

FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

Vaughan Williams: An Oxford Elegy

Finzi: Requiem da Camera • Gurney: The Trumpet

Butterworth: A Shropshire Lad – Rhapsody for Orchestra

Roderick Williams, Baritone • Jeremy Irons, Speaker
City of London Choir • London Mozart Players

Hilary Davan Wetton



FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

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(Edited and completed by Christian Alexander) | 22:29 |
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Flowers of the Field

All the composers gathered on this recording were affected by the carnage of the First World War. Vaughan Williams, Butterworth and Gurney served in that conflict; of them, Butterworth died and Gurney's remaining life was scarred by mental instability, while the teenage Finzi lost his beloved teacher, Ernest Farrar. What binds together the music too is its elegiac character; it is music of regret and lost innocence, of love won and lost, of the Romantic idyll of the wanderer on the open road, of the young soldier, sacrifice and premature death.

George Butterworth is one of the tantalizing figures of early 20th-century British music. His loss was grievous since his was an outstanding talent and the handful of works he left indicates a composer of major stature. What might he have achieved had he lived? Educated at Eton and Oxford, he taught at Radley College, wrote music criticism for *The Times*, before briefly attending the Royal College of Music. He became a major force in the English Folk Dance and Song Society, notating songs and dances mainly in Oxfordshire and by repute he was a fine folk dancer himself. His principal legacy was his two song cycles to poems by A.E. Housman, *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad* (1911) and *Bredon Hill and Other Songs* (1912), as well as two orchestral works, *A Shropshire Lad* (1912) and *The Banks of Green Willow* (1913).

Butterworth enlisted only days after the declaration of war in 1914 as a private in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Later he became a Second Lieutenant in the 13th Durham Light Infantry; he was killed by a sniper's bullet at Pozieres during the Somme offensive in 1916. His gallantry earned him the posthumous award of the Military Cross, and the naming of a trench after him. He was a close friend of Vaughan Williams who dedicated *A London Symphony* to his memory.

No other composer quite got under the skin of Housman's bleak pessimism so much as Butterworth. The rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad*, was conceived as an epilogue to his Housman song cycles, and seems to encapsulate the sense of life's transience that is the core of the poet's sensibility. First performed by the London Symphony Orchestra at the 1913 Leeds Music Festival, conducted by

Artur Nikisch, the work is based mainly on a fragment of melody sung to the opening words of the first song of the *A Shropshire Lad* cycle, 'Loveliest of Trees', whose descending melodic line is a brilliant musical image of the downward flutter of falling blossom. The cherry tree's brief splendour is evoked through a majestic brass climax taken from the melody at the words 'wearing white for Eastertide'. As the music becomes more restless it reaches a searing climax, laced with melancholy, which is briefly assuaged by a tender recollection of the main theme on violins. However, the rhapsody ends in desolation as the flute alludes to the opening line of the final song of the *Bredon Hill* cycle, 'With rue my heart is laden'.

Too young to be a combatant in the First World War, Gerald Finzi, was undoubtedly profoundly affected by it. Fleeing from Zeppelin raids on London, Finzi and his mother settled in Harrogate in 1915, where for a brief time the shy teenager found in Ernest Farrar an inspiring mentor. All too soon, Farrar was on his way to the front, where he was killed within days of arrival. Finzi was shattered, and this, combined with the legacy of the deaths by this time of his father and three brothers, left an indelible mark on his art as a composer: the preciousness of life, the importance of unsullied innocence, the restless march of time, all became the core preoccupations of his music.

After Farrar's death Finzi studied with Edward Bairstow and with R.O. Morris. He came to attention with the orchestral *A Severn Rhapsody* (1923) and during the 1930s the song cycle *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1926-29), settings of his favourite poet Thomas Hardy, brought him to wider attention. His reputation was consolidated with the cantata *Dies natalis* (mid-1920s, 1938-39), a seraphic response to Thomas Traherne's metaphysical poetry. Later works include the *Clarinet* and *Cello Concertos* (1949 and 1951-55 respectively), further important Hardy settings, for example, *Before and After Summer* (1938-49) and his large-scale choral setting of Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality* (late 1930s, 1949-50.)

Unquestionably the wellspring of Finzi's *Requiem da Camera* was Farrar's death, as the dedication 'In memory

of E.B.F.' indicates and, by extension, it is a requiem too for other fallen artists such as Butterworth. However, the work may be viewed too as a metaphor – the permanence of the land, and centuries-old pattern of rural life, contrasted with the violent havoc and destructive dislocation wrought by war. In this it bears affinity to Edward Thomas's *The Trumpet* and it is no coincidence that Finzi greatly admired the poet, as indeed he did Ivor Gurney, whose music and poetry he ardently championed.

Scored for baritone, mixed chorus and small orchestra, it was his first attempt at composing an extended work comprising several movements. Its musical origins are traced to Finzi's 1923 setting of Thomas Hardy's *In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'* for male voices and piano. This would become the third movement of the *Requiem da Camera*, to which would be added in the following year two further settings of poetry written during the First World War – verses from John Masefield's *August, 1914*, and W.W. Gibson's *Lament*, from *Whin* – forming the second and fourth movements respectively, the whole being prefaced by an orchestral prelude. The concluding page is dated 'Painswick, 1924'. Finzi had no success in his attempts to get the work published and at some point during the 1930s it seems he decided the Hardy setting was unsatisfactory since he wrote an entirely new version for baritone solo, conceived for orchestral accompaniment (although this was only partially completed).

Apart from its specific commemoration of Farrar, Finzi binds his work together with a motif heard at the opening of the prelude which also includes overt references to Butterworth's song *Loveliest of Trees* from his *A Shropshire Lad*. In the oboe's poignant solo towards the end, Finzi weaves in allusions to *The Last Post*, which recur hauntingly at the end of the work played by the flute. Apart from the final Hardy setting, Finzi's voice for the majority of the work is still as if in a chrysalis, yet there are pointers to the mature composer – the use of Bachian counterpoint, dissonant clashes between sharp and flat notes against naturals for vivid word painting, and the slow, march-like tread of descending bass lines.

The only part of the *Requiem da Camera* to be performed during Finzi's lifetime was the *Prelude* in 1925.

The first performance of the full work, in an edition by Philip Thomas with his completed orchestration of the third movement, took place in 1990 in London, conducted by Richard Hickox. This recording is of a new edition and completion by Christian Alexander which was first performed in Australia in 2013. The first UK performance of this edition was given by the City of London Choir, conducted by Hilary Davan Wetton, as part of the 2014 English Music Festival.

Although not killed on the battlefields of France, the composer and poet Ivor Gurney was, nevertheless, another victim of the war, scarred through injury and the effects of gas. Born in Gloucester, he was a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral and a pupil of the cathedral organist Herbert Brewer. In 1911 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied with Stanford. By 1913 as well as composing he was writing poetry. His music legacy was almost entirely songs, for instance *Five Elizabethan Songs* (1913), which includes the masterly *Sleep*, two cycles to Housman *Ludlow and Teme* (1919) and *The Western Playland* (1920) as well as *Lights Out* (1926), setting poems by Edward Thomas, yet another victim of the slaughter.

Gurney volunteered for service on the declaration of war, but was rejected because of poor eyesight. The following year he was successful, joining the 2nd/5th Gloucesters. In 1917 he was wounded, then gassed at Passchendaele. Invalided back to England, he suffered a mental breakdown and contemplated suicide. He was discharged from the army in October 1918. Despite periods of mental stability, during which he resumed studies at the Royal College of Music under Vaughan Williams, he was declared insane in 1922, spending the final 15 years of his life in an asylum. His first volume of poetry *Severn and Somme*, published in 1917, was widely admired; *War's Embers* followed two years later.

In his Thomas cycle, *Lights Out*, he set the poem *The Trumpet*, which he had previously composed for chorus in 1921. This earlier setting is for 4-part choir with an accompaniment which the scholar Philip Lancaster surmises was intended for orchestral forces. However, Gurney failed to orchestrate the work which then languished until the première of the extant music at Abbey Dore, Herefordshire, conducted by Paul Spicer in 2007.

Lancaster's edition, with his idiomatic orchestral version, was first performed the following year.

Although they never met Gurney felt a strong affinity with Thomas through his poetry, both sharing a love of nature and the countryside. Thomas wrote *The Trumpet* in 1916 whilst training in Wiltshire, the words spurred by the trumpet calls which, he wrote to a friend, 'go all day'. The poem is a cry from the heart that mankind must set aside the folly of war, and return to a saner world. With its fanfare-like opening rise, Gurney's music in its majestic breadth and sweep appositely captures the spirit of Thomas's metaphorical call to arms.

The première of the *Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis* announced that a distinctive new voice had emerged in English music. Overnight Ralph Vaughan Williams became the spiritual leader of a generation of British composers including Gurney, Howells and Finzi. He studied at Cambridge and the Royal College of Music where his teachers included Parry and Stanford. Later he studied with Ravel. He began collecting English folksongs in 1902 and was editor of the *English Hymnal* (1906). For the roots of his style he turned to the English folksong tradition and the music of the Tudor period. His long compositional career included nine symphonies that formed the backbone of his achievement. Other significant works include the 'masque for dancing' *Job* (1927-30), the operas *Sir John in Love* (1924-28), and *The Pilgrim's Progress* (completed 1949) and the choral *Sancta Civitas* (1923-25).

Despite being 42 in 1914 Vaughan Williams enlisted on New Year's Eve that year as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps. From 1916, he served first in France, then Salonika, as a stretcher bearer, before being commissioned in 1917 as an officer in the Royal Artillery when he returned to France. He responded to his experiences in his highly personal requiem for the fallen *A Pastoral Symphony* (1921-22) and the choral and orchestral *Dona nobis pacem* (1936).

In the latter stages of his career, Vaughan Williams experimented with unusual instrumental sonorities, for instance writing works for harmonica and tuba, and exploiting tuned percussion in his *Eighth Symphony*. The use of the spoken voice was also explored in *An Oxford Elegy* composed between 1947 and 1949, scored for speaker, small chorus and orchestra. He maintained his

reason for using the spoken voice was because he was fed up of not being able to hear the words in choral works. It was first performed privately, the public première taking place in June 1952, appropriately in Oxford, under the auspices of the Oxford Orchestral Society, conducted by Bernard Rose, with Stuart Wilson as speaker.

The text is drawn from *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis* by the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold, Vaughan Williams's admiration for the poet dating back to his young manhood. He had long contemplated an opera on the tale of *The Scholar Gipsy*; indeed in 1901 had sketched some music for it, and one theme found its way into *An Oxford Elegy*. The story had its origins in the 17th century, telling of an impoverished student who forsakes the university and his friends to join the gipsies. Later recognised by some former friends, he tells them that when he has learnt all of the gipsies' remarkable arts and powers he will come back to Oxford to write an account of their mysteries. However, he never returned, but the legend persisted that he had not died but lived on, occasionally, fleetingly, seen down the centuries. For Arnold both poems were recollections of the landscape around Oxford explored during the time of his student days in the companionship of friends including another poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, whose early death is commemorated in *Thyrsis*.

In *An Oxford Elegy* Vaughan Williams uses the voices as a wordless extension of the sound of the orchestra; from time to time they flourish into words as at 'Soon will the Midsummer pomps come', set to a ravishing melody and rocking rhythm. The scholar is evoked by a theme on the bassoon following the line 'But came to Oxford and his friends no more', and later this is developed into a wordless passage of serene vocal counterpoint. Throughout, the music is riven with nostalgia that befits the poetry but, as the great authority on Vaughan Williams, Michael Kennedy, has pointed out, surely the composer in this work, written long after the Great War, was recalling his own lost friends such as Butterworth, and the work is his elegy for them. This is emphasised in the most magical music of all at the close to the words 'Thou art gone, and me thou leavest here ... the light we sought is shining still'.

Andrew Burn

Roderick Williams



Photo: Benjamin Ealovega

Roderick Williams sings a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform, and in recital. He has performed in all the major opera houses in the United Kingdom and is particularly associated with the baritone rôles of Mozart. He has also sung world premières of operas by David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa, Robert Saxton, and Alexander Knaifel. Williams sings concert repertoire with all the BBC orchestras as well as the Bournemouth Symphony, London Sinfonietta, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, among many others. His festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh, and Melbourne. Roderick Williams is also a composer and has had works performed at the Barbican Centre, the Purcell Room, and Wigmore Hall.

www.ingpen.co.uk/artist/roderick-williams

Jeremy Irons



Photo: Sven Baenzinger

Jeremy Irons won the Academy Award® for Best Actor for his performance as Claus von Bulow in *Reversal of Fortune*. He is also a Golden Globe® Award, Primetime Emmy® Award, Tony Award®, and SAG Award® winner. He has an extraordinary legacy of film, television and theatre performances including *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which he starred opposite Meryl Streep, *The Mission* and David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*. Irons starred in *Damage* and *M. Butterfly* before he made pop culture history as the voice of the evil lion Scar in Disney's classic *The Lion King*. Other career highlights include *Being Julia* with Annette Bening, *Appaloosa* with Ed Harris and Viggo Mortensen, and Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty*. Irons received a Tony® for his performance in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and appeared in London in the National Theatre's *Never so Good* and in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Gods Weep*. He is probably best known for his rôle as Charles Ryder in the television serial *Brideshead Revisited*. He joined Helen Mirren and director Tom Hooper in the award-winning television miniseries *Elizabeth I*. He was also recently lauded for his portrayal of iconic photographer Alfred

Stieglitz in the award-winning biographical picture *Georgia O'Keeffe*. Jeremy Irons received his latest SAG nomination (Best Actor in a miniseries or movie for television) in 2014 for his portrayal of Henry IV in Neal Street's BBC/PBS television series *The Hollow Crown*.

City of London Choir



Photo: Greg Dickens

The City of London Choir was founded in 1963 and, in the words of *The Times*, is a 'leader among non-professional choruses'. Under the inspirational leadership of Hilary Davan Wetton, it undertakes a busy annual programme, performing at the Barbican and in a well-regarded season at St John's, Smith Square, with leading professional orchestras, instrumentalists and soloists. The choir also appears regularly at the Royal Albert Hall, on the Southbank, at St Martin-in-the-Fields and outside London. The CLC has earned an enviable reputation, both in the national media and amongst audiences, for its distinctive youthful sound and the quality of its performances. With Hilary Davan Wetton, it has developed a particular reputation for English music of the twentieth century, but its repertoire is broad. The choir's first two

recordings on the Naxos label received wide critical acclaim: *In Terra Pax: A Christmas Anthology* (8.572102) reached No. 2 in the *Gramophone* Classical Chart; and Beethoven's *Der glorreiche Augenblick* (8.572783) received a five star review in *BBC Music Magazine*.

www.cityoflondonchoir.org

London Mozart Players

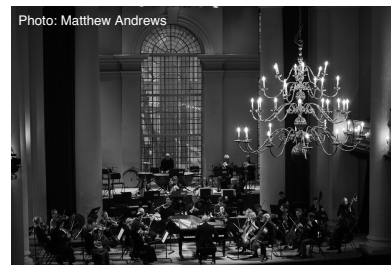


Photo: Matthew Andrews

Founded by Harry Blech in 1949 as the United Kingdom's first chamber orchestra, the London Mozart Players (LMP) is regarded as one of the country's finest ensembles, enjoying a worldwide following through its numerous recordings for ASV, Hyperion, Chandos, and First Hand Records (the complete HMV stereo recordings). Known for its definitive performances of the core Classical repertoire throughout Britain, across Europe and in the Far East, the orchestra also plays an active rôle in contemporary music, giving many world premières and commissioning new works. In March 2011 Roxanna Panufnik was appointed Associate Composer. The orchestra's distinct dynamic sound has been developed under the successive musical direction of Jane Glover, Matthias Bamert, Andrew Parrott and since 2009, Gérard Korsten. The orchestra currently enjoys connections with Hilary Davan Wetton as Associate Conductor, and Howard Shelley as Conductor Laureate. It works closely with many of the world's finest soloists. BBC Young Musician Laura van der Heijden was appointed Young Artist in Residence from 2015. In June 2014 the London Mozart Players began a new and exciting phase in its history, becoming the first chamber orchestra in Great Britain to be managed both operationally and artistically by the players.

www.londonmozartplayers.com

Hilary Davan Wetton



Photo: Clive Barda

Hilary Davan Wetton has been Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the City of London Choir since 1989. One of the country's most distinguished choral conductors, he was founder/conductor of the Holst Singers, and is Conductor Emeritus of the Guildford Choral Society and Artistic Director of Leicester Philharmonic Choir. He is also Associate Conductor of the London Mozart Players and Conductor Emeritus of the Milton Keynes City Orchestra. He studied conducting with Sir Adrian Boult and was awarded the Ricordi conducting prize in 1967. Over a career spanning fifty years, he has been particularly admired for his performances of twentieth-century British music. He has conducted many first performances for British composers as well as neglected works by Parry, Holst, Dyson, Bridge, Sterndale Bennett and Samuel Wesley, many of which he has recorded. His extensive discography includes Holst's *Choral Symphony* (which won the *Diapason d'Or*), Holst's *Planets* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations* with the LPO for Collins Classics, and acclaimed discs for Naxos and EM Records with the City of London Choir.

www.hilarydavanwetton.co.uk

**This recording was made possible by the generosity of the late Mrs Maude Fisher
and is dedicated to her memory.**

Gerald Finzi (1901-56): Requiem da Camera

III. How still this quiet cornfield is to-night

Chorus: How still this quiet cornfield is to-night!
By an intenser glow the evening falls,
Bringing, not darkness, but a deeper light;
Among the stooks a partridge covey calls.

The windows glitter on the distant hill;
Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold
Stumble on sudden music and are still;
The forlorn pinewoods droop above the wold.

An endless quiet valley reaches out
Past the blue hills into the evening sky;
Over the stubble, cawing, goes a rout
Of rooks from harvest, flagging as they fly.

So beautiful it is, I never saw
So great a beauty on these English fields,
Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields.

* * * * *

These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things, past-speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms,
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,
Heard, as we hear, the rumours and alarms
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh.

And knew, as we know, that the message meant
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,
Death, like a miser getting in his rent,
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends.

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls.

[...]

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more
The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,
Nor the dear outline of the English shore.

John Masfield (1878-1967)

"August 1914" from *Philip the King, and other Poems*
The Society of Authors as the Literary Representative
of the Estate of John Masfield.

III. Only a man harrowing clods

Baritone: Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)
"In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'"

IV. We who are left

Chorus: We who are left, how shall we look again
Happily on the sun or feel the rain,
Without remembering how they who went
Ungrudgingly, and spent
Their lives for us, loved too the sun and the rain?

A bird among the rain-wet lilac sings –
But we, how shall we turn to little things
And listen to the birds and winds and streams
Made holy by their dreams,
Nor feel the heart-break in the heart of things?

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (1878-1962)

"A Lament" © Wilfrid Gibson 1918, from *Whin*,
published by Pan Macmillan Ltd.
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Music Publishers, Ltd.

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937): The Trumpet

Rise up, rise up,
And, as the trumpet blowing
Scatters* the dreams of men,
As the dawn glowing
The stars that left unlit
The land and water,
Rise up and scatter
The dew that covers
The print of last night's lovers -
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening
To that** clear horn,
Forget, men, everything
On this earth newborn,
Save*** that it is lovelier
Than any mysteries.

Open your eyes to the air
That has washed the eyes of the stars
Through all the dewy night:
Up with the light,
To the old wars;
Arise, arise!

Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

* Original: "Chases"
** Original: "the"
*** Original: "Except"

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958):
An Oxford Elegy

(Note: Lines in italics are sung; the rest are spoken)

Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill;
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes;
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green;
Come Shepherd, and again begin the quest.

Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn –
All the live murmur of a summer's day.
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn –
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
 And here till sundown, Shepherd, will I be.
 Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
 And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
 Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:
 And air-swept lindens yield
 Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
 And bower me from the August sun with shade;
 And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers:
That sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not summer for beauty's heightening,
Lovely all times she lies, lovely today!

Come, let me read the oft-read tale again:
 The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
 Who, one summer morn forsook his friends,
 And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
 But came to Oxford and his friends no more.
 But rumours hung about the country-side,
 That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
 And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
 And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy trace;
 Or in my boat I lie
 Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
 'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
 And watch the warm green-muffled Cumnor hills,
 And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.
 Leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
 Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream,
 Still waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
 Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
 Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
 Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
 Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
 And thou hast climb'd the hill
 And gain'd the white brow of the Cumnor range;
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
 The line of festal light in Christ Church hall –
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what – I dream! Two hundred years are flown;
 And thou from earth art gone
 Long since and in some quiet churchyard laid –
 Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
 Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.
 Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven! and we,
 Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?
 See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
 Today from Oxford up your pathway strays!
 Here came I often, often, in old days;
 Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.
 Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
 Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
 The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
 The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
 The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames? –
 That single elm-tree bright
 Against the west – I miss it! is it gone?
 We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
 Our friend, the Scholar Gipsy, was not dead;
 While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.
 Needs must I, with heavy heart
 Into the world and wave of men depart;
 But Thyrsis of his own will went away.
 So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
 From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
 Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.
 He hearkens not! light cometh, he is flown!
 What matters it? next year he will return,
 And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
 With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
 And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
 And scent of hay new-mown.
 But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see.
 Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
 In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill.

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I? –
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and far, descried,
 High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
 Hath since our day put by
 The coronals of that forgotten time.
 They are all gone, and thou art gone as well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
 Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair.
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry
 That lonely Tree against the western sky.
 Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
 Woods with anemones in flower till May
 Know him a wanderer still.
 Then let in thy voice a whisper often come,
 To chase fatigue and fear.

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

Words adapted from *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*

These composers were all affected by the carnage of World War I, and their elegiac music expresses regret and lost innocence, love won and lost, sacrifice and death. George Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, conceived as an epilogue to his Housman song cycles, encapsulates the poet's sense of life's transience. Ivor Gurney was both shot and gassed in 1917, and *The Trumpet* pleads with mankind to set aside the folly of war. Heard here in a new completion, Gerald Finzi's *Requiem da Camera* mourns the death of his mentor Ernest Farrar and those of other fallen artists, and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *An Oxford Elegy* recalls lost friends with an intense and magical nostalgia.

FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

- | | | |
|------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | George Butterworth (1885-1916): | |
| | A Shropshire Lad – Rhapsody for Orchestra | 10:22 |
| 2-5 | Gerald Finzi (1901-1956): Requiem da Camera* | 22:29 |
| | (Edited and completed by Christian Alexander) | |
| 6 | Ivor Gurney (1890-1937): The Trumpet* | 5:45 |
| | (Edited and orchestrated by Philip Lancaster) | |
| 7 | Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958): An Oxford Elegy | 22:01 |

***WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS**

Roderick Williams, Baritone 4 • Jeremy Irons, Speaker 7
City of London Choir 3 5-7 • London Mozart Players
Hilary Davan Wetton

A detailed track list and artists' details can be found inside the booklet.
The sung texts can be found inside the booklet and may also be accessed at
www.naxos.com/libretti/573426.htm

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