

GURNEY Songs • 2

Sleep • Severn Meadows • Snow

Marcus Farnsworth, Baritone • Eric McElroy, Piano





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Ivor Gurney (1890–1937)

Songs · 2

Ivor Gurney was born in the city of Gloucester in August 1890, the son of a tailor. Family life centred on a small church, All Saints, on the east side of Gloucester. Several uncles and cousins lived close by and were involved with the church, one cousin playing the organ, and others singing in the choir, which Ivor himself duly joined in 1899. His potential as a boy treble being quickly recognised, he was soon auditioned for the cathedral choir, and from May 1900 became a cathedral chorister, under the guidance of the organist, Herbert Brewer. Alongside the daily singing of services at the cathedral, the climax of the choir's year was the annual Three Choirs Festival, one of the oldest musical events in the country, attracting esteemed musicians, soloists and composers.

It was at the Three Choirs that Gurney settled upon his future course. Inspired by hearing and singing the music of Edward Elgar at the festival, and by the sight of the man himself – 'a live hero' – the young Gurney determined to become a composer. He began writing his first music in around 1904–5, and by 1908 was writing with confidence, undertaking several miniatures for piano and violin and increasing numbers of songs. Indeed, song was the thing that came most naturally to Gurney. His musical response to poetry was intuitive, and although he would go on to write many chamber works, a few large scale pieces for orchestra, and some choral music, it is in the genre of song that Gurney's strength and most important musical legacy lies.

He was a voracious reader of poetry, having been given free rein of his godfather's library, with favourite poets for setting in his earliest songs being Robert Bridges, William Ernest Henley and Robert Louis Stevenson. Henley was, like Gurney, born and schooled in Gloucester, and it was to Henley's poems of the sea to which Gurney was particularly attracted, such as *The sea is full of wandering foam* verses that perhaps tie in with the tales told to Gurney by sailors coming into the busy docks nearby. Bridges's poems provided more lyrical, pastoral fodder, including *Since thou, O fondest and truest*, which was, like the Henley, composed in around 1908.

In 1910 Gurney applied to London's Royal College of Music. He was rewarded with an open scholarship, which he took up in 1911, so coming under the influence of Hubert Parry (another Gloucester luminary) and professor of composition, Charles Villiers Stanford. Stanford declared Gurney to be perhaps the most gifted of his many notable pupils, but the least teachable. On one occasion, Stanford pored over Gurney's manuscript, made a few pencil alterations, and returned the score. On looking it over, Gurney declared, 'Well, Sir Charles, I see you've "jigged the whole show", and stormed out of the lesson. The song in question may well have been a setting of a Goethe poem well known from its settings by Schubert and Wolf, *Kennst du das Land?*, which would have been set by Stanford as an exercise in word-setting in around 1914. The manuscript bears the marks of Stanford's infamous, much dreaded gold pencil. However, with its passing echoes of Stanford's partsong, *The Blue Bird*, it perhaps betrays some inkling of Gurney's admiration for his teacher.

Back in Gloucester during the Christmas break from college of 1913–14, Gurney composed what is regarded as his first masterpiece: a set of *Five Elizabethan Songs* that would become Gurney's first published musical work, in 1920. One of these, a setting of John Fletcher's *Sleep*, has become the most enduringly popular of Gurney's songs.

Gurney's studies were interrupted by the outbreak of war. In February 1915, on his second attempt at joining up, Gurney was admitted into the 2/5th Gloucestershire Battalion. While in training he found time to revise one of his recent songs – a setting of a Border Ballad, *The Twa Corbies*, dedicated to Hubert Parry – but opportunity for writing music was otherwise limited. Gurney had begun to dabble with verse in around 1907, and even submitted a poem to a magazine in 1912, without success. With music becoming a more difficult undertaking as a soldier, he instead channelled his creativity into poetry. The war served as his poetic apprenticeship, and he emerged from it a published poet with not one, but two published collections to his name, *Severn and Somme* and *War's Embers*. This is not to say that music didn't come: he composed five songs while in the trenches; ruminations on mortality, and expressions of homesickness. One of these is unusual in being a setting of one of his own poems – a poem titled *Song* written in January 1917, which, two months later, became the song *Severn Meadows*, which recalls Gloucestershire, and the meadows beside the River Severn that Gurney loved so well.

In the autumn of 1917, Gurney was back in Gloucestershire. Having been invalided home following a mild gassing, he had a week of leave before returning to army training. Here, a friend introduced Gurney to the poetry of Edward Thomas; an introduction that was quietly seismic in Gurney's creative work. The influence of Thomas's poetry soon became evident in Gurney's own writings, poetical and musical, notably composing 21 settings of Thomas's poems, all but a few of them composed in the three years between 1918 and 1921, and all but one as solo songs. All three of the songs to Edward Thomas on this album were composed in 1921. The attraction of *In Memoriam* to Gurney, in the context of his war service, is self-evident, while *Adlestrop* finds Thomas stopped unexpectedly in a sleepy corner of Gloucestershire. *Snow* is one of Gurney's perfect vision images, capturing beautifully the atmosphere of the scene in which Thomas's daughter weeps for the bird whose soft down she believes falls about them, filling the air.

With his return to England, Gurney began writing music again at the end, finishing songs imagined in France, and beginning new ones, including the ballad setting *The Lawlands of Holland*, composed in early January 1918, and of Yeats's *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, written the following month. His return from hospital to the discipline of army training was short-lived. Concerns about his well-being saw him returned to a succession of hospitals to convalesce; concerns that culminated in an attempted suicide in June 1918. Gurney never returned to front line duty.

Although he was attempting to compose chamber music, his instinct for song made this the mainstay of his return to music making following the war. Over the next few years he worked avidly, creating a huge amount of both poetry and music. He returned to his studies at the Royal College of Music in 1919, now studying with Ralph Vaughan Williams, and undertook some of his most ambitious large-scale work between 1919 and 1921, in addition to over 150 songs. Returning to London as a published poet, Gurney was now moving in literary circles, befriending several of the new 'Georgian Poets', including the poets of several songs on this album: Edward Shanks (*The fields are full*); Walter de la Mare (*The Ghost*); John Masefield (*The Halt of the Legion*); and Wilfrid Gibson, whose *Red Roses* was set written for a nurse he fell in love with in early 1918, while *Blaweary* and *The Mugger's Song* followed in late 1920.

The mastermind behind the notion of the Georgian Poets, identifying what he saw as a new poetic manner amongst English poets, was Edward Marsh, who put together five anthologies of Georgian Poetry between 1912 and 1922. Gurney had hopes of becoming one of those Georgians, sending Marsh some notebooks of poems in 1922, but too late for Marsh's final volume. Gurney was first in touch with Marsh in late 1921, when Marsh sent him some money to support his work. With the money, Gurney took himself off to Cornwall for a few weeks to take up some work as a cinema pianist in Bude. There, he composed a set of four Rupert Brooke songs for Marsh (who had been a close friend of Brooke), of which *There's Wisdom in Women* was the second.

Where the Elizabethans had inspired Gurney's first masterpiece, his 'Elizas', the influence of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets and composers persisted. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were those most admired and 'honoured' by Gurney, in both poetry and music, as in the songs *Come away, death* and *Echo's Lament of Narcissus*.

During 1922, Gurney's health again deteriorated. In September he was confined to an asylum, where he would remain for the rest of his life. For five years Gurney continued to write, at first only poetry; but the music returned in 1924 for another short few years of fervid creativity, writing works that he believed no one would ever see or care about. One of the first songs of this new creative lease of life was a setting of another Georgian Poet, Frank Prewett, *Voices of Women*, probably composed in 1924, which looks back to the war and those lost in France. *World Strangeness*, from August 1925, captures something of the strangeness of the surroundings in which Gurney now found himself. The final song of the album is perhaps Gurney's final song; the latest dated song in the archive: *Western Sailors*, composed in March 1926. Being locked away from the world, unable to collaborate or freely explore bookshops and shelves, Gurney again provided his own words for this love song to his beloved Gloucestershire and River Severn.

Philip Lancaster

1 Down by the salley gardens

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet; She passed the salley 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 would not agree.

In a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
she laid 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.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

2 The fields are full

The fields are full of summer still
And breathe again upon the air
From brown dry side of hedge and hill
More sweetness than the sense can bear.

So some old couple, who in youth With love were filled and over-full, And loved with strength and loved with truth, In heavy age are beautiful.

Edward Shanks (1892–1953)

3 Adlestrop

Yes. I remember Adlestrop – The name, because one afternoon Of heat the express-train drew up there Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat. No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop – only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass, And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry, No whit less still and lonely fair Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang Close by, and round him, mistier, Farther and farther, all the birds Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Edward Thomas (1878–1917)

4 Hawk and Buckle

Robert Graves (1895–1985)

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5 In Memoriam (Easter, 1915)

The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood
This Eastertide call into mind the men,
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should
Have gathered them and will do never again.

Edward Thomas

6 Voices of Women

Frank Prewett (1893–1962)

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7 The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree, And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made; Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee, And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart's core.

William Butler Yeats

8 The Halt of the Legion

John Masefield (1878–1967)

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9 Severn Meadows

Only the wanderer Knows England's graces, Or can anew see clear Familiar faces. And who loves joy as he That dwells in shadows? Do not forget me quite, O Severn meadows.

Ivor Gurney (1890–1937)

10 Blaweary

As I came by Blaweary
I heard a young wife sing –
Hush-a-low, hush-a-low,
Hush-a-low my dearie,
Hush-a-low my little lamb,
Hush-a-low and sleep.

As I came by Blaweary
I heard a young wife sing –
Hush-a-low, hush-a-low,
Hush-a-low my dearie,
Daddy's in the lambing-storm
'Tending to the sheep.

As I came by Blaweary
I heard a young wife sing –
Hush-a-low, hush-a-low
Hush-a-low my dearie,
Daddy's coming home again
To find his lamb asleep.

Wilfrid Gibson (1878–1962)

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11 Sleep

Come, sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving Lock me in delight awhile;
Let some pleasing dream beguile
All my fancies, that from thence
I may feel an influence,
All my powers of care bereaving.

Tho' but a shadow, but a sliding, Let me know some little joy. We, that suffer long annoy, Are contented with a thought Thro' an idle fancy wrought: O let my joys have some abiding.

John Fletcher (1579–1625)

12 Red Roses

Red Roses floating in a crystal bowl You bring, O love; and in your eyes I see Blossom on blossom your warm love of me. Burning within the crystal of your soul Red roses floating in a crystal bowl.

Wilfrid Gibson

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13 Snow

In the gloom of whiteness,
In the great silence of snow,
A child was sighing
And bitterly saying: 'Oh,
They have killed a white bird up there on her nest,
The down is fluttering from her breast.'
And still it fell through that dusky brightness
On the child crying for the bird of the snow.

Edward Thomas

14 The Lawlands of Holland

The love that I ha'e chosen, I'll therewith be content;
The saut sea shall be frozen
Before that I repent.
Repent it sall I never
Until the day I dee;
But the Lawlands of Holland
Hae twinned my love and me.

My love he built a bonnie ship
And set her to the main,
With four and twenty mariners
To sail her out and hame.
But the weary wind began to rise,
The sea began to rout,
And my love and his bonnie ship
Turned withershins about.

There sall no mantle cross my back Nae kaim gae in my hair, Neither shall coal or candlelight Shine in my bower mair; Nor sall I choose anither love Until the day I dee, For the Lawlands of Holland Hae twinned my love and me.

Traditional Ballad

15 Tarantella

Do you remember an Inn,

Miranda?

Do you remember an Inn?

And the tedding and the spreading

Of the straw for a bedding,

And the fleas that tease in the High Pyrenees,

And the wine that tasted of the tar?

And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers

(Under the vine of the dark verandah)?

Do you remember an Inn, Miranda,

Do you remember an Inn?

And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers

Who hadn't got a penny,

And who weren't paying any,

And the hammer at the doors and the din?

And the hip! Hop! Hap!

Of the clap

Of the hands to the twirl and the swirl

Of the girl gone chancing,

Glancing,

Dancing,

Backing and advancing,

Snapping of the clapper to the spin

Out and in -

And the ting, tong, tang of the guitar!

Do you remember an Inn,

Miranda?

Do you remember an Inn?

Never more;
Miranda,
Never more.
Only the high peaks hoar:
And Aragon a torrent at the door.
No sound
In the walls of the halls where falls
The tread
Of the feet of the dead to the ground,
No sound:
But the boom
Of the far waterfall like doom.

Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953)

16 The Twa Corbies

As I was walking all alane, I heard twa corbies making a mane; The tane unto the t'other say, 'Where sall we gang and dine to-day?'

'In behint yon auld fail dyke, I wot there lies a new-slain knight; And naebody kens that he lies there, But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

'His hound is to the hunting gane, His hawk, to fetch the wild-fowl hame, His lady's ta'en another mate, So we may mak our dinner sweet.

'Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane, And I'll pike out his bonny blue een. Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair, We'll theek our nest when it grows bare. 'Mony a ane for him makes mane, But nane sall ken whare he is gane: O'er his white banes, when they are bare, The wind sall blaw for evermair.'

Traditional Border Ballad

17 Echo's Lament of Narcissus

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears: Yet slower, yet; O faintly, gentle springs:
List to the heavy part the music bears,
Woe weeps out her division when she sings.
Droop herbs and flowers,
Fall grief in showers,
Our beauties are not ours;
O, I could still,
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,
Drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is, now, a withered daffodil.

Ben Jonson (1572–1637)

18 The Ghost

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)

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19 Kennst du das Land?

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn, Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn, Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht, Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht? Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! dahin Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn.

Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach. Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach, Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an: Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan? Kennst du es wohl? Dahin! dahin Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn.

Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg? Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg; In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut; Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut! Kennst du ihn wohl? Dahin! dahin Geht unser Weg! O Vater, laß uns ziehn!

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Do you know the country where the lemon trees blossom, Where the golden oranges glow in the dark foliage, Where a gentle wind wafts from the blue sky, Where myrtles stand quietly and laurel trees stand tall, Do you really know it?
Let us go there! There Is where I would like to go off with you, my beloved.

Do you know the house? Its roof rests on columns, The hall is glowing, the chamber is shining, Marble images stand there and are looking at me: What have they done to you, poor child? Do you really know it? Let us go there! There Is where I would like to go off with you, my protector.

Do you know the mountain and its path into the clouds? In the mist the mule is trying to find its way; The dragon's old brood lives in caves; The cliff falls away and above it there is a waterfall. Do you really know it?
Let us go there! There
Is where our route takes us. O father, let us go off!

English translation © Malcolm Wren (schubertsong.uk)

20 There's Wisdom in Women

'Oh love is fair, and love is rare;' my dear one she said, 'But love goes lightly over.' I bowed her foolish head, And kissed her hair and laughed at her.

Such a child was she;
So new to love, so true to love, and she spoke so bitterly.

But there's wisdom in women, of more than they have known,
And thoughts go blowing through them, are wiser than their own,
Or how should my dear one, being ignorant and young,
Have cried on love so bitterly, with so true a tongue?

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915)

21 The Mugger's Song

Driving up the Mallerstang
The mugger cracked his whip and sang
And all his crocks went rattle, rattle –
'The road runs fair and smooth and even
From Appleby to Kirkby Stephen
And womenfolk are kittle cattle.

And Kirkby Stephen's fair to see And inns are good in Appleby,' And all his crocks went rattle, rattle. 'But what care I for Kirkby Stephen, Or whether roads are rough or even, And womenfolk are kittle cattle?

And what care I for Appleby, Since Bess of the Blue Bell jilted me?' And all his crocks went rattle, rattle – 'And wed today in Kirkby Stephen, A sweep whose legs are odd and even? And womenfolk are kittle cattle.'

Wilfrid Gibson

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22 Since thou, O fondest and truest

Since thou, O fondest and truest, Hast loved me best and longest, And now with trust the strongest The joy of my heart renewest;

Since thou art dearer and dearer While other hearts grow colder, And ever, as love is older, More lovingly drawest nearer:

Since now I see in the measure Of all my giving and taking, Thou wert my hand in the making, The sense and soul of my pleasure;

The good I have ne'er repaid thee In heaven I pray be recorded, And all thy love rewarded By God, thy master that made thee.

Robert Bridges (1844–1930)

23 The sea is full of wandering foam

The sea is full of wandering foam, The sky of driving cloud; My restless thoughts among them roam... The night is dark and loud.

Where are the hours that came to me So beautiful and bright?
A wild wind shakes the wilder sea...
O, dark and loud's the night!

William Henley (1849–1903)

24 Come away, death

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O, prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown.

Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.

A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where

Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there!

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

25 World Strangeness

Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown –
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray, Yet my Host can ne'er espy, And I know not to this day Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

William Watson (1858–1935)

26 Western Sailors

I know a western river
Where the Spring goes first of all.
I know a sailors' village
Where the elm trees grow tall
And the folk in their walk
And their half sea, half farm-way talk
Bring names of tales and brighter fames
As live as them all.

O, you river, gliding to the sea, I'll ne'er forget brown Severn While my life loves the sea.

Far out to wider waters
All the old men have gone
To shores of great Atlantic.
I would love to look on
Baltimore and Boston City
And the wide Hudson shore,
That their fathers found in
Danger with a war-time risk to run.

O, you river, gliding to the West: Of all the rivers yet I know, I love Severn best.

They came, those hearty sailors, Home at times from foreign parts. New words and songs and salty yarns, With sea-pride in their hearts; Still I'd jump at any chance to cruise Where Carolina's sand and pines Heave first in sight for English folk With pride and salutes.

O, you rivers, gliding to the sea, If you'll take me where I want to I'll make chanties of thee, Love's songs of thee.

Ivor Gurney

Marcus Farnsworth



Marcus Farnsworth is a past First Prize winner of the Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition, and has performed in recital with Malcolm Martineau, Julius Drake, the Myrthen Ensemble with Joseph Middleton and the Nash Ensemble at venues such as Wigmore Hall, Opéra de Lille and La Monnaie, Brussels, among others. He regularly appears with English National Opera, and has also performed at Garsington Opera and Three Choirs Festival as well as with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and has undertaken European tours of Purcell's *King Arthur* with the Gabrieli Consort and Vox Luminis. Other highlights include *Candide* with the London Symphony Orchestra, and Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* at the BBC Proms. As well as new works, including Colin Matthews' *The Great Journey* and the world premiere of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Last Man Standing*, his concert repertoire has featured Britten's *War Requiem*, Elgar's *The Apostles* and Orff's *Carmina Burana* with conductors such as François-Xavier Roth, Paul McCreesh and Bernard Labadie. Farnsworth is the founder and artistic director of the Southwell Music Festival.

Eric McElroy



Composer-pianist Eric McElroy has appeared in recital across North America and Europe. A prolific composer, his works have been performed in Germany, Austria, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. McElroy's debut album, *Tongues of Fire* (SOMM Recordings), featuring his own song cycles as performed by himself and tenor James Gilchrist, was released to international critical acclaim in 2023. The brother of American flautist Colleen McElroy, he studied with Maria Sier, and received his Bachelor's degree with Gerald Berthiaume from Washington State University, undertaking additional studies with Jeffrey Gilliam at Western Washington University. In 2014 he moved to Vienna where he obtained his Master's degree in piano under Klaus Sticken at the Musik und Kunst Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien, and in 2017 completed his postgraduate diploma at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under Mark Bebbington and Margaret Fingerhut. He graduated with a doctorate in musicology under the supervision of Daniel Grimley in 2023 at the University of Oxford and is now based in London.

Ivor Gurney was a poet as well as a composer and was accomplished in a number of musical genres including song. With his intuitive approach to poetry he selected texts widely, from contemporaries to ballads, Elizabethan and Jacobean poets, and even set his own lyrics. This wide-ranging selection includes his masterpieces – among them *Sleep* and *Severn Meadows* – with several songs heard in their first recording. Marcus Farnsworth, First Prize winner in the 2009 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, has been praised for his 'superbly controlled baritone voice' (*Fanfare*).

GURNEY

1	Down by the salley gardens	2:23	14	The Lawlands of Holland*	2:51
2	The fields are full	1:50	15	Tarantella	3:30
3	Adlestrop*	2:32	16	The Twa Corbies	4:38
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6	Voices of Women*	3:02	19	Kennst du das Land?*	2:08
7	The Lake Isle of Innisfree*	3:36	20	There's Wisdom in Women*	1:06
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11	Sleep	3:26	24	Come away, death*	3:29
12	Red Roses	2:40	25	World Strangeness*	2:55
13	Snow	2:31	26	Western Sailors	2:29

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Marcus Farnsworth, Baritone • Eric McElroy, Piano

A detailed track list and full recording and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet

The available sung texts are included in the booklet and may also be accessed at

www.naxos.com/libretti/574599.htm • Booklet notes: Philip Lancaster • This recording is sponsored

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