



Gerald Finzi

By Footpath and Stile

Finzi Quartet

with Marcus Farnsworth baritone
Robert Plane clarinet
& Ruth Bolister oboe

1. Romance, Op. 11 [7:13]

arr. for string quartet by Christian Alexander

By Footpath and Stile, Op. 2

for baritone and string quartet

2. Paying calls [4:13]

3. Where the picnic was [4:27]

4. The Oxen [3:11]

5. The master and the leaves [3:16]

6. Voices from things growing [7:01]

in a churchyard

7. Exeunt omnes [3:21]

8. Prelude [5:01]

arr. for string quartet by Christian Alexander

9. Interlude, Op. 21 [11:47]

for oboe and string quartet

10. Elegy, Op. 22 [7:52]

arr. for string quartet by Christian Alexander

Five Bagatelles, Op. 23

arr. for clarinet and string quartet by Christian Alexander

11. Prelude: Allegro deciso [3:27]

12. Romance: Andante tranquillo [5:03]

13. Carol: Andante semplice [1:51]

14. Forlana: Allegretto grazioso [3:00]

15. Fughetta: Allegro vivace [2:13]

Total playing time [73:05]



Gerald Finzi
(photograph courtesy of Boosey and Hawkes)

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956): By Footpath and Stile

In 1941 Gerald Finzi wrote, in a document entitled *Absalom's Place* – a very personal attempt to summarise his artistic beliefs – ‘... some curious force compels us to preserve and project into the future the essence of our individuality, and, in doing so, to project something of our age and civilization.’ And as one of England’s best-loved twentieth-century composers, Finzi’s music can seem at once of its time yet also timeless.

Finzi’s own time started in July 1901, born into comparative wealth and the comfortable surroundings of Hamilton Terrace in London’s Maida Vale; while his life ended in an Oxford hospital in September 1956, during the seventeenth year of his family’s occupancy of Church Farm in the remote Hampshire village of Ashmansworth. The music in this recording covers most of Finzi’s life as a professional composer: from early published successes, through increasingly self-assured mid-career work, to music completed nearer the end of his relatively curtailed life.

As the shadow of the First World War began to stretch far into the future, the young Gerald Finzi was only beginning to find his voice as a composer. The grim reality of war ramified throughout Europe; reshaped

national boundaries, peace treaties, reparations, The League of Nations and spiralling inflation all served to restructure the routines of daily life and define the decades to come. And amidst all of this, every day, people moved forward in their lives trying to deal with the ineluctable impact of personal loss, premature deaths, and lost love. Whether writing music during this period was a search for catharsis, a desire to construct a memorial to lost lives and lost times, or an attempt to cast off towards the future for Finzi the artist, we find in *By Footpath and Stile*, Op. 2, the seeds of lifelong obsessions: the passing of time, mortality, the poetry of Thomas Hardy, and most importantly, song itself. Here too, in Finzi’s first published work, can be heard the steering influences of composers and folk song enthusiasts Ralph Vaughan Williams and George Butterworth, both of whom had composed chamber music song cycles.

Departing the hilly Gloucestershire countryside for the more propitious London music scene of the late 1920s, Finzi was still attempting to find his voice as a composer. Looking not only to the music of Vaughan Williams, other illustrious contemporaries and the English folk-song heritage, but also back towards to the Baroque era, Finzi was yet to find his stride. The Prelude for strings from this time does not sing with the confidence and craftsmanship

of his later works but, in its song-like melodies and relatively simple harmonies, the young composer's desire to communicate directly and with explicit clarity is easily apparent.

Living in London for eight years, very much part of the contemporary English musical landscape, teaching at the Royal Academy of Music, and starting what would become ongoing dialogues with other prominent musicians (most notably Howard Ferguson), Finzi began to grow in assuredness as a composer. In 1933 he married the artist and poet Joyce Black (Joy Finzi's life was to stretch decades beyond that of her husband Gerald's), and together they became a remarkable and at times progressive force for cultural good, encouraging other artists and musicians, and inspiring those around their open and friendly household. Although Gerald was by nature anxious, fragile and prone to worrying, Joy was to provide the strength and no doubt optimism too in the Finzi family's life. In 1933 they moved to Aldbourne, Wiltshire, where their two sons Christopher (Kiffer) and Nigel were born. Here, and later on in Ashmansworth, Finzi found the space to indulge his passion for collecting books and conserving rare varieties of apple trees, while beginning to flourish as a composer.

In song collections such as *A Young Man's*

Exhortation, Op. 14, and *Earth and Air and Rain*, Op. 15 (Finzi's first music to be taken on by a mainstream music publisher – what is now Boosey & Hawkes and still Finzi's publisher), both settings of poetry by Thomas Hardy, the hand of a considerably more confident and increasingly skilled composer is clearly at work. The rather drawn out gestation of his stunning *Dies natalis*, Op. 8, what was eventually a five-movement cantata for high voice and strings, also took place throughout this period. And it was at this time Finzi composed his *Romance* for string orchestra, Op. 11 and *Interlude* for oboe and string quartet, Op. 21. Ever modest and self-effacing, Finzi told his friend Howard Ferguson 'There's some decent music in the Oboe Interlude and a certain amount of rant, which I had to stick in to fill things up when I got rather rushed towards the end'. Ferguson replied that the 'rant' could well be turn out to be the best of it – maybe for most artists, and I imagine in all likelihood for Finzi, learning to trust one's own instinct does not come easily.

Although the *Romance* was composed in 1928 and is now arguably one of Finzi's most treasured instrumental works (alongside the Cello Concerto, Op. 40, the Clarinet Concerto, Op. 31, and the Five Bagatelles, Op. 23), it did not see the light of day until

close to the end of the composer's life, resurrected and tweaked for a Newbury String Players concert. It does not aspire to the emotional gravitas, the Sibelius-like architectural strength, or the harmonic intensity of the Cello Concerto (a work which dominated the composer's final year and was first broadcast the evening before his death); but as is the case with much of Finzi's output, it is a musical gem. Small-scale and intimate, song-like in its flow, it is instantly recognisable as the musical voice of Gerald Finzi. This music speaks with unpretentious directness and emotional openness; it is packed with an enviable degree of melodic invention and a consistent sense of the composer's own harmonic language. As he moved into the last phase of his working life, Finzi must surely have felt more confident about his place and future in English music.

Finzi's most accomplished music was written in his forties and early fifties, whilst living at Church Farm in Hampshire; it was during this period that he completed the Five Bagatelles (although this was composed over at least four years and utilised sketches that stemmed back many years more), and composed his Elegy for violin and piano, Op. 22.

Two of the pieces on this recording are in their original versions: *By Footpath and Stile* and *Interlude*; the four remaining pieces

have all been arranged in recent years by the current writer. This version of the Five Bagatelles, commissioned for David Campbell and the Endellion Quartet was first performed on the centenary of Gerald Finzi's birth, while the arrangements of *Romance*, *Elegy* and *Prelude* were all commissioned more recently by the Finzi Quartet.

Making arrangements of another composer's music can be an onerous business, which carries with it a tremendous weight of responsibility, every bit as taxing and absorbing as composing one's own music, maybe even more so. Finzi was a painstaking, meticulous composer who paid scrupulous attention to every detail of his music (and indeed his settings of words); as an arranger, I saw my task as being to protect and maintain this integrity, whilst also trying to provide the music with a different lease of life in a new format. This does take a modicum of courage: the arranger needs to think of the music to some degree as his own, ignoring the many pretentious and presumptuous implications of this approach. Having said that, arranging the Five Bagatelles was a relatively straightforward task: the original piano part seemed to me very much like chamber music transcribed for piano, as if the composer had imagined the music first for a small orchestra or chamber group, but for practical reasons written it for piano. The *Prelude* also seemed

to lend itself easily to an arrangement for string quartet, once I had made the decision to shift the music's key upwards enabling me to preserve the original musical counterpoint intact using only the four instruments of the quartet.

The same cannot be said of Romance and Elegy however; these presented more difficulties – and the Finzi Quartet themselves offered much invaluable advice concerning these two arrangements. In Elegy, the original solo violin part is largely retained intact as the quartet's first violin part; which left the problem of representing the sometimes rich piano writing on a mere three string instruments. And in Romance, with its rich, frequently sub-divided string orchestration, the challenges were obvious, but no less difficult to resolve. My sincere hope for all of these arrangements is simply that they still appear to sound like the music of Gerald Finzi, a wonderful English composer.

I hope also that these four arrangements will help to encourage the listener to seek out Gerald Finzi's relatively modest, but deeply impressive musical output. Finzi also wrote in Absalom's Place, 'It must be clear, particularly in the case of a slow worker, that only a long life can see the rounding-off and completion of this projection. Consequently, those few works of mine fit for publication

can only be regarded as fragments of a building.' Gerald Finzi did not have a long life, but it was richly productive. In his 'fragments of a building' can be glimpsed something truly beautiful; and perhaps my contribution might have provided a few more bricks, and that I have in some small way reached back in time to 'shake hands with a good friend'.

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Finzi Quartet

By Footpath and Stile

Text by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

I. Paying calls

I went by footpath and by stile
Beyond where bustle ends,
Strayed here a mile and there a mile
And called upon some friends.

On certain ones I had not seen
For years past did I call,
And then on others who had been
The oldest friends of all.

It was the time of midsummer
When they had used to roam;
But now, though tempting was the air,
I found them all at home.

I spoke to one and other of them
By mound and stone and tree
Of things we had done ere days were dim,
But they spoke not to me.

*'Paying Calls' from Moments of Vision and
Miscellaneous Verses (pub. 1917)*

II. Where the picnic was

Where we made the fire,
In the summer time,
Of branch and briar
On the hill to the sea
I slowly climb
Through winter mire,
And scan and trace
The forsaken place
Quite readily.

Now a cold wind blows,
And the grass is gray,
But the spot still shows
As a burnt circle - aye,
And stick-ends, charred,
Still strew the sward
Whereon I stand,
Last relic of the band
Who came that day!

Yes, I am here
Just as last year,
And the sea breathes brine
From its strange straight line
Up hither, the same
As when we four came.

– But two have wandered far
From this grassy rise
Into urban roar
Where no picnics are,
And one - has shut her eyes
For evermore.

*'Where the picnic was' from Satires of Circumstance,
Lyrics and Reveries with Miscellaneous Pieces (pub. 1914)*

III. The Oxen

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
'Now they are all on their knees,'
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
'Come; see the oxen kneel,

'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,'
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

'The Oxen' (pub. 1919)

IV. The master and the leaves

We are budding, Master, budding,
We of your favourite tree;
March drought and April flooding
Arouse us merrily,
Our stemlets newly studding;
And yet you do not see!

We are fully woven for summer
In stuff of limpest green,
The twitterer and the hummer
Here rest of nights, unseen,
While like a long-roll drummer
The nightjar thrills the treen.

We are turning yellow, Master,
And next we are turning red,
And faster then and faster
Shall seek our rooty bed,
All wasted in disaster!
But you lift not your head.

– 'I mark your early going,
And that you'll soon be clay,
I have seen your summer showing
As in my youthful day;
But why I seem unknowing
Is too sunk in to say!'

*'The master and the leaves' from Owl
(pub. 1919, rev. 1922)*

V. Voices from things growing in a churchyard

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,
Sir or Madam,

A little girl here sepulchred.
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird
Above the grass, as now I wave
In daisy shapes above my grave,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

- I am one Bachelor Bowring, "Gent,"
Sir or Madam;
In shingled oak my bones were pent;
Hence more than a hundred years I spent
In my feat of change from a coffin-thrall
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall.
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

- I, these berries of juice and gloss,
Sir or Madam,
Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss;
Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from the moss
That covers my sod, and have entered this yew,
And turned to clusters ruddy of view,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

- The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,
Sir or Madam,
Am I--this laurel that shades your head;
Into its veins I have stilly sped,
And made them of me; and my leaves now shine,
As did my satins superfine,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

V. (continued)

- I, who as innocent withwind climb,
Sir or Madam.
Am one Eve Greensleeves, in olden time
Kissed by men from many a clime,
Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,
As now by glowworms and by bees,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

- I'm old Squire Audeley Grey, who grew,
Sir or Madam,
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew;
Till anon I clambered up anew
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,
And in that attire I have longtime gayed
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

- And so they breathe, these masks, to each
Sir or Madam
Who lingers there, and their lively speech
Affords an interpreter much to teach,
As their murmurous accents seem to come
Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily!

*'Voices from things growing in a churchyard' first
published in London Mercury 1921, rev. 1922*

VI. Exeunt omnes

Everybody else, then, going,
And I still left where the fair was? . . .
Much have I seen of neighbour loungers
Making a lusty showing,
Each now past all knowing.

There is an air of blankness
In the street and the littered spaces;
Thoroughfare, steeple, bridge and highway
Wizen themselves to lankness;
Kennels dribble dankness.

Folk all fade. And whither,
As I wait alone where the fair was?
Into the clammy and numbing night-fog
Whence they entered hither.
Soon do I follow thither!

*'Exeunt omnes' from Satires of Circumstance,
Lyrics and Reveries with Miscellaneous Pieces
(pub. 1914)*



Finzi Quartet

Finzi Quartet

Prize winners in the 2010 Royal Over Seas League Competition and the 5th Trondheim International String Quartet Competition in Norway, the Finzi Quartet has given recitals and made numerous festival appearances at major venues throughout the UK and Europe, including London's Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Auditorio Sony in Madrid.

The Quartet enjoys regular collaborations with several international guest artists and is fortunate to have worked with many inspirational musicians including, Hatto Beyerle, Valentin Erben, Andras Keller, Johannes Meissl, Heime Muller, Gabor Takacs-Nagy, Christoph Richter, and Thomas Riebl.

As selected artists the Quartet has also benefited from the support of the Tillett Trust, Park Lane Group, the Tunnell Trust, the Kirkman Concerts Society, the Swiss Global Artistic Foundation and the Hattori Foundation.

Among the highlights of 2010 were appearances on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune' and on Viennese Radio as winners of the Austrian 'Wiener Klassik Prize' for their interpretation of quartets by Joseph Haydn, a second Aldeburgh Residency and a recording of Sir John Tavener's *Towards Silence* for Signum Records. The Quartet also enjoys a continuing

collaboration with Northern Irish composer Deirdre Gribbin through its recital series at St Anne and St Agnes Lutheran Church in the City of London. Major festival engagements during 2011 included the Brighton, Salisbury and Edinburgh Festivals and, following the success of their Tunnell Trust Young Artist Tour of Scotland, the Quartet will make several return tours in 2012 and 2013 in association with Enterprise Music Scotland.

Future projects include performances of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet and Virgil Thomson's *Stabat Mater* with soprano Sarah Gabriel, Schubert's C major Quintet with cellists Christoph Richter and Gary Hoffman and concerts in Menorca for the Fundacion Fidah. The Quartet will also feature in the Harrogate and Cheltenham Festivals, and will give a series of concerts in France as part of their ongoing collaboration with ProQuartet.

The Quartet is actively involved in education and outreach projects, working regularly with Live Music Now and the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust. Following its appointment as Bulldog Junior Fellows at Trinity College of Music for 2009/2010, the Quartet currently holds a Leverhulme Fellowship at the Royal Northern College of Music.

www.finziquartet.com

Marcus Farnsworth (baritone)

Photography: Benjamin Ealovega



Marcus Farnsworth was awarded first prize in the 2009 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, and the Song Prize at the 2011 Kathleen Ferrier Competition. He completed his studies at the Royal Academy of

Music in 2011, where roles included Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*); Sid (*Albert Herring*); Oreste (Cavalli's *Giasone*) and Meredith in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Kommilitonen*!

Recent and future opera plans include Eddy in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Greek* for Music Theatre Wales; Novice's Friend in a new production of Britten's *Billy Budd* for English National Opera; the title role in Britten's *Owen Wingrave* as part of the International Chamber Music Festival in Nuremberg, and, in concert, Kilian in *Der Freischütz* with the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Colin Davis; Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*) for the Early Opera Company and Christian Curnyn at the Wigmore Hall and a recording of Mozart's *Apollo and Hyacinth* with the Classical Opera Company.

Future recitals include Schubert's *Die Schöne*

Müllerin for the Oxford Lieder Festival and at St John's, Smith Square, London; a Schubertiade with The Prince Consort in Perth and Britten's *Tit for Tat* with Malcolm Martineau and the *Canticles* with Julius Drake and Mark Padmore, as part of the Wigmore Hall's Britten Festival in 2012.

On the concert platform plans include Nielsen's Symphony No. 3 with the LSO and Sir Colin Davis; Haydn's *Paukenmesse* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Bernard Labadie; *St Matthew Passion* (Christ and arias) in Lausanne, Switzerland and Wrocław, Poland with the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh; Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the Wermlands Opera Orchestra, Karlstad, Sweden and a return to the Newbury Spring Festival in May 2012 to sing Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Marcus will also make appearances with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the coming seasons.

Marcus has recently performed Bach's Cantata No. 82 *Ich habe Genug* and Zelenka's *The Lamentations of Jeremiah* with the Academy of Ancient Music in the UK and on tour in France with whom he has also sung Bach's *St John Passion* in London and Cambridge and Charpentier's *Te Deum* at the Three Choirs Festival. Other concert appearances have included the *St John Passion* with the Gabrieli Consort in Berlin.

www.marcusfarnsworth.com

Robert Plane (clarinet)



Robert Plane has long championed the music of British composers, past and present, both in the concert hall and in the recording studio. His disc of Finzi's Clarinet Concerto won *Classic CD* magazine's

'Concerto Recording of the Year' award and his disc of Sonatas by Arnold Bax was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award.

He has given the premieres of concertos by Diana Burrell, Nicola LeFanu, Piers Hellawell and Simon Holt and he made his solo debut at the BBC Proms in 2011 in Holt's double concerto *Centauromachy*. Robert has performed concertos with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, City of London Sinfonia, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmonic and RTE National Symphony Orchestra, in prestigious halls across Europe from Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Musica and the Zurich Tonhalle to London's Barbican and Royal Albert Hall.

A guest of string quartets such as the Maggini,

Dante, Brodsky, Carducci, Tippett, Auer and Mandelring, he also enjoys a close relationship with the Gould Piano Trio. Together they direct the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival in Northumberland. Their recording of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* was described by *BBC Music Magazine* as the 'best modern account' of this monumental work.

Chamber music tours have taken Robert to the USA, China, South America and New Zealand.

Alongside his solo career Robert has held the principal clarinet positions of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

www.robertplane.com

Ruth Bolister (oboe)



Ruth Bolister studied at Clare College, Cambridge, The Royal Academy of Music in London and the Karlsruhe Hochschule für Musik.

In 1990 she was runner-up in the woodwind final of the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition before winning first prize in the Isle of Wight International Oboe Competition in 1993, which led to her Wigmore Hall debut. She has also appeared as a soloist at the Wigmore Hall as part of the Tillet Trust's Young Artists' Platform and in the fiftieth anniversary celebrations for the oboe manufacturers T.W. Howarth and Company.

Ruth released a recording of English Oboe Concertos with the Elgar Chamber Orchestra for the ASV label in 2003 to much critical acclaim, and in 2004 she was a soloist on BBC Radio 2's 'Friday Night is Music Night'.

Ruth is Principal Oboe of English National Opera, a position she has held since 1997. She also regularly works as guest principal oboe with other chamber and symphony orchestras in London.

www.ruthbolister.co.uk

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By Footpath and Stile

Music for string quartet by Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Finzi Quartet

Sara Wolstenholme *violin 1*

Natalie Klouda *violin 2*

Ruth Gibson *viola*

Lydia Shelley *cello*

with

Marcus Farnsworth *baritone*

Robert Plane *clarinet*

Ruth Bolister *oboe*

About the Finzi Quartet:

'... a beautiful, clean, elegant sound'

www.bachtrack.com

'... quite exceptional ... they chose to play with a real sweetness'

Mundo Classico

About Marcus Farnsworth:

'... a conspicuously shining star ... classic dignity and elegance'

The Telegraph

