music), a yearly celebration of Australian music in the heart of London launched in 2017.

www.wendyhiscocks.com



The **British Music Society** (Registered Charity No. 1043838), founded in 1979, brings together professional and amateur musicians, students and scholars, and music enthusiasts young and old from around the globe to promote, preserve and celebrate British music, pre-dominantly from the Twentieth century, both at home and abroad. Its extensive discography is now being re-issued by Naxos, bringing to a wider audience many highly-acclaimed performances, often world premières, of neglected British works. The Society's Historic label includes a number of famous vintage recordings by artists such as Noel Mewton-Wood and Walter Goehr.

In addition the Society produces a Journal, *British Music*, packed full of scholarly articles and reviews, as well as a regular e-newsletter for members. Our website lists forthcoming BMS events as well as performances of British music, and also provides a forum for discussion and debate.

www.britishmusicsociety.com

Arthur Benjamin and Edgar Bainton were linked by a genuine love for humanity, curiosity about wider cultures and a willingness to travel in the cause of their calling as musicians. Both were also caught up in the traumas of World War I. Benjamin is best known for his *Jamaican Rumba*. His vocal music is imbued with a sense of refinement and impeccable craftsmanship, as well as the rhythmic vitality and colour expected from a virtuoso pianist. Bainton's hallmarks also include sensitive and harmonically imaginative piano writing, his devotion to poetry resulting in settings with an outstanding artistic instinct for beauty.

Arthur
BENJAMIN
(1893–1960)

19 songs, including:

The Piper
Diaphenia
Wind's Work
Shepherd's Holiday
Linstead Market

Edgar
BAINTON
(1880–1956)

23 songs, including:

Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount
Shooting Star
Young Love Lies Dreaming
A Casualty
The Twilight People

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Susan Bickley, Mezzo-soprano **1 3 9–11 14–16 24–26 30–36 41 42**

Christopher Gillett, Tenor **2 4–8 12 13 17–23 27–29 37–40**

Wendy Hiscocks, Piano



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A detailed track list and publishers' information can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

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