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DDD

CHORAL MUSIC BY GEORGE DYSON (1883-1964)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Royal College of Music Chamber Choir

Osian Ellis harp Stephen Roberts baritone

David Nettle and Richard Markham pianos

Sir David Willcocks conductor

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| [1] | In Honour of the City | 14:27 |
| | Fantasia for Mixed Chorus and Orchestra | |
| [2] | Sweet Thames, Run Softly | 24:52 |
| | Cantata for Baritone, Chorus and Orchestra | |
| [3] | A Spring Garland | 14:17 |
| | for Women's Voices and Harp | |
| [4] | The Blacksmiths | 13:43 |
| | for Mixed Chorus, Strings, Two Pianos, Timpani and Percussion | |
| [5] | To Music | 2:57 |
| | for Unaccompanied Mixed Voices | |

Total duration: 70:48

The above individual timings will normally each include two pauses, one before the beginning and one after the end of each movement or work.

Texts and Translations included in the booklet. Recording Producer: Christopher Palmer.
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Series

CHORAL MUSIC BY GEORGE DYSON

Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra

Royal College of Music
Chamber Choir

conducted by
Sir David Willcocks

'Old London had many scourges,' wrote Sir George Dyson in a programme-note for *In Honour of the City*. 'It was badly lit and badly drained' (here speaks the practical Dyson who, on becoming Director of The Royal College of Music in 1937, made the refurbishing of the 'Ladies' a priority job). 'The closely-packed wooden houses, the narrow, tortuous streets, the rough fare and coarse manners, the plagues and pestilences: all these were only too common. Yet Chaucer, and Dunbar, and Spenser, and many another poet and writer, have extolled the glory and beauty of that same London. They saw the Bridge, with its shops and merchandise. They knew the Thames, not confined by walls, but offering a magnificent tidal expanse that was everybody's highway... they enjoyed that wonderful pageantry of street and hall, when nearly every profession had its own insignia, worn frankly and publicly to grace the figure and delight the eye. There may have been little privacy, and no comfort as we know it, but there was a vigour and a colour in everyday things which enlivened the scene and fired the imagination.' Fired the imagination, certainly, of Dyson; for this is the atmosphere – vigour and colour being its prime constituents – which pervades his musical portrait of medieval London as presented on this disc, his literary collaborators being Chaucer, and Dunbar, and Spenser.

After decades of neglect the music of Sir George Dyson (1883-1964) is gradually stirring to life again. His was, in fact, one of the most distinguished musical minds of his time, and he was also a caring and sympathetic human being of wide-ranging interests and abilities. As public schoolmaster, broadcaster, lecturer, author (his book *The New Music*, published in 1924, was a landmark in twentieth-century music criticism), composer and administrator, he played an influential part in English musical life for over fifty years. Are his compositions neglected because they are unfit to survive? I fear it is more a question of philistine indifference. There is some kind of received notion of Dyson as an 'academic' composer. As this disc makes abundantly clear, he was too keen an enjoyer of the good things of life for that; his students remember a twinkle in the eye, and his music registers a relish. Certainly it's very English-traditional, and perhaps best described as a kind of enriched Parry. Think of Parry, with his feeling for English poetry, for vocal colour and texture, his ability to construct broad and sonorous climaxes; complement these qualities with a richly and fitly-developed orchestral sense (one of the idols of Dyson's youth was Richard Strauss), a poetic feeling for 'colour-harmony' indebted perhaps more to Delius than anyone else, consistent warmth of romantic, lyrical expression, and a strong penchant for the dramatic: and you have something approaching the Dyson idiom. Not an *original* idiom, as Dyson himself was the first to admit; but you

don't have to be original to compose interesting or worthwhile music. Dyson's is above all very *musical* music: it always sings as music should, is expertly-crafted and as grateful to play or sing as to listen to. One goes away feeling that life is the more worth living for having listened.

William Dunbar wrote his *In Honour of the City of London* around 1500. Dyson's setting appeared in 1928 (nine years before Walton's, who, unlike Dyson, left Dunbar's Chaucerian English unmodernised); it was his first major work, and an immediate success. It is much simpler than Walton's; the orchestration sparkles, and there is a proud swing and a splendour about such moments as 'Of lords and barons, and many a goodly knight', which somehow stirs the blood. No doubt it is basically a question of melodic invention. The opening trumpet theme – London calling to revel – has a true festive glitter (it's immediately answered by the Westminster chimes in the horns) and the textual incipits are all memorably tuneful as well as satisfyingly vocal (listen especially for 'London thou are of townés a *per se*', 'Sovereign of cities', 'Of famous prelates in habits clerical' and the tenors' fanfaring of the 'most delectable lusty ladies bright'). 'Gem of all joys' marks the start of a faster, lighter section followed by a slower episode which depicts the Thames as it flows in broad strength (a beautiful new theme arises at the thought of the fair-winged swans). The finale is pervaded by the canter and trot of horses; we can also hear artillery (cymbals and bass drum), and the blithe-sounding bells come ever closer into focus as the crowds throng in rejoicing tumult.

London celebrations also inspired *Sweet Thames, run softly* – both Spenser's poem of 1596 and Dyson's setting, composed nearly 360 years later, in 1955. Spenser wrote his 'Prothalamion' or 'preliminary nuptial song' in honour of the double marriage of the then Earl of Worcester's two daughters. The brides sailed up the Thames as far as the Temple and were married from the home of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex: the 'noble peer' whose 'noble victory' at Cadiz was still fresh in the memory and who was at that time still *persona gratissima* with Elizabeth I ('great Eliza'). For Dyson, however, the 'great Eliza' whose name was to ring through all the world was just as easily his own newly-crowned Sovereign, and the 'grave muse' referred to at the end of stanza 5 none other than Sir Hubert Parry: for here Dyson paraphrases that part of Parry's famous Coronation Anthem *I was Glad* in which the Monarch's scholars of Westminster School traditionally shout their greeting ('vivat Regina Elizabetha').

Dyson brings the entire episode to life in music of rare charm and freshness. The opening sections, evoking the breeze-ruffled calm of the Thames on an early summer's morning, are

exquisitely written, with many a passing beauty of vocal-orchestral texture: the music has a quality of youthful sensuousness which belies the fact that it was the work of a man in his seventies. What a happy idea is that of the two flutes, with their white-grey tone-colour, to represent the two swans (ie, the brides), and how skilfully does Dyson contrive to keep the music always in murmuring motion, now flecked and dappled with sunlight, now swelling and heaving with the trumpet motif of London calling from *In Honour of the City* (with its attendant Westminster chimes) tells us that journey's end is near. The apostrophe to Eliza's realm is a great moment, like a curtain being swept back; and, following the Vivats, the trumpet leads the nuptial procession. After a resplendent climax the sun drops quickly in the sky, we are riverborne again, and with hazy reminiscences of the opening the work ends in a mood of ever-deepening twilight tranquillity:

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.

Girls' voices and harp celebrate the full-blown arrival of spring in an all-Herrick sequence, *A Spring Garland* (selection, order and titles are all Dyson's). Robert Herrick (1591-1674) spent much of his life as vicar of the parish of Dean Prior in Devon, on the south-east of Dartmoor; this is the background of as much of his poetry (and it is much) as cultivates and celebrates the pleasures of rural life. In the first of the poems in the *Garland* (it is actually a conflation of two poems), Herrick unwittingly made Dyson one of those offers that cannot be refused:

Thou shalt not die, for while Love's fire shines
Upon his altar, men shall read thy lines;
And learn'd musicians shall, to honour Herrick's
Fame, and his name, both set and sing his lyrics.

Which is precisely what Dyson proceeded to do.

Dyson was of course a Yorkshireman, born in Halifax into a working-class family; his mother was a weaver, his father a blacksmith. *The Blacksmiths* reflects both the North-of-England industrial landscape in which he spent his early years, and his father's profession (the work is dedicated to the latter's memory). The poem, a remarkable exercise in alliteration, is of Middle English origin, freely adapted and modernised almost certainly by Dyson's wife Mildred (we print both versions in the texts). Its character might suggest a Soviet-realistic

style of orchestral treatment à la Mossolov (*The Iron Foundry*) or Prokofiev; but though there is a Russian influence it is definitely pre-Soviet, and on the choral writing: namely the Rachmaninov of *The Bells*. Few concessions are made to ease of performance: this was a Leeds Festival (1934) commission, and Dyson was surely mindful of the fact that three years before, the Festival Chorus had successfully tackled the first performance of the mighty *Belshazzar's Feast*. In its original form *The Blacksmiths* is scored for large orchestra, but the composer prepared a special version for smaller choirs in which the accompaniment consists of two pianos, strings, and percussion, which includes an elaborate part for timpani with two players (Dyson was surely recalling here his student experiences as timpanist in the RCM orchestra under Stanford). In a way the vivid black-and-whites of this version (with their various intermediate shades of G-minor grey) suit the music's percussive, dynamic character even better. The music progresses via steady accumulation of themes and episodes – each describing a new aspect of the blacksmiths' activities – until a huge, hammered recapitulation of the first section ('swart, smirched smiths, smattered with smoke') leads to an explosion and eventually to a slow, still coda of remembered thematic splinters, a kind of requiem ('Christ them save'): A remarkable piece indeed.

The part-song *To Music* is a fine and further example of Dyson's love affair with Herrick's poetry, and a happy demonstration of Dyson's poetic way with unaccompanied singers – like many fine English composers, he grew up with what Herbert Howells called 'the immemorial sound of voices' and never wanted to grow out of it. The poet looks forward to a 'night of easy slumbers' – a fitting note on which to end this disc.

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Aujourd'hui, après des décennies d'oubli, l'intérêt à la musique de Sir George Dyson (1883-1964) se réanime peu à peu. Il possédait une des intelligences musicales les plus distinguées de son époque, et il était aussi un être humain plein de bienveillance et de sympathie, aux divers intérêts et talents. Comme professeur d'un collège secondaire, comme personnalité de la radio, conférencier, écrivain (son livre "*The New Music*", publié en 1924, fut un véritable évènement de la critique musicale du vingtième siècle), compositeur et administrateur, il a joué un rôle d'influence dans la vie musicale anglaise.

Ses compositions sont-elles négligées parce qu'elles ne sont pas dignes de survivre? Malheureusement, c'est plutôt une question d'indifférence philistine. Il y a une certaine idée

reque de Dyson comme "compositeur académique". Ce CD démontre que, pour cela, il a trop savouré les plaisirs de la vie. Ses étudiants se souviennent d'un pétilllement dans ses yeux, et sa musique respire l'enthousiasme.

Comme il l'a avoué le premier, son langage musical n'était pas original; mais on n'a pas besoin d'originalité pour composer de la musique intéressante et valable. Sa musique est surtout très *musicale*; elle chante comme la musique le doit faire; elle est d'une technique experte, aussi agréable à jouer ou à chanter qu'elle l'est à écouter. Après l'avoir entendue on s'en va avec le sentiment que la vie en vaut mieux la peine d'être vécue.

William Dunbar a écrit son poème *En l'honneur de la Cité de Londres* vers 1500. La mise en musique de Dyson a paru en 1928; c'était sa première œuvre majeure, et a joui d'un succès immédiat. L'orchestration est brillante, et des passages comme "Of lords and barons and many a goodly knight" ont un entrain et un éclat enthousiasmant. C'est au fond une question d'invention mélodique, ce que Dyson possédait en abondance. Le finale résonne du galop et du trot de chevaux; on entend aussi l'artillerie (représentée par les cymbales et la grosse caisse), et les cloches joyeuses qui résonnent de plus en plus près, tandis que les foules se pressent en un tumulte réjouissant.

La louange de Londres a inspiré aussi *Sweet Thames, run softly* (*Gentille Tamise, coule doucement*). Spenser écrivit son *Prothalamion* (ou "chanson nuptiale") en l'honneur des doubles noces des deux filles du Comte de Worcester. Les futures mariées ont remonté la Tamise en bateau jusqu'au Temple, et se sont mariées à la maison de Robert Devereux, Comte d'Essex, le "noble pair" dont le souvenir de sa "noble victoire" à Cadiz était encore frais dans la mémoire, et qui était alors encore *persona gratissima* avec Elizabeth 1ère ("la grande Eliza"). Pour Dyson cependant la "grande Eliza" pourrait également être sa propre Souveraine nouvellement couronnée. Dyson (en 1955) fait revivre l'épisode entier en musique d'un charme et d'une fraîcheur rares.

Les jeunes filles et la harpe célèbrent l'arrivée épanouie du printemps dans une suite de mises en musique de poèmes de Herrick, *Une Guirlande de Printemps*. Robert Herrick (1591-1674) a passé une grande partie de sa vie comme curé de la paroisse de Dean Prior en Devonshire, au sud-est de Dartmoor, qui fait le cadre de beaucoup de sa poésie qui cultive et célèbre les plaisirs de la vie rurale.

Dyson venait de Yorkshire, né à Halifax d'une famille ouvrière; sa mère était tisserande, son père forgeron. *The Blacksmiths (Les Forgerons)* reflète le paysage industriel de l'Angleterre du nord où il a passé sa jeunesse, aussi bien que le métier de son père (l'œuvre est dédiée à sa mémoire). Le poème, d'une écriture moyen-anglaise, a été librement adapté et modernisé, presque certainement par sa femme Mildred. Le compositeur ne se montre pas très indulgent envers les exécutants; c'était une commande du Festival de Leeds de 1934, et Dyson s'est assurément souvenu que la Chorale du Festival avait récemment donné avec succès la première audition du formidable *Belsazar's Feast* de William Walton. *The Blacksmiths* a été composé originellement pour grand orchestre, mais le compositeur a arrangé une version (donnée sur ce CD) pour les chorales plus petites accompagnées par deux pianos, cordes et percussion, avec une partie compliquée de timbales à deux exécutants. A certains égards, le noir-et-blanc vivant de cette version (avec ses tons de gris divers intermédiaires en sol mineur) met en valeur le style percutant et dynamique de la musique.

La chanson à plusieurs voix *To Music* est encore un exemplaire de la "liaison amoureuse" de Dyson avec la poésie de Herrick, et de sa sympathie poétique avec les chanteurs sans accompagnement. Comme beaucoup d'excellents compositeurs anglais, il a été élevé avec ce que Herbert Howells a nommé "le son immémorial des voix", et il n'a jamais voulu en perdre l'habitude. Le poète attend "une nuit de sommeil paisible" – une image bien à propos pour conclure ce CD.

Traduction: Denys Becher et Nadia Jackson

Nach Jahrzentelanger Vernachlässigung wird die Musik von Sir George Dyson (1883-1964) allmählich wieder wachgerufen. Er war, in der Tat, einer der hervorragendsten musikalischen Denker seiner Zeit und er war außerdem ein einfühlsamer und verständnisvoller Mensch mit weitreichenden Interessen und Fähigkeiten. In seinen Rollen als Rektor an einer Privatschule, Rundfunkredakteur, Dozent, Schriftsteller (sein 1924 veröffentlichtes Buch *The New Music (Die neue Musik)*, war ein Meilenstein für die Musikkritik des 20. Jahrhunderts), und als Komponist und Verwalter spielte er über fünfzig Jahre hinweg eine einflussreiche Rolle in dem musikalischen Leben Englands. Vernachlässigt man seine Kompositionen weil sie zum Überleben ungeeignet sind? Ich befürchte, es ist mehr eine Frage kulturloser Gleichgültigkeit, Manche betrachten sehen Dyson als einen 'akademischen'

Komponisten. Aber wie diese CD es reichlich klar macht, war er dazu ein zu großer Genießer der guten Dinge im Leben; seine Studenten erinnern sich an den schalkenhaften Ausdruck in seinen Augen und seine Musik bringt Genuss zum Ausdruck. Dysons Ausdrucksweise ist nicht originell, was der Komponist als Erster selbst zugab; aber man muss nicht unbedingt originell sein, um interessante und sich lohnende Musik zu komponieren. Seine Musik ist vor allem sehr *musikalisch*; sie singt, wie Musik singen soll, sie ist meisterhaft gehandwerklt und sie ist ebenso wohltuend zu spielen, wie sie zu singen und anzuhören ist und nach Anhören der Musik geht man weg im Glauben, es lohne sich jetzt mehr das Leben zu leben.

William Dunbar schrieb seine *In Honour of the City of London* (Zu Ehren der Stadt London) um das Jahr 1500. Dysons Vertonung erschien im Jahre 1928; es war sein erstes bedeutendes Werk und ein schlagerartiger Erfolg. Die Orchestrierung glitzert und Stellen wie 'Of Lords and Barons, and many a goodly knight' (Lords und Barone und so mancher ansehnlicher Ritter) haben einen Schwung und eine Pracht an sich, die das Blut irgendwie in Wallung bringen. Zweifellos ist es im Grunde eine Frage der Melodiebildung, die hier reichlich ist. Das Finale ist von dem Galopp und Trab der Pferde erfüllt; die Artillerie ist auch zu hören (Becken und Bassstrommel), und die fröhlich klingenden Glocken kommen immer näher in den Mittelpunkt, je mehr sich die Menschenmengen in dem jubelnden Tumult auflösen.

Sweet Thames, run softly (*Oh süße Thames fließ sanft*) war ebenso von den Londoner Feiern inspiriert. Spenser schrieb sein 'Prothalamion' oder 'Hochzeitslied' zu Ehren der Doppelhochzeit der beiden Töchter des damaligen Earl of Worcester: Die Bräute segelten auf der Thames bis zum Temple und die Hochzeitszeremonie fand im Hause von Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex statt; der edle Peer, dessen heldenhafter Sieg von Cadiz immer noch frisch in Erinnerung war und der zu der damaligen Zeit immer noch die persona gratissima von Elizabeth I ('great Eliza') war. Für Dyson jedoch war die 'great Eliza', deren Name später auf der ganzen Welt zum Begriff wurde genauso einfach seine eigene neugekrönte Herrscherin. Mit Musik von seltenem Charme und Frische gelingt es Dyson die ganze Episode lebendig zu machen.

Mädchen und Harfe feiern den vollerwachten Frühling in der Herrick Sequenz *A Spring Garland* (*Eine Frühlingsgarlande*) (Auswahl, Reihenfolge und Titeln waren Dysons Idee). Robert Herrick verbrachte einen großen Teil seines Lebens als Pfarrer der Pfarrgemeinde Dean Prior in Devon, südöstlich von Dartmoor; dieser Lebensabschnitt stellt den Rahmen vieler seiner Gedichte, welche die Freude des Landlebens kultivieren und feiern.

Dyson wurde in eine Familie der Arbeiterklasse in Halifax, Yorkshire hineingeboren; seine Mutter war eine Weberin, sein Vater ein Hufschmied. *The Blacksmiths* (*Die Hufschmiede*) beschreibt die Industrielandschaft im Norden von England, wo er die frühen Jahre seines Lebens verbrachte, sowohl als auch den Beruf seines Vaters (das Werk ist dem Andenken seines Vaters gewidmet). Das Gedicht kommt aus dem Mittelenglischen und wurde höchstwahrscheinlich von Dysons Frau Mildred frei adaptiert und modernisiert. Wenige Zugeständnisse wurden gemacht, um die Aufführung zu erleichtern: es handelte sich um einen Auftrag für die Leeds Festspiele (1934) und sicherlich berücksichtigte Dyson die Tatsache, dass der Festspielchor drei Jahre zuvor die erste Aufführung von William Waltons mächtigem *Belsazar's Feast* (*Belsnzars Gastmahl*) in ihrer Originalfassung erfolgreich bewältigt hatte. *The Blacksmiths* wurde für ein großes Orchester instrumentiert, der Komponist jedoch bereitete eine besondere Fassung für kleinere Chöre (die hier aufgeführt wird) vor, die Begleitung für diese Fassung ist für zwei Klaviere, Streicher und Schlagzeug, mit einem anspruchsvollen Teil für Posaune für zwei Spieler. Auf gewisse Weise passen die lebhaften schwarz/weiß Elemente dieser Fassung (mit ihren verschiedenen Zwischenschattierungen in einem G Moll grau) sogar besser zu dem dynamischen, perkussorischen Charakter der Musik. Es ist in der Tat ein außergewöhnliches Stück.

Das mehrstimmige Lied *To Music (An die Musik)* ist ein weiteres gutes Beispiel der Liebschaft Dysons mit Herricks Dichtung. Dyson zeigt hier erfolgreich seine poetische Zuneigung für die Stimmen ohne Begleitung. Dyson, wie soviele feine englische Komponisten ist mit, was Herbert Howells nennt, den 'seit undenklichen Zeiten stammenden Stimmen' aufgewachsen und wollte sich diesen nie entfernen. Der Dichter freut sich auf eine 'Nacht des sachten Schlummers', was eine passende Note ist, um diese CD abzuschließen.

Übersetzung: Ilse Herlihy

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1 IN HONOUR OF THE CITY

London, thou art of townès, *A per se*
Sovereign of cities, seemliest in sight,
Of high renown, riches and royalty;
Of lords, barons, and many a goodly
knight;
Of most delectable lusty ladies bright;
Of famous prelates, in habits clerical;
Of merchants full of substance and of
might:
London, thou art the flower of Cities all.

Gem of all joy, jasper of jocundity,
Most mighty carbuncle of virtue and
valour;
Strong Troy in vigour and in strenuity;
Of royal cities rose and gillyflower;
Empress of townès, exalt in honour;
In beauty bearing the crown imperial;
Sweet paradise precelling in pleasure;
London, thou art the flower of Cities all.

Above all rivers thy River hath renown,
Whose beryl streamès, pleasant and
preclare,
Under thy lusty wallès runneth down,
Where many a swan doth swim
with wingès fair;
Where many a barge doth sail and
row with are;
Where many a ship doth rest with top-royal.
O, town of towns! patron and not
compare,
London, thou are the flower of Cities all.

Upon thy lusty Bridge of pillars white
Be merchantès full royal to behold;
Upon thy streets go'th many a seemly knight
In velvet gownès and in chains of gold.
By Julius Caesar thy Tower founded of old
May be the house of Mars victorial,
Whose artillery with tongue may not be
told;
London, thou art the flower of Cities all.

Strong be thy wallès that about thee stands;
Wise be the people that within thee
dwells;
Fresh is thy river with his lusty strands;
Blithe be thy churches, well sounding be
thy bells;
Rich be thy merchants in substance that
excells;
Fair be their wives, right lovesome, white
and small;
Clear be thy virgins, lusty under kells;
London, thou art the flower of Cities all.

William Dunbar

A per se: unique *Are:* oar *Kells:* hoods

2 SWEET THAMES RUN SOFTLY

I

Calm was the day, and through the trembling
air
Sweet-breathing Zephyrus did softly play
A gentle spirit that lightly did delay;

Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister
fair;
When I walked forth along the shore of
silver streaming Thames;
Whose rutty bank, the which his river hemms,
Was painted all with variable flowers,
And all the meads adorned with dainty gems
Fit to deck maiden's bowers,
And crown their paramours
Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my
song.

II

There, in a meadow, by the river's side,
A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untied,
As each had been a bride;
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs, entrailèd curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their
flasket,

And with fine fingers cropped full feateously
The tender stalks on high.
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some; the violet, pallid blue,
The little daisy, that at evening closes,
The virgin lily, and the primrose true,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroom's posies
Against the bridal day, which was not long:

Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my
song.

III

With that I saw two swans of goodly hue
Come softly swimming down along the Lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see;
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus
strew,
Did never whiter shew;
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them
bare,
Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows
spare
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,
And mar their beauties bright,
That shone as heaven's light,
Against their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my
song.

IV

Eftsoons the nymphs, which now had flow-
ers their fill,
Ran all in haste to see that silver brood,
As they came floating on the crystal flood;
Whom when they saw, they stood amazèd
still,
Their wondering eyes to fill;
Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair,
Of fowls, so lovely, that they sure did deem
Them heavenly born, or to be that same pair
Which through the sky draw Venus; silver
team;
So fresh they seemed as day.

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew
Great store of flowers, the honour of the field,
That to the sense did fragrant odours yield,
All which upon those goodly birds they
threw
And all the waves did strew.
So forth those joyous birds did pass along,
Adown the Lee, that to them murmured low,
As he would speak, but that he lacked a
tongue,
Yet did by signs his glad affections show,
Making his stream run slow.
And all the fowl which in his flood did dwell
'gan flock about these twain. So they,
enraged well,
Did on these two attend,
And their best service lend
Against their wedding day, which was not
long:
Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my
song.

V

At length they all to merry London came,
To merry London, my most kindly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native
source.
There when they came, whereas those
bricky towers
The which on Thames' broad agèd back to
ride,
Where now the studious lawyers have
their bowers,
There whilom wont the Templar Knights to
bide;

Next whereunto there stands a stately
place,
Where oft I gainèd gifts and goodly grace;
Therein doth now lodge a noble peer,
Great England's glory, and the world's
wide wonder,
Whose dreadful name late through all
Spain did thunder,
And Hercules' two pillars standing near
Did make to quake and fear.
Fair branch of honour, flower of chivalry!
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,
That through thy prowess, and victorious
arms,
Thy country may be freed from foreign
harms;
And great Eliza's glorious name may ring
Through all the world filled with thy wide
alarms,
Which some brave muse may sing
To ages following.
(Vivat! Regina Elizabetha.)

VI

From those high towers this noble lord
issuing,
Like radiant Hesper, when his golden hair
In the ocean's billows he hath bathèd fair,
Descended to the river's open viewing,
With a great train ensuing.
Above the rest were goodly to be seen
Two gentle knights of lovely face and
feature,
Beseeming well the bower of any queen,

With gifts of wit, and ornaments of nature,
Fit for so goodly stature,
That like the twins of Jove they seemed in
sight,
Which deck the baldrick of heavens bright;
They two, forth pacing to the river's side,
Received those two fair brides, their love's
delight;
Which, at the appointed tide,
Each one did make his bride
Against their bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my
song.

from the *Prothalamion* of
Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

3 A SPRING GARLAND

I. TO THE MUSES

Honour to you who sit
Near to the well of wit,
And drink your fill of it.
Glory and worship be
To you, sweet maids (thrice three)
Who still inspire me,
And teach me how to sing,
Unto the lyric string,
My measures ravishing!
For while Love's fire shines
Upon his altar, men shall read thy lines;
And learn'd musicians shall to honour
Herrick's
Fame, and his name, both set and sing
his Lyrics.

II. A PRAYER FOR HARVEST
First offer incense, then thy field and
meads
Shall smile and smell the better by thy
beads.
The spangling dew dredged o'er the
grass shall be
Turn'd all to mell and manna there for
thee.
Butter of amber, cream, and wine, and oil
Shall run, as rivers, all throughout thy
soil.
Would'st thou to sincere-silver turn thy
mould?
Pray once; twice pray, and turn thy
ground to gold.

III. I SING OF BROOKS

I sing of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds, and
Bowers:
Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers.
I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails,
Wakes,
Of Bride-grooms, Brides, and of their
Bridal-cakes.
I write of Youth, of Love, and have
Access
By these, to sing of cleanly-Wantonness.
I sing of Dews, of Rains, and piece by
piece
Of Balm, of Oil, of Spice, and Amber-
Greece.
I sing of Times trans-shifting; and I write
How Roses first came Red, and Lilies
White.

I write of Groves, of Twilights, and I sing
The Court of Mab, and of the Fairie-King.

IV. THE FOUR SWEET MONTHS

First, April, she with mellow showers
Opens the way for early flowers;
Then after her some smiling May,
In a more rich and sweet array;
Next enters June, and brings us more
Gems, than those two that went before:
Then (lastly) July comes, and she
More wealth brings in, than all those
three.

V. HOUSEMATES

Though clock,
To tell how night draws hence, I've none,
A cock
I have, to sing how day draws on.
I have
A maid (my Prue) by good luck sent,
To save
That little, Fates me gave or lent.
A hen
I keep, which creaking day by day,
Tells when
She goes her long white egg to lay.
A goose
I have, which, with a jealous ear,
Lets loose
Her tongue, to tell what danger's near.
A lamb
I keep (tame) with my morsels fed,
Whose dam
An orphan left him (lately dead).

A cat

I keep, that plays about my house,
Grown fat,
With eating many a munching mouse.
To these
A spaniel I do keep, whereby
I please
The more my rural privacy:
Which are
But toys, to give my heart some ease.
Where care
None is, slight things do lightly please.

VI. THE CORONET

Come with the Spring-time forth, fair
maid, and be
This year again, the meadows' Deity.
Yet ere ye enter, give us leave to set
Upon your head this flowery coronet;
To make this neat distinction from
the rest;
You are the prime and princess of the
feast:
To which with silver feet lead you the
way,
While sweet-breath nymphs attend on
you this day.
This is your hour; and best you may com
mand,
Since you are Lady of this Fairy land.

Robert Herrick

4 THE BLACKSMITHS

Swart, smirched smiths, smattered with
smoke,

Drive me to death with din of their dents.
Such noise on nights ne'er heard men never;
Such clashing of cries and clattering of
knocks.

The craftsmen clamour for 'Coal, coal, coal'
And blow their bellows, their brains to burst.
They jostle and jangle, they jape and they
jest,
They groove and they grind, they grumble
together,
Hot with the heaving of heated hammers.
Of thick bull's-hide are their branded aprons;
Their shanks are shod 'gainst shooting
sparks.

Huge hammers they have, and hard to
handle;
Stark strokes strike they on the steeléd stock.
'Well wrought! Well wrought! Well wrought!'

Might daunt the devil, such life they lead,
All armourers, founders, forgemen,
Christ them save!

*As adapted and modernised by George and
Mildred Dyson from the original anonymous
14th century Middle-English version.*

5 TO MUSIC

Charm me asleep, and melt me so
With thy delicious numbers,
That being ravish'd, hence I go
Away in easy slumbers.
Ease my sick head,
And make my bed,
Thou Power that canst sever
From me this ill; –
And quickly still,
Though thou not kill
My fever.

Fall on me like a silent dew,
Or like those maiden showers.
Which, by the peep of day, do strew
A baptism o'er the flowers.

Melt, melt my pains
With thy soft strains;
That having ease me given,
With full delight,
I leave this light,
And take my flight
For Heaven.

Robert Herrick

Our discs are available worldwide from all good record shops. In case of difficulty and for further information please contact us direct: SOMM Recordings, Sales & Marketing Dept., 13 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0QL, UK.
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