



**Gerald
FINZI**

I Said to Love

Let Us Garlands Bring

**Before and After
Summer**

Roderick Williams, Baritone

Iain Burnside, Piano

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

I Said to Love, Op. 19b

Let Us Garlands Bring, Op. 18

Before and After Summer, Op. 16

Gerald Finzi studied with Ernest Farrar, Edward Bairstow and R.O. Morris. He came to attention with works like the orchestral miniature *A Severn Rhapsody* (1923) and a song-cycle to poems by Thomas Hardy, *By Footpath and Stile* (1921-2). Finzi's reputation grew during the 1930s with performances of two groups of Hardy settings, *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1926-9) and *Earth and Air and Rain* (1928-32), and was consolidated with the première in 1940 of his cantata *Dies natalis* (1925-39). During World War II Finzi worked at the Ministry of War Transport and founded a fine, mainly amateur, orchestra, the Newbury String Players. Two of his most popular works appeared during the war, the *Five Bagatelles* for clarinet (1920s, 1941-3) and the Shakespeare settings, *Let Us Garlands Bring* (1938-40).

In the post-war years his works include the festival anthem *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice* (1946), the ceremonial ode *For St Cecilia* (1947) and a further Hardy song set *Before and After Summer* (1932-49), the *Clarinet Concerto* (1948-9) and *Intimations of Immortality* for chorus and orchestra (late 1936-8, 1949-50). Although the final years of his life were lived under the shadow of an incurable illness, he completed the Christmas scene *In terra pax* (1951-4) and his *Cello Concerto* (1951-5).

Song-writing is at the heart of Finzi's output and he made a significant contribution to British twentieth-century music in this genre, especially the settings of Thomas Hardy, his favourite poet, whom he set more than any other. His volume of Hardy's *Collected Poems* was a treasured possession, as he wrote to a friend: 'If I had to be cut off from everything that would be the one book I should choose'. He felt an empathy with Hardy's bleak fatalism, his sense of transience, and his anger at the suffering that mankind afflicts on mankind. About Hardy he wrote tellingly: 'I

have always loved him so much and from earliest days responded, not so much to an influence, as to a kinship with him'.

Finzi composed slowly, so that songs that formed his sets, as he preferred to call them, were gathered over many years, gradually being brought into suitable groupings. Consequently at his death some two dozen songs were left complete. His friend Howard Ferguson, together with Finzi's widow Joy, and eldest son Christopher, divided them into four song sets of which *I Said to Love* brought together the remaining Hardy settings for baritone. This group includes four songs that Finzi, in a flurry of creativity, composed or completed during 1956, the last year of his life, with others begun in the 1920s. Ferguson accompanied John Carol Case in the first performance of the songs on 27th January the following year.

Initially the setting of *I Need Not Go* has a nonchalant air, but in the final verse the music changes mood with the realisation that the poet's beloved is, in reality, in her grave. The damp chill of a murky winter's day is evoked by Finzi in *At Middle-Field Gate in February*, through an oscillating Holstian chordal sequence which underpins a dank vocal line. Later the music warms as it responds to Hardy's recollection of youth and love in summers long past. Initially to light-footed music, *Two Lips* plays on the image of the kiss given in ardent imagination, in reality and then finally, as the mood of poem and music starkly changes, in death. Finzi referred to *In Five-Score Summers* (which Hardy titled 1967) as a 'meditation'. The poem is centred around Hardy's utopian aspiration for a better world a century hence despite the follies of mankind. Hardy's images in the opening verse are vividly portrayed by an animated, chromatically descending phrase. *For Life I Had Never Cared Greatly* is set to a purposeful, swaying gait

mirroring the image of the journeying wanderer, as well as suggesting the dance of time. *I Said to Love* was Finzi's last Hardy setting completed during the month before his death. On a broad scale, it is cast like a miniature scena with many memorable melodic responses to the words. It culminates in a dramatic piano cadenza unlike anything else in Finzi's output, as the poet squares up to his adversary and forecasts that 'Mankind shall cease', before the music ends with an emphatic violent ending and plunging cadence.

Finzi's settings of Shakespeare, *Let Us Garlands Bring*, were first performed by Robert Irvin and Howard Ferguson on 12th October 1942. That performance coincided with Vaughan Williams's seventieth birthday and Finzi dedicated the songs to him as his present. The dedicatee told him that *Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun* was one of the loveliest songs he had ever heard. After the concert Finzi and his wife took Vaughan Williams to lunch and as a second birthday present gave him the largest home-grown apple ever seen.

The songs range widely in mood beginning with the resigned funeral chime of *Come Away, Come Away, Death*, which is contrasted by a fresh evocation of newborn love in *Who is Sylvia?*. Vaughan Williams's favourite, *Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun*, is indeed the finest of the set. As so often in Finzi's Hardy settings, it is the images of transience (the dust to which the 'golden lads and girls' all must come), that drew from him an unforgettable response, as he translates the words into a haunting melody riven with melancholy. The lilting metre falters just once, in a superbly judged moment of drama at 'No Exorciser Harm Thee', which Finzi sets as a quasi-recitative, before a ghostly echo of the main melody closes the song. The genial *O Mistress Mine*, described by Finzi as a 'pleasant, light, troubadourish setting' follows, and a carefree version of *It Was a Lover and His Lass* rounds off the work.

During 1948-9 Finzi composed a number of new Hardy settings, as well as revising older ones which were gathered under the title *Before and After Summer* and were first performed in a BBC broadcast on 17th October 1949 by Robert Irvin and Frederick Stone. The central poetic image of *Childhood among the ferns* is

the child's oneness with nature. Finzi emphasises this with his evocations of the pattering raindrops and streaming rivulets in the accompaniment of the first two verses and the magical change of key as the sunlight bursts forth after the shower. In the title song of the set, Finzi captures the poet's sharply contrasting moods, initially buoyant and expectant, then redolent with autumnal melancholy emphasised by the slow, sad tread in the bass of the piano. Tolling chords as cold as the grave begin *The Self-Unseeing*, giving way to an invocation of Hardy's happy childhood memories in the gentle dance that follows, whilst at the beginning of *Overlooking the River*, the soaring vocal line vividly portrays the curving flight of the swallows.

At the mid-point in the set comes *Channel Firing*, arguably Finzi's most ambitious Hardy setting in the scale of moods the poem encompasses. It is symphonic in its relative proportions and is framed by the thunder of the guns out at sea. Within there is a fiery eruption as the Creator rails at mankind's propensity for war, a melting consoling phrase at the words beginning *For You Are Men*, an ironic scherzando as the skeletons of the awakened dead muse on men's folly, and finally a coda in which, by a deft melodic line of sheer beauty, Finzi conjures Hardy's visionary images of past dynasties.

Memories of a dead lover haunt *In the Mind's Eye* with its tiny obsessive refrain in between verses that mirrors the ever-present phantom in the poet's mind, and in the opening bars of *The Too Short Time*, (Hardy's title was *The Best She Could*), Finzi effortlessly evokes the fall of autumn leaves floating waywardly to earth. In *Epeisodia* Finzi composed a gem of a song where the verses are linked and underpinned by a graceful accompaniment which flows in response to the contours of the words. The insouciant mood of the first verse turns darker in the second as, to a minor key, urban images of drudgery are personified in the relentless tread of the music, only to emerge once more into the major and a vision of rest at the end of life's journey. *Amabel*, set in a simple, strophic folksong-like manner, ironically reflects on the ravages of time. For the final song *He Abjures Love*, Finzi responded with a

dramatic scena and music that mirrors the devil may care attitude of the poet. By the end though the sombre pedal line in the accompaniment leads to music that ends the song in a mood of bleak nihilism. The set as a whole has now come full circle, the 'before' of the

child's innocence in the first song now the 'after' with the rejection of love.

Andrew Burn

Roderick Williams

The baritone Roderick Williams is recognised throughout Europe as an extremely versatile, intelligent and musical artist. He studied on the Opera Course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, and won several prizes and awards, including second prize in the 1994 Kathleen Ferrier singing competition and the 1996 Lili Boulanger Memorial award. Recent opera rôles include the Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*) and Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) for Opera North, Schaunard and more recently Marcello (*La Bohème*) for Scottish Opera. Other opera rôles include Watchful and First Shepherd (*Pilgrim's Progress*) for the Royal Opera, Donner (*The Rhinegold*) (in concert) for English National Opera, Deceit in Barry's *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* for Almeida opera, Albert (*Werther*) and Novice's Friend (*Billy Budd*) for New Israeli Opera and Prince André in Prokoviev's *War and Peace* at the Spoleto Festival. World premières include David Sawer's *From Morning Till Midnight* and Martin Butler's *A Better Place*, both for English National Opera, his début with Netherlands Opera in Alexander Knaifel's *Alice in Wonderland*, and Sally Beamish's *Monster* for Scottish Opera. Other rôles for English Opera North include those of Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and the title rôle in *Don Giovanni*. Roderick Williams has made many appearances in opera in concert, including Sir Robert Cecil (*Gloriana*) in the highly successful semi-staged performances with the Philharmonia and Richard Hickox at the 2003 Aldeburgh Festival, and Lennox Berkeley's *Ruth* and *The Dinner Engagement* at the 2003 Cheltenham International Festival, repeated at the Linbury Studio Theatre and also recorded. Other appearances include Diomede (*Troilus and Cressida*) as part of the London South Bank's William Walton Festival in 2002, Sid (*Albert Herring*) with the City of London Sinfonia, and Eddie in Turnage's *Greek* (part of the festival 'momentum: the music of Mark Anthony Turnage' at the Barbican in January 2003. Roderick Williams appears in concert throughout Europe in a very diverse range of repertoire, winning huge success with the world première of Birtwistle's *The Ring Dance of the Nazarene* with VARA Radio, a work he also performed at the BBC Proms, in the British première, the Barbican's *Mostly Mozart Festival* singing Mozart arias with Joseph Swensen, and concerts with the Nash Ensemble, the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh in France, London and New York. His many recent concert performances have included a highly acclaimed performance of Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He has a wide experience of recital and solo oratorio work throughout Britain and abroad, including recitals at major venues, broadcasts and recordings. He is also a composer and has had works performed at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, the Purcell Room and live on national radio.

Iain Burnside

Iain Burnside enjoys a unique reputation as pianist and broadcaster, forged through his commitment to the song repertoire and his collaborations with leading international singers. Such artists have included Dame Margaret Price, Susan Chilcott, Galina Gorchakova, Adrienne Pieczonka, Amanda Roccoft, Yvonne Kenny and Susan Bickley; David Daniels, John Mark Ainsley, Mark Padmore and Bryn Terfel. He has also worked with some outstanding younger singers, including Lisa Milne, Sally Matthews, Sarah Connolly; William Dazeley, Roderick Williams and Jonathan Lemalu. His broadcasting career covers both radio and television. He continues to present BBC Radio 3's *Voices* programme, and has recently been honoured with a Sony Radio Award. His innovative programming led to highly acclaimed recordings comprising songs by Schoenberg with Sarah Connolly and Roderick Williams, Debussy with Lisa Milne and Susan Bickley, and Copland with Susan Chilcott. His television involvement includes the Cardiff Singer of the World, Leeds International Piano Competition and BBC Young Musician of the Year. He has devised concert series for a number of organizations, among them the acclaimed *Century Songs* for the Bath Festival and The Crucible, Sheffield, the International Song Recital Series at London's South Bank Centre, and the Finzi Friends' triennial festival of English Song in Ludlow. He has given masterclasses at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, the Juilliard School in New York, and the Canadian Banff Centre.

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www.naxos.com**NAXOS****THE ENGLISH SONG SERIES • 12 FINZI****8.557644**

Gerald Finzi made a significant contribution to British twentieth-century song-writing, especially with his settings of Thomas Hardy, his favourite poet, whom he set more than any other. Finzi's empathy with Hardy's bleak fatalism, his sense of transience and his anger at the suffering that mankind afflicts on fellow human beings permeates all three collections on this disc. Highlights include the dramatic *I said to Love*, as the poet squares up to his adversary and forecasts that 'Mankind shall cease', the haunting *Fear no more the heat o' the sun* with its images of the dust to which 'the golden lads and girls' must all come, and the large-scale *Channel Firing*, arguably Finzi's most ambitious Hardy setting.

Gerald FINZI

(1901-1956)

I Said to Love, Op. 19b (Words by Thomas Hardy)

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|---|------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | I need not go | 2:10 |
| 2 | At Middle-Field Gate in February | 3:27 |
| 3 | Two Lips | 0:56 |
| 4 | In five-score Summers (Meditation) | 1:47 |
| 5 | For Life I had never cared greatly | 2:07 |
| 6 | I Said to Love | 3:06 |

Let Us Garlands Bring, Op. 18 15:02 (Words by Shakespeare)

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|----|----------------------------------|------|
| 7 | Come away, come away, death | 3:30 |
| 8 | Who is Silvia? | 1:36 |
| 9 | Fear no more the heat o' the Sun | 5:42 |
| 10 | O Mistress Mine | 1:42 |
| 11 | It was a lover and his lass | 2:32 |

13:34 Before and After Summer, Op. 16 (Words by Thomas Hardy) 32:43

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| 12 | Childhood among the Ferns | 3:29 |
| 13 | Before and after Summer | 2:36 |
| 14 | The Self-unseeing | 2:54 |
| 15 | Overlooking the River | 2:38 |
| 16 | Channel Firing | 6:38 |
| 17 | In the mind's eye | 1:48 |
| 18 | The Too Short Time | 3:07 |
| 19 | Epeisodia | 2:03 |
| 20 | Amabel | 2:58 |
| 21 | He abjures Love | 4:33 |

Roderick Williams, Baritone • Iain Burnside, Piano

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