

THE JOHN RUTTER EDITION

The background of the cover is a painting of a man in a hat and coat carrying a large bundle on his back, walking through a field. The man is wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a long, light-colored coat. He is carrying a large, dark bundle on his back, which appears to be a pack or a bundle of goods. He is walking towards the right of the frame, looking back over his shoulder. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a small building in the distance.

**The Sprig
of Thyme**
Traditional Songs

The Cambridge Singers
with members of
The City of London Sinfonia

directed by
John Rutter

The Sprig of Thyme

Traditional songs



For children growing up in postwar England as I did, traditional songs still formed a common musical currency. The first songs we sang were nursery rhymes like *Oranges and lemons* and *Pop goes the weasel*; at school, we warbled *Early one morning* and *Drink to me only* in singing class, and *O God, our help in ages past* and *Holy, Holy, Holy* in morning assembly; at scout camp, we endured *Ten green bottles* and *One man went to mow*. Those of us that sang in choirs were thoroughly familiar with the choral folk song arrangements of Vaughan Williams and Holst; and absolutely everyone could recognize *Rule, Britannia*, *Greensleeves* and the National Anthem. Probably none of us stopped to think that this heritage of ‘traditional’ song had been fairly deliberately created: the approved repertoire of nursery rhymes stemmed largely from a BBC radio programme called *Listen with Mother*, the school class singing repertoire from *The National Song Book*, and the hymns we knew from *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (middle-of-the-road late Victorian), *The English Hymnal* (edited by Vaughan Williams, rather more high church) and *Songs of Praise* (Vaughan Williams again, mildly radical and strong on social service). Vaughan Williams, who collected folk songs and saw them as crucial to a revival of our national musical consciousness, was also one of the moving forces behind the prevalence of folk songs, which, along with italic handwriting, pottery and the weaving of rush mats, were considered good for the young.

It is easy to poke fun at the worthiness, gentility and cultural nationalism of this vanished age, soon to give place to the more frantic, colourful and cosmopolitan ’60s. Yet the songs it promoted formed a more solid bedrock for a shared musical culture than today’s television jingles, pop songs and football chants. Among the numerous ‘As I went out one morning’s that fill folk song collections, you can find love songs of exquisite and fragile beauty such as *O*

waly, waly and *The sprig of thyme*, drinking songs of picaresque humour such as *The miller of Dee*, lullabies of heart-easing tenderness such as *O can ye sew cushions*. These songs brought me delight and pleasure then, and they still do now, though pleasure has become tinged with nostalgia because, for the most part, they are forgotten and gone from our lives, perhaps forever. This album is an affectionate tribute to their composers and poets; a few were renowned, most were obscure or unknown, but the songs they created were famous, and I remember them fondly.

JOHN RUTTER

The Cambridge Singers

Sopranos: Caroline Ashton, Fiona Clarke, Donna Deam, Judith English, Ruth Gomme, Karen Kerslake, Jocelyn Miles, Olive Simpson, Clare Wallace, Julia Wilson-James

Altos: Nicola Barber, Patrick Craig, Natanya Hadda, Frances Jellard, Penny Vickers, Lucy Winkett

Tenors: Paul Badley, Harvey Brough, Paul Gordon, David Jones, William Lee, Paul Sutton

Basses: Michael Chambers, Bruce Hamilton, James Mure, Ben Parry, Benjamin Thompson, Julian Walker

The Sprig of Thyme

Traditional songs

The Cambridge Singers • Members of the City of London Sinfonia
conducted by John Rutter

Total playing time: 68' 25"

1 – 11 THE SPRIG OF THYME (29' 46")

A cycle of folk song settings, for mixed choir with chamber ensemble
arranged by John Rutter

- 1** **1. The bold grenadier** (2' 58")
English
- 2** **2. The keel row** (2' 06")
English (Northumbrian)
- 3** **3. The willow tree** (2' 56")
English (Hampshire)
- 4** **4. The sprig of thyme** (2' 48")
English (Lincolnshire)
- 5** **5. Down by the sally gardens** (2' 45")
Irish
Clarinet: David Rix
- 6** **6. The cuckoo** (2' 27")
English
Harp: Rachel Masters
- 7** **7. I know where I'm going** (3' 01")
Irish
Oboe: Christopher Hooker

8 **8. Willow song** (1' 58")
English, 16th century

9 **9. O can ye sew cushions** (2' 45")
Scottish

10 **10. The miller of Dee** (1' 54")
English, 18th century

11 **11. Afton water** (3' 29")
Scottish

12 – 16 FIVE TRADITIONAL SONGS (11' 22")
arranged for unaccompanied mixed voices
by John Rutter

12 **1. The girl I left behind me** (1' 50")
English

13 **2. O waly, waly** (2' 47")
English (Somerset)

14 **3. The British Grenadiers** (1' 50")
English

15 **4. Golden slumbers** (2' 17")
English

16 **5. Dashing away with the smoothing iron** (2' 23")
English

17 **THE LARK IN THE CLEAR AIR** (3' 49")
Irish, arranged by Andrew Carter
Flute: Duke Dobing

18 **SHE'S LIKE THE SWALLOW** (3' 14")
Newfoundland, arranged by Edward T. Chapman

19 **SEARCHING FOR LAMBS** (2' 13")
English, arranged by John Rutter

20 – 24 FIVE ENGLISH FOLK SONGS (14' 02")
arranged for unaccompanied mixed voices
by R. Vaughan Williams

20 **1. The dark eyed sailor** (2' 23")

21 **2. The spring time of the year** (2' 45")

22 **3. Just as the tide was flowing** (2' 22")

23 **4. The lover's ghost** (3' 39")

24 **5. Wassail song** (2' 39")

25 **SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR** (3' 23")
Irish, arranged by Daryl Runswick

The Sprig of Thyme (tracks 1–11) published by Oxford University Press

Five Traditional Songs (tracks 12–16) published by Oxford University Press

The lark in the clear air (track 17) published by Oxford University Press

She's like the swallow (track 18) published by Oxford University Press in the collection *Folk Songs for Choirs 1*, edited by John Rutter

Searching for lambs (track 19) is unpublished (© Collegium Music Publications)

Five English Folk Songs, arranged by R. Vaughan Williams (tracks 20–24), published by Stainer & Bell Ltd.

She moved through the fair (track 25) published by Faber Music

1 – 11 The Sprig of Thyme

A cycle of folk song settings, for mixed choir with chamber ensemble
arranged by John Rutter

1 1. The bold grenadier

As I was a-walking one morning in May,
I spied a young couple a-making of hay.
O one was a fair maid and her beauty shone clear,
And the other was a soldier, a bold grenadier.

‘Good morning, good morning, good morning,’ said he:
‘O where are you going, my pretty lady?’
‘I am going a-walking by the clear crystal stream,
To see cool waters glide and hear nightingales sing.’

‘O soldier, O soldier, will you marry me?’
‘Oh, no my sweet lady, that never can be:
For I’ve got a wife at home in my own country;
Two wives and the army’s too many for me.’

As I was a-walking one morning in May
I spied a young couple a-making of hay.
O one was a fair maid and her beauty shone clear,
And the other was a soldier, a bold grenadier.

2 2. The keel row

As I came through Sandgate,
I heard a lassie sing:
O weel may the keel row
That my laddie’s in.

O who’s like my Johnny,
Sae leish, sae blith, sae bonny,
He’s foremost of the mony
Keel lads o’coaly Tyne.

He’ll set and row so tightly,
Or in the dance so sprightly,
He’ll cut and shuffle sightly,
’Tis true, were he not mine.

He wears a blue bonnet,
A dimple in his chin.
And weel may the keel row
That my laddie’s in.

3 3. The willow tree

O take me to your arms, love,
For keen doth the wind blow,
O take me to your arms, love,
For bitter is my deep woe.
She hears me not, she heeds me not,
Nor will she listen to me,
While here I lie alone
To die beneath the willow tree.

My love hath wealth and beauty,
Rich suitors attend her door,
My love hath wealth and beauty,
She slights me because I’m poor.
The ribbon fair that bound her hair

Is all that is left to me,
While here I lie alone
To die beneath the willow tree.

I once had gold and silver,
I thought them without end,
I once had gold and silver,
I thought I had a true friend.
My wealth is lost, my friend is false,
My love hath he stolen from me,
While here I lie alone
To die beneath the willow tree.

4 4. The sprig of thyme

Once I had a sprig of thyme.
It prospered by night and by day
Till a false young man came a-courting to me,
And he stole all this thyme away.

The gardener was standing by:
I bade him choose for me.
He chose me the lily and the violet and the pink
But these I refused all three.

Thyme it is the prettiest thing,
And time it will grow on,
And time it will bring all things to an end,
And so does my time grow on.

It's very well drinking ale,
And it's very well drinking wine:

But it's far better sitting by a young man's side
That has won this heart of mine.

5 5. Down by the sally gardens

Down by the sally gardens my love and I did meet.
She passed the sally gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy,
As the leaves grow on the tree.
But I being young and foolish,
With her did not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand.
And on my leaning shoulder she placed her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy,
As the grass grows on the weirs.
But I was young and foolish,
And now am full of tears.

W. B. Yeats, 1865–1939

6 6. The cuckoo

O the cuckoo she's a pretty bird, she singeth as she flies;
She bringeth good tidings, she telleth no lies.
She sucketh white flowers, for to keep her voice clear;
And the more she singeth cuckoo, the summer draweth near.

As I was a-walking and a-talking one day,
I met my own true love, as he came that way.
O to meet him was a pleasure, though the courting was a woe,
For I found him false-hearted, he would kiss me and go.

I wish I were a scholar and could handle the pen,
I would write to my lover and to all roving men.
I would tell them of the grief and woe that attend on their lies,
I would wish them have pity on the flower when it dies.

7 7. I know where I'm going

I know where I'm going,
And I know who's going with me,
I know who I love
But the dear knows who I'll marry!

I have stockings of silk,
Shoes of fine green leather,
Combs to buckle my hair,
And a ring for every finger.

Some say he's black*,
But I say he's bonny,
The fairest of them all
My handsome, winsome Johnny.

Feather beds are soft,
And painted rooms are bonny,
But I would leave them all
To go with my love Johnny.

I know where I'm going,
And I know who's going with me,
I know who I love
But the dear knows who I'll marry!

*black: dour, ungracious

8 8. Willow song

A poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing willow, willow, willow!
With his hand in his bosom and his head upon his knee.
O willow, O willow my garland shall be.
Sing all a green willow,
Ah me! the green willow my garland must be.

He sighed in his singing and made a great moan,
Sing willow, willow, willow!
I am dead to all pleasure, my true love is gone!
O willow, O willow my garland shall be.
Sing all a green willow,
Ah me! the green willow my garland must be.

9 9. O can ye sew cushions?

O can ye sew cushions,
Or can ye sew sheets,
Or can ye sing balaloo
When the bairn greets?
And hee and baw birdie,
And hee and baw lamb,
And hee and baw birdie,
My bonnie wee lamb.

I placed my cradle
On yon holly top,
And ay as the wind blew
My cradle did rock.

And hush a baw birdie,
And balilee loo,
And hee and baw birdie,
My bonny wee doo.

10 10. The miller of Dee

There was a jolly miller once,
Lived on the River Dee.
He danced and sang from morn till night,
No lark more blithe than he.
And this the burden of his song
Forever used to be:
'I care for nobody, no, not I,
If nobody cares for me.'

I love my mill, she is to me
Both parent, child and wife.
I would not change my station
For another one in life.
Then push, push, push the bowl, my boys,
And pass it round to me;
The longer we sit here and drink,
The merrier we shall be.

Then like the miller bold and free
Let us rejoice and sing.
The days of youth were made for glee,
And time is on the wing.
This song shall pass from me to thee
Around this jovial ring:
Let heart and voice and all agree
To sing 'Long live the King!'.

11 11. Afton Water

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise.
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far marked with the courses of clear winding rills.
There daily I wander as dawn rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft as mild evening creeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays.
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Robert Burns, 1759–96

12 – 16 Five Traditional Songs

arranged for unaccompanied mixed voices
by John Rutter

12 1. The girl I left behind me

I'm lonesome since I cross'd the hill,
And o'er the moor and valley,

Such heavy thoughts my heart do fill
Since parting from my Sally;
I seek no more the fine and gay,
For each doth but remind me
How swiftly passed the hours away
With the girl I left behind me.

O ne'er shall I forget that night
The stars were bright above me,
And gently lent their silv'ry light
When first she vow'd to love me.
But now I'm bound to Brighton camp;
Kind heaven then pray guide me,
And bring me safely back again
To the girl I left behind me.

Her golden hair in ringlets fair,
Her eyes like diamonds shining,
Her slender waist, with carriage chaste,
May leave the swain repining.
Ye Gods above! O hear my prayer!
To my beauteous fair to bind me,
And send me safely back again
To the girl I left behind me.

13 2. O waly, waly

The water is wide, I cannot get o'er,
And neither have I wings to fly;
Give me a boat that will carry two,
And both shall row, my love and I.

O down in the meadows the other day
A-gath'ring flow'rs both fine and gay,
A-gath'ring flow'rs both red and blue,
I little thought what love can do.

I leaned my back up against some oak
Thinking that he was a trusty tree;
But first he bended and then he broke;
And so did my false love to me.

A ship there is and she sails the sea,
She's loaded deep as deep can be,
But not so deep as the love I'm in:
I know not if I sink or swim.

O love is handsome and love is fine,
And love's a jewel while it is new,
But when it is old it groweth cold,
And fades away like morning dew.

14 3. The British Grenadiers

Some talk of Alexander
And some of Hercules,
Of Hector and Lysander,
And such great names as these;
But of all the world's brave heroes
There's none that can compare,
With a tow row row
To the British Grenadiers.

Whene'er we are commanded
To storm the palisades,

Our leaders march with fuses
And we with hand grenades;
We throw them from the glacis
About the enemies' ears;
Sing tow row row
The British Grenadiers.

Then let us fill a bumper
And drink a health to those
Who carry caps and pouches
And wear the loupèd clothes.
May they and their commanders
Live happy all their years,
With a tow row row
For the British Grenadiers.

15 4. Golden slumbers

Golden slumbers kiss your eyes;
Smiles awake you when you rise;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.

Care you know not, therefore sleep,
While I o'er you watch do keep;
Sleep, pretty darlings, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.

16 5. Dashing away with the smoothing iron

'Twas on a Monday morning
And there I saw my darling,
She looked so neat and charming

In ev'ry high degree.
She looked so neat and nimble O
A-washing of her linen O,
Dashing away with the smoothing iron
She stole my heart away.

'Twas on a Tuesday morning . . .
. . . A-hanging out her linen O . . .

'Twas on a Wednesday morning . . .
. . . A-starching of her linen O . . .

'Twas on a Thursday morning . . .
. . . A-ironing of her linen O . . .

'Twas on a Friday morning . . .
. . . A-folding of her linen O . . .

'Twas on a Saturday morning . . .
. . . A-airing of her linen O . . .

'Twas on a Sunday morning . . .
. . . A-wearing of her linen O . . .

17 The lark in the clear air

Irish, arranged by Andrew Carter

Dear thoughts are in my mind,
And my soul soars enchanted
As I hear the sweet lark sing
In the clear air of the day.
For a tender beaming smile

To my hope has been granted,
And tomorrow she shall hear
All my fond heart would say.

I shall tell her all my love,
And my soul's adoration,
And I think she will hear me
And will not say me nay.
It is this that gives my soul
All its joyous elation
As I hear the sweet lark sing
In the clear air of the day.

18 She's like the swallow

Newfoundland, arranged by Edward T. Chapman

She's like the swallow that flies so high,
She's like the river that never runs dry,
She's like the sunshine on the lee shore,
I love my love, and love is no more.

'Twas out in garden this fair maid did go,
A-picking the beautiful primrose;
The more she plucked the more she pulled
Until she got her apron full.

It's out of those roses she made a bed,
A stony pillow for her head.
She laid her down, no word did say,
Until this fair maid's heart did break.

She's like the swallow that flies so high,

She's like the river that never runs dry,
She's like the sunshine on the lee shore,
I love my love and love is no more.

19 Searching for lambs

English, arranged by John Rutter

As I went out one May morning,
One May morning betime,
I met a maid, from home had strayed,
Just as the sun did shine.

'What makes you rise so soon, my dear,
Your journey to pursue?
Your pretty little feet they tread so sweet,
Strike off the morning dew.'

'I'm going to feed my father's flock,
His young and tender lambs,
That over hills and over dales
Lie waiting for their dams.'

'O stay, O stay, you handsome maid,
And rest a moment here,
For there is none but you alone
That I do love so dear.

How gloriously the sun doth shine,
How pleasant is the air;
I'd rather rest on a true love's breast
Than any other where.'

For I am thine, and thou art mine,
No man shall uncomf'ort thee;
We'll join our hands in wedded bliss
And a-married we will be.

20 – 24 Five English Folk Songs

arranged for unaccompanied mixed voices

by R. Vaughan Williams

20 1. The dark eyed sailor

It was a comely young lady fair,
Was walking out for to take the air;
She met a sailor all on her way,
So I paid attention to what they did say.

Said William, 'Lady why walk alone?
The night is coming and the day near gone.'
She said, while tears from her eyes did fall,
'It's a dark eyed sailor that's proving my downfall.

It's two long years since he left the land;
He took a gold ring from off my hand;
We broke the token, here's part with me,
And the other lies rolling at the bottom of the sea.'

Then half the ring did young William show,
She was distracted midst joy and woe.
'O welcome, William, I've lands and gold
For my dark eyed sailor, so manly, true and bold.'

Then in a village down by the sea,

They joined in wedlock and well agree.
So maids be true while your love's away,
For a cloudy morning brings forth a shining day.

21 2. The spring time of the year

As I walked out one morning,
In the springtime of the year,
I overheard a sailor boy,
Likewise a lady fair.

They sang a song together,
Made the valleys for to ring,
While the birds on spray and the meadows gay
Proclaimed the lovely spring.

22 3. Just as the tide was flowing

One morning in the month of May,
Down by some rolling river,
A jolly sailor, I did stray
When I beheld my lover.
She carelessly along did stray,
A-picking of the daisies gay;
And sweetly sang her roundelay,
Just as the tide was flowing.

O! her dress it was so white as milk,
And jewels did adorn her.
Her shoes were made of crimson silk
Just like some lady of honour.
Her cheeks were red, her eyes were brown,
Her hair in ringlets hanging down;

She'd a lovely brow without a frown
Just as the tide was flowing.

I made a bow and said 'Fair maid,
How came you here so early?
My heart by you it is betray'd
For I do love you dearly.
I am a sailor come from sea
If you will accept of my company
To walk and view the fishes play'
Just as the tide was flowing.

No more we said, but on our way
We gang'd along together;
The small birds sang, and the lambs did play,
And pleasant was the weather.
When we were weary we did sit down,
Beneath a tree with branches round;
For my true love at last I'd found,
Just as the tide was flowing.

23 4. The lover's ghost

Well met, well met my own true love;
Long time I have been absent from thee,
I am lately come from the salt sea,
And 'tis all for the sake, my love, of thee.

I have three ships all on the salt sea,
And one of them has brought me to land,
I've four and twenty mariners on board,
You shall have music at your command.

The ship wherein my love shall sail
Is glorious for to behold,
The sails shall be of shining silk,
The mast shall be of the fine beaten gold.

I might have had a King's daughter,
And fain she would have married me,
But I forsook her crown of gold,
And 'tis all for the sake, my love, of thee.

24 5. Wassail song

Wassail, Wassail, all over the town,
Our bread it is white and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl it is made of the green maple tree;
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the ox and to his right eye,
Pray God send our master a good Christmas pie,
A good Christmas pie as e'er I did see.
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the ox and to his right horn,
Pray God send our master a good crop of corn,
A good crop of corn as e'er I did see.
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Here's a health to the ox and to his long tail,
Pray God send our master a good cask of ale,
A good cask of ale as e'er I did see.
In the Wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee.

Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best;
Then I pray that your soul in heaven may rest;
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
May the Devil take butler, bowl and all!

Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock,
Who tripp'd to the door and slipp'd back the lock;
Who tripp'd to the door and pull'd back the pin,
For to let these jolly Wassailers walk in.

25 She moved through the fair

Irish, arranged by Daryl Runswick

My young love said to me, 'My mother won't mind,
And my father won't slight you for your lack of kind,'
And she stepped away from me and this she did say,
'It will not be long, love, till our wedding day.'

She stepped away from me, and she went through the fair,
And fondly I watched her move here and move there.
And then she went homeward with one star awake,
As the swan in the evening moves over the lake.

Last night she came to me, she came softly in,
So softly she came, that her feet made no din.
And she laid her hand on me and this she did say,
'It will not be long, love, till our wedding day.'

Collegium
RECORDS

CSCD 517

STEREO DDD

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