

Although Boult had catholic tastes in repertoire, and was a doughty champion of 20th-century music during his tenure as head of the BBC Symphony, record companies (primarily HMV, EMI, Decca, Pye Nixa, and Lyrita) largely confined him to British repertoire, above all Elgar and Vaughan Williams. (Interestingly, though, the next most prominent name in Boult's discography is Tchaikovsky!) In the years following his 1952–54 series of RVW's first seven symphonies, with Nos. 8 and 9 following in 1956 and 1958, Boult recorded a number of mostly shorter works by that composer, most of which are presented here. The *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, *Fantasia on Greensleeves*, *English Folk Song Suite*, and *Norfolk Rhapsody* No. 1 were recorded for Pye Nixa (under the pseudonym "Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra" for contractual reasons) in 1953, and *Old King Cole*, *Job*, *The Wasps*, and *The Partita for Double String Orchestra* (the last-named in stereo) for Decca in 1953–56.

Boult recorded the *Tallis Fantasia* five times in the studio; a live performance from 1972 also has been issued. Strikingly, his interpretation of the piece changed markedly between his two monaural recordings (BBC 1940 and London Philharmonic 1953) and his three stereo versions (Vienna State Opera Orchestra 1959, London Philharmonic 1969 and 1975) and live account (New Philharmonia 1972). In the former two the performance is brisk, coming in at slightly over 14 minutes; in the latter four, it expands to slightly over 16 minutes. More strikingly yet, whereas the 1940 BBC version, despite more antiquated sound, matches the four later recordings for lushness of string texture, the 1953 account heard here radically shifts the emphasis to rhythmic incisiveness and clarity of the interweaving lines. It thus represents a unique take by Boult on the work, that more than justifies its restoration to the active catalog.

Job was another favorite RVW score of Boult's—indeed, the score is dedicated to him. He recorded it in the studio four times (BBC SO 1946, London Philharmonic 1954 and 1958, and London Symphony 1970), plus a live performance with the London Philharmonic filmed in 1972 and available on DVD. Of these, the 1946 version suffers both outdated sonics and a degree of metrical stiffness, while the 1958 Everest recording is too closely miked and rather harsh sounding. The remaining three are all excellent; while this 1954 version (like the live 1972 outing) is less hard-driving than the 1970 account, it has no lack of energy or nobility and makes a great effect even today.

By contrast, this 1953 recording of the 1923 folk dance ballet *Old King Cole* is not only the only recording of the work by Boult; it apparently remains one of only three recordings ever made (the other two being by Richard Hickox for EMI, and an acoustical set led by the composer in 1925).

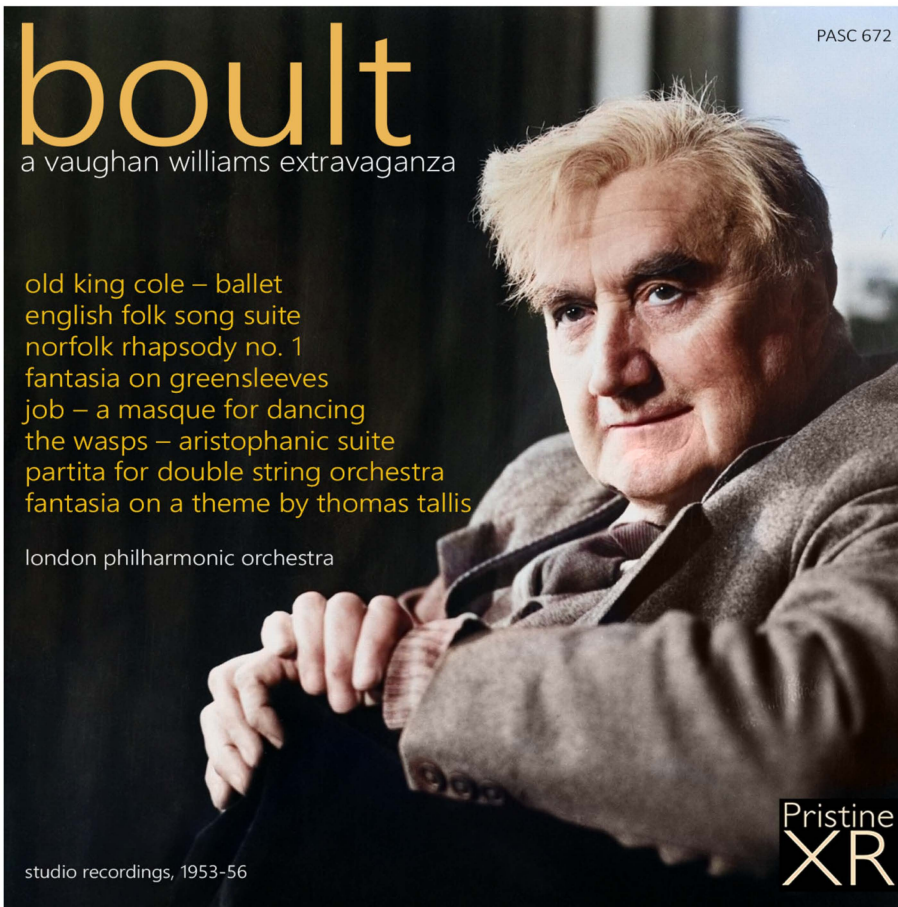
The *Fantasia on Greensleeves* (drawn from the 1928 opera *Sir John in Love*) and 1923 *English Folk Song Suite* were recorded in tandem by Boult three times, with the London Philharmonic in 1953, the Vienna State Opera Orchestra in 1959, and the London Symphony in 1970. All three sets are delightful and more or less on a par.

The *Norfolk Rhapsody* No. 1 is, after the *Tallis Fantasia*, far and away the most often recorded work of RVW among the items included in this present set. Originally written in 1905–06 and revised in 1914, it is generally considered to be RVW's first orchestral piece to speak in his distinctive voice. Boult would re-record it with the New Philharmonia in 1968; this earlier 1953 version is more extroverted in mood.

The *Partita for Double String Orchestra* from 1948, reworked from the earlier unsatisfactory version of a double trio for string sextet, is another RVW rarity. Apart from Boult, who again recorded it twice (the second time with the London Philharmonic in 1975), apparently only four other conductors—John Farrer, Vernon Handley, Ross Pople, and Bryden Thompson—have set it down on disc. As with the *Tallis Fantasia*, Boult significantly changed his interpretation of the *Partita* between his two versions; this earlier 1956 version has a far more ponderous opening movement and thicker instrumental textures throughout, but a brisker, more febrile finale than in the EMI remake.

Boult also recorded the delightful incidental music for Aristophanes's *The Wasps* from 1909 twice, the second time with the London Philharmonic in 1968; he also recorded just the overture for *Everest* in 1958 and the march for *Lyrita* in 1973. If the latter version has more vivid recorded sound, the earlier one from 1953–54 has a more energetic snap to it.

JAMES ALTENA



PASC 672

boult

a vaughan williams extravaganza

old king cole – ballet
english folk song suite
norfolk rhapsody no. 1
fantasia on greensleeves
job – a masque for dancing
the wasps – aristophanic suite
partita for double string orchestra
fantasia on a theme by thomas tallis

london philharmonic orchestra

Pristine
XR

studio recordings, 1953–56

boult

a vaughan williams extravaganza



disc one (79:45)

1. **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (15:00)
Recorded 12 & 14-15 September 1953, Walthamstow Assembly Hall

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Job - A Masque for Dancing

2. Scene 1: Introduction - Pastoral Dance - Satan's Appeal to God - Saraband of the Sons of God (9:55)
3. Scene 2: Satan's Dance of Triumph (3:43)
4. Scene 3: Minuet of the Sons of Job and Their Wives (4:15)
5. Scene 4: Job's Dream - Dance of Plague, Pestilence, Famine and Battle (4:28)
6. Scene 5: Dance of the Three Messengers (4:56)
7. Scene 6: Dance of Job's Comforters - Job's Curse - A Vision of Satan (4:47)
8. Scene 7: Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty - Pavane of the Sons of the Morning (5:27)
9. Scene 8: Galliard of the Sons of the Morning - Altar Dance and Heavenly Pavane (5:01)
10. Scene 9: Epilogue (3:08)
Recorded 9 & 11-13 January 1954, Kingsway Hall, London

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Old King Cole - Ballet

11. Introduction (3:30)
12. Pipe Dance (2:48)
13. Bowl Dance (1:22)
14. Morris Jig: 'Go and 'list for a sailor' (1:24)
15. Folk Song: 'Bold Young Farmer' (2:11)
16. Folk Tune: 'The Jolly Thresherman' (1:34)
17. General Dance (6:16)
Recorded 29 September 1953, Walthamstow Assembly Hall

disc two (73:33)

1. **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** Fantasia on Greensleeves (5:02)
Recorded 10-14 & 29 September 1953, Walthamstow Assembly Hall

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS English Folk Song Suite

2. 1. March - 'Seventeen come Sunday' (3:24)
3. 2. Intermezzo - 'My Bonny Boy' (3:27)
4. 3. March - 'Folk Songs from Somerset' (3:44)
Recorded 12, 14-15 September 1953, Walthamstow Assembly Hall

5. **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 (10:39)
Recorded 10-14 & 29 September 1953, Walthamstow Assembly Hall

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Partita for Double String Orchestra*

6. 1st mvt. - Prelude (6:27)
7. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo Ostinato (4:26)
8. 3rd mvt. - Intermezzo (Homage to Henry Hall) (4:24)
9. 4th mvt. - Fantasia (6:22)
Recorded 12-13 November 1956, Kingsway Hall, London

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS The Wasps (Aristophanic Suite)

10. 1. Overture (10:04)
11. 2. Entr'acte (2:58)
12. 3. March past of the kitchen utensils (1:47)
13. 4. Entr'acte (4:32)
14. 5. Ballet and final Tableau (6:17)
Recorded 28-31 December 1953 & 1 January 1954, Kingsway Hall, London

London Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

XR Remastered by **Andrew Rose**
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photograph of Vaughan Williams
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All recordings presented in
Ambient Stereo except *Stereo

Total duration: 2hr 33:22

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