

1. THE SEEDS OF LOVE:

This song is arranged for string quartet from Cecil Sharp's piano accompaniment. It seems designed to be so expanded, since the piano part is meticulously crafted in four contrapuntal parts. Sharp was probably the finest composer of the period at providing accompaniment for folk songs; this arrangement is extraordinary even for Sharp. The meticulous counterpoint in a piano accompaniment is indeed rare and indicates that the song had special meaning for Sharp. The song was his first encounter with the living folk song; he heard it by chance from a gardener, fittingly named John England, and immediately noted it down. Some have dated the start of the modern folk *song revival from that incident; thus it is appropriate that we open with this song. (*Sung to Sharp in Hambridge, Somerset, 1903. String quartet - arr. JE*)

2. A ROSEBUD IN JUNE (SHEEP SHEARING SONG):

This song has an unusually complex and convoluted tune. It opens with a horn call, followed by the voice unaccompanied. The accompaniment gives a cushion of simplicity and solidity, allowing the singer the great rhythmic freedom the song demands. (*Sung to Sharp by William King of East Hamptree, Somerset. Rebec, cornetto, sackbut, dulcian arr. MB*)

3. I WILL GIVE MY LOVE AN APPLE (THE RIDDLE SONG, Child 46):

The dark colors of the viols in low registers bring out the almost mystical character of the words and the tune. The poignancy of the song is intensified as the counter-melody reaches upward along with the vocal line. Then, as the riddle is resolved, the calmness returns. (*Collected by Hammond from Mr. J. Burrows, Sherborne, Dorset, 1906. Rebec, treble viol, bass viol - arr. MB*)

4. THE LOVER'S TASKS (Child 2):

This is a version of one of the most ancient of ballads. It has a lilting dance-like quality which is given extra pulse and energy by the medieval dance-fiddle, the rebec. The transparency of scoring leaves space for the whimsicality of the words which are rooted in magic and ritual. (*Sung to Sharp by William Huxtable, Rowbarton, Taunton, 1906. Rebec, treble viol, bass viol arr. MB*)

5. JOHN BARLEYCORN:

The stark power of this extraordinary hymn to the slain and risen god of the grain has captivated many arrangers. Sharp's well known piano accompaniment is among his finest. The arrangement here is intended to be in the style of English polyphony circa 1450. (*Sung to Sharp by John Stafford at Bishop's Sutton, Somerset. Shawm, cornetto, sackbut, dulcian, bagpipe - arr. JE*)

6. THE SOULING SONG:

This ritual begging song for All Souls Day is built on the most primitive elements imaginable. The tune contains just three notes (and a hint of a fourth); the accompaniment also could not be simpler. The two viols pluck a repeating figure, very much in the manner of a folk instrument, and the bamboo flute plays the melody. (*Collected by Lucy Broadwood, published in her English County Songs, 1893. Arr. JE*)

7. THE MAY DAY CAROL:

The innocence of the song is underscored by the setting. The reedy sound of the concertina is heard first alone, then with the voice. One by one, more instruments join in the procession, then fade away, as if the singer were strolling out of sight and out of

hearing. (*Collected in Tilsworth, Bedfordshire, 1875. Concertina, bamboo flute, rebec, bass viol - arr. MB*)

8. GREEN BROOM:

An early version of this traditional song was published in *Pills To Purge Melancholy*. The arrangement for string trio tries to capture the sense of impish mischief so strongly felt in both the words and the tune. Plucked strings are heard, first together, then disjointly, almost like giggling. Then, like laughter no longer suppressed, the violin abandons plucking for the bow to be soon joined by the others as the song careens to a close. (*Sung to Sharp by John Fockrell, Bridgewater, Somerset. String trio - arr. JE*)

9. THE LARK IN THE MORN:

Many variants of this song are known, in particular the popular Irish version. This tune is surely among the finest, rising and falling in waves, perhaps in imitation of the bird in flight. Here the bamboo flute, riding high above the voice, is used to evoke the images of the text. (*Sung to Sharp by William Stokes of Clew Stoke, Somerset. Violin, bamboo flute - arr. MB*)

10. LORD RENDAL (Child 12):

This great tragic ballad is one of the most widely collected, and versions have been in print for over 200 years. There is a childlike innocence in both tune and words — a chilling contrast to the horror of the story. The impulse for the setting is the quiet intensity of the text and the complexity of its elements. The insistent plucking over a low held note creates dissonance and unrest; the rocking pattern in the flute suggests the lullaby of the cradling mother, the strident metallic notes the ugliness of the poison and the cruelty of the sweetheart. Then finally all is still, as, succumbing to death, the voice alone is heard. (*Sung to Sharp by Mrs. Perry of Langport, Somerset. Bamboo flute, mandolin, bouzouki, bass viol - arr. MB*)

11. STAINES MORRIS:

The words reveal later composition than the tune which can be found in Playford's *English Dancing Master* (1651). The arrangement brings to mind Brueghel: earthy peasants, noise, jostling. The brashness of the early wind instruments, the vigor of the tune, the insistent rhythm reinforced by percussion, give a cheerful, open-air feeling of revelry. (*Recorder, shawm, cornetto, dulcian, percussion - arr. MB*)

12. TURTLE DOVE:

One of the most poignant of love songs, it is here set in a web of instrumental colors. Strings plucked and bowed — all have long melodic lines, curving toward and away from the tune or in parallel motion against the low drone. Yet there is still transparency to reveal the beauty of the voice and text. (*Collected by Vaughan Williams in Rusper, Sussex, 1907. Mandolin, Irish harp, psaltery, rebec, viol, bamboo flute - arr. MB*)

13. THE FALSE BRIDE:

The riveting text of this ballad is surely one of the most remarkable examples of folk poetry. Though the song is basically narrative, as any ballad, there are three powerful verses (the first two and the last) that have no logical connection with the story. Yet these verses have a most powerful emotional connection. Full of metaphor and intense imagery, they tell the "story" with far more "reality" than any direct statement. While most of the arrangements on this record are stylistically kin to earlier musical periods, this arrangement, along with *The Seeds of Love* is unashamedly romantic -- thus

bringing us full circle. The texts of our first and last songs are also similar in that both tell the inner story of the pain of lost love through remarkable metaphoric images from nature. Thus, *The Seeds of Love*. (collected by sharp in Holford, Somerset, 1904. cello, concertina - arr. JE)

notes by Marshall Barron and Jerome Epstein

JOHN LANGSTAFF's involvement in music has been lifelong, commencing with early childhood music making at home and professional singing from age seven as boy soloist at Grace Church, New York and for WNBC radio. After training at Curtis Institute and Juilliard, he began an international concert career, including television, recordings, and performances with major symphony orchestras. His repertoire has often included traditional songs – some of his first recordings were ballads, accompanied by Gerald Moore at the piano. His interest in traditional Anglo-American music stems from a boyhood summer at the unique White Top festival in the Appalachian mountains where he heard for the first time unaccompanied traditional singers. Later, his close friendship with collectors Maud Karpeles, Frank and Anne Warner, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Douglas Kennedy intensified his interest in this music. The qualities of simple direct delivery, total intensity, and strong verbal rhythm heard in the singing of genuine traditional singers he has heard – Horton Barker, Sailor John Hunt, Seamus Ennis, Jean Ritchie, Phil Tanner, Frank Proffitt, Sarah Makem, Jeannie Robertson and others – have helped him develop his own style of performance.

MARSHALL BARRON is a graduate of the Putney School, Vassar College and Columbia Teacher's College. She currently teaches violin, music theory and madrigals at the Neighborhood Music School, New Haven, CT. Her compositions include *Overture for American Revels*, performed in New York in 1985, and *A Carol for Dancing*, choreographed for Revels in Washington, DC in 1984. A dance musician for over 25 years with the Country Dance Society of America, her violin playing can be heard on CDS, Revels, and Arabesque labels. She has published five books of arrangements of English country dance tunes, and her settings of folksongs can be found in several publications by John Langstaff, particularly *Hi Ho The Rattlin' Bog* and *The Christmas Revels Songbook*.

JEROME EPSTEIN holds degrees from Columbia College, New York University and City University of New York; he has been interested and involved in music nearly all his life. His training in piano, theory and harmony, and composition began at age five at the Elston Conservatory in New York. His interest in folk song also began in childhood through recordings of Burl Ives, Paul Robeson and, later, Richard Dyer-Bennet and The Weavers. He first heard real traditional singers at the Newport festivals of the early 1960s and at Pinewoods Camp, where, in 1965, he was also first inspired by the singing of John Langstaff. He works regularly as transcriber and arranger for Revels, Inc.; he is Music Director of Revels, New York, and some of his arrangements are published in *The Christmas Revels Songbook*. He was music editor of the *Frank and Anne Warner Collection* and composed *High Holy Days Services* under commission from Temple Beth Shalom of Long Beach, New York. He has also recorded for Minstrel, Adelphi and Living Folk record labels; he has been accompanist for John Langstaff in concerts over the past 15 years, and, as a singer in his own right, he has performed for folk societies and for clubs and festivals throughout the northeast United States, England and Scotland.

John Langstaff



the SEEDS of LOVE

The instrumental arrangements on this record, and the magnificent voice of John Langstaff, bring these songs very far indeed from their native habitat. In every case the singer from whom the song was collected sang unaccompanied. In the early days of the 20th century folksong revival among the educated classes, the collectors felt, no doubt correctly, that the urban public would not accept these songs in their unadorned form. Thus, a "classical" accompaniment, generally for piano, was required.

In the past 25 years, a large "traditional" movement has arisen in support of folk song performance as much like the rural source singers as possible. Thus, folk songs are to be sung unaccompanied or with an instrumentation appropriate to the origin of the song. Our reasons for presenting these songs as we do has nothing to do with this or any other aesthetic controversy. We have no thesis to prove; it is not our purpose that anyone else should necessarily sing these songs in this way or accompany them in this way. We ignore abstract questions of what is "proper" for folk songs. Our goal is simply music.

We have been drawn to writing these arrangements by the charismatic voice and magical style of John Langstaff, but primarily we have been seduced by the musical possibilities we saw inherent in the songs themselves. Suspend, even if temporarily, all intellectual questions about what is "proper" for folk songs and simply listen to the music.