

NAXOS

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

DDD

8.555300

Phantasy Quintet
String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2

Maggini Quartet
Garfield Jackson, Viola



Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) Phantasy Quintet • String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in the Gloucestershire village of Down Ampney in 1872, the son of a clergyman. His ancestry on both his father's and mother's side was of some intellectual distinction. His father was descended from a family eminent in the law while his maternal grandfather was a Wedgwood and his grandmother a Darwin. On the death of his father in 1875 the family moved to live with his mother's father at Leith Hill Place in Surrey. As a child Vaughan Williams learned the piano and the violin and received a conventional upper middle class education at Charterhouse after which he delayed entry to Cambridge preferring instead to study at the Royal College of Music where his teachers included Hubert Parry and Walter Parratt later master of the Queen's Musick both soon to be knighted. In 1892 he took up his place at Trinity College, Cambridge where he read history, but took composition lessons from Charles Wood. After graduation in both history and music he returned to the Royal College where he studied composition with Stanford and perhaps more significant, became a friend of a fellow student, Gustav Holst. The friendship with Holst was to prove of great importance in frank exchanges of views on one another's compositions in the years that followed.

In 1897 Vaughan Williams married and took the opportunity to visit Berlin where he had lessons from Max Bruch and widened his musical experience. In England he turned his attention to the collection of folk music in various regions of the country, an interest that materially influenced the shape of his musical language. In 1908 he went to Paris to take lessons, particularly in orchestration, from Ravel and had by now begun to make a reputation for himself as a composer not least with the first performance in 1910 of his first symphony, *A Sea Symphony*, setting words by Walt Whitman and

his *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* in the same year. The even tenor of his life was interrupted by the war when he enlisted at once in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. 1914 was also the year of *A London Symphony* and of his rhapsodic work for violin and orchestra, *The Lark Ascending*. Three years later, after service in Salonica that seemed to him ineffective, he took a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery and was posted to France. There he was also able to make some use of his abilities as a musician.

After the war Vaughan Williams returned to the Royal College of Music, now as a professor of composition, a position he retained until 1938. In these years he came to occupy a commanding position in the musical life of the country with a series of compositions that seemed essentially English, the apparent successor of Elgar, although his musical language was markedly different. The war of 1939 brought the challenge of composition for the cinema with notable scores for *The 49th Parallel* in 1940 and a number of other films culminating in 1949 in his music for the film *Scott of the Antarctic*, the basis of the seventh of his symphonies. Other works of the last decade of his life included two more symphonies, the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a violin sonata and concertos for harmonica and for tuba, remarkable adventures for an octogenarian.

The Phantasy Quintet, scored for string quartet and a second viola, was written in 1912 and first performed at the Aeolian Hall in London in March 1914 by the London Quartet led by Albert Sammons with James Lockyer as second viola. It was dedicated to the quartet and to William Wilson Cobbett, the music patron who had established awards to encourage the composition of 'phantasies', a word that suggested the traditional viol consort fantasies of an earlier period of English music

and had invited the composition. The quintet consists of four short movements. The first viola starts the opening *Prelude* with thematic material of pentatonic outline to be answered by the first violin. The viola ends the movement immediately followed by the *Scherzo* with its asymmetrical rhythm and ostinato in textures that seem at times reminiscent of Ravel. The cello, which had started the movement, completes it before the *Alla Sarabanda* scored for muted instruments without the cello which returns to begin the final *Burlesca* with its echoes of folk song and reminiscences of the first movement before a final ascent to the ethereal heights.

Vaughan Williams completed his *String Quartet in G minor* in 1908 after his short period of lessons with Ravel. It was performed in London in the same year by the quartet led by Isidore Schwiller and revised in 1921. It is natural that there should be echoes of Ravel and Debussy in the textures and melodic contours of the work which opens with the viola statement of the theme leading to a secondary section marked *Tranquillo*. The material is subtly developed eventually returning in a transformed recapitulation. The second movement is a *Minuet and Trio* with modal traces of folk song influence. The tonal centre shifts from E to C for the *Trio* with a melody of descending contour. The ternary form *Romance* tender in mood, gently unfolds with a

central section of greater intensity. This is followed by a lively and varied *Rondo Capriccioso* driven forward by its compelling rhythmic patterns, relaxing only briefly before a *5/4 fugato*.

The *String Quartet in A minor (For Jean on Her Birthday)* was written in 1942 and 1943 and dedicated to Jean Stewart, violist of the Menges Quartet which gave the first performance at a war time National Gallery concert in October 1944. It is the viola, generally prominent throughout, that provides an emphatic opening to the first movement, proposing material that provides the basis of much that follows. The viola starts the second movement *Romance* each instrumental line marked *senza vibrato* in music of absolute tranquility leading to a chorale-like passage and eventually to a dynamic climax. The viola ends the movement and opens the *Scherzo* with a theme from the music from the film *The 49th Parallel* against the muted tremolo figuration of the other instruments. The *Epilogue* with the subtitle *Greetings from Joan to Jean* and again opened by the viola uses material intended originally for a proposed film on Joan of Arc hence the addition to the title. It is a movement of characteristically beautiful serenity.

Keith Anderson

Garfield Jackson

Garfield Jackson was born in London and studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Academy of Music. He is a founder member of the Endellion String Quartet who are now in their 19th year. The quartet has toured worldwide, given concerts throughout Britain and broadcast extensively for the BBC. Their recordings cover a wide range of repertoire for several companies. Since 1992 they have been quartet in residence at Cambridge University. As a soloist, Garfield Jackson has appeared in the Queen Elizabeth, Barbican and Wigmore Halls and on the BBC. As a chamber musician he is much in demand and has performed with many artists including members of the Amadeus Quartet, Steven Isserlis and András Schiff as well as being a regular guest with the Nash Ensemble.

Maggini Quartet

Since its inception in 1988, the Maggini Quartet has quickly established itself as a highly acclaimed international quartet, enthraling audiences at festivals and major concert halls throughout Britain, Europe, US and the Far East. The Quartet is renowned for championing British composers through its recordings for Naxos in a *Gramophone* Award winning series, currently among the top-selling chamber music albums in Europe. These include a release of works by Frank Bridge which won critical acclaim while their recording of Elgar's *Quartet* and *Piano Quintet* with Peter Donohoe was a 1997 winner of the *Diapason d'Or*, France's most prestigious award for classical music recordings. Their recording of E.J. Moeran's *Quartets* and *Trio* proved to be one of the best selling chamber music albums of 1988. The Maggini has also recorded all the Britten *Quartets* for Naxos, the first volume of which was described by the influential French *Diapason* Magazine as indispensable while the second volume was an Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* in September 1999 and in *Classic* album in November of the same year. Their recently released album of Walton's *Quartet* and *Piano Quartet* with Peter Donohoe was Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and the BBC Music Magazine and nominated for a *Gramophone* Award. The Maggini Quartet will be recording a further nine albums of British music in the coming years planned to include repertoire by Vaughan Williams, Bax, Bliss and Bridge. For other companies the Maggini Quartet has recorded a wide repertoire of music ranging from Haydn to Szymanowski and has commissioned new works including Robert Simpson's last work, his *Cello Quintet*, given its first performance at the Cheltenham International Festival in 1996, a year that also saw the first performance of Roxanna Panufnik's *Olivia*, commissioned for the Maggini by Brunel University Arts Centre in London. The Maggini's Tenth Anniversary Season featured the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Second Quartet* (the Maggini's anniversary commission) at the Wigmore Hall in London where it was received with enthusiasm as in the later Scottish premiere at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh and the Canadian premiere for Vancouver New Music. Following the success of her *Quartet No. 1*, commissioned in 1993, Eleanor Alberga is currently writing her *String Quartet No. 3* for the Quartet. The Maggini Quartet appears regularly in prestigious concert series at home and abroad and is heard frequently on *BBC Radio 3*. The Quartet has coached at leading music institutions in Britain and holds a pre-eminent position among chamber music courses around the country. International activities of this kind include an annual coaching engagement for the Norwegian Chamber Music Society and other coaching has included Yale University and Oberlin College in the US. The Quartet also holds residencies at Brunel University, Canterbury Christ Church College and Shrewsbury School. The name of the Quartet derives from the famous 16th-century Brescian violin maker Giovanni Paolo Maggini, an example of whose work is played by David Angel.





DDD

8.555300

 Playing Time
 66:29


WWW.NAXOS.COM

 © 2001 & © 2021 Naxos Rights US, Inc.
 Booklet notes in English
 Made in Germany

Vaughan Williams was able to establish his own distinctive musical voice relatively early in his career. While his *Phantasy Quintet* and *G minor Quartet*, conceived before 1914, show contemporary French influence, they are immediately identifiable as his and display a characteristically beautiful serenity still found in the *A minor Quartet* written during the 1940s.

Ralph
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
 (1872–1958)

Phantasy Quintet (1912) 15:06

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Prelude: Lento ma non troppo | 4:07 |
| 2 | Scherzo: Prestissimo | 4:09 |
| 3 | Alla Sarabanda: Lento | 2:50 |
| 4 | Burlesca: Allegro moderato | 4:00 |

String Quartet No. 1 in G minor (1908, rev. 1921) 29:36

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 5 | Allegro moderato | 9:15 |
| 6 | Minuet and Trio: Tempo di minuetto | 4:48 |
| 7 | Romance: Andante sostenuto | 7:35 |
| 8 | Finale: Rondo Capriccioso – Allegro molto | 7:59 |

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor (1942–43) 21:46

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|------|
| 9 | Prelude: Allegro appassionato | 3:52 |
| 10 | Romance: Largo | 9:31 |
| 11 | Scherzo: Allegro | 3:35 |
| 12 | Epilogue: Andante sostenuto | 4:48 |

Maggini Quartet • Garfield Jackson, Viola 1–4

Recorded: 13–15 June 2000 at Potton Hall, Suffolk, UK

Recorded and edited at 24-bit resolution for higher definition sound

Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd) • Engineer: Eleanor Thomason • Editor: Peter Newble

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover painting: *Bluebell Wood* (pastel on paper) by Edward Clifford (1844–1907)

Private Collection / Bridgeman Art Library