



LOVERS LOVE LONDON  
THE MUSIC OF  
**ROBERT FARNOON**

Conducted by  
**Jack Parnell**

**THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC STRINGS**  
Leader **Rolph Wilson**

## LOVERS LOVE LONDON

THE MUSIC OF

## ROBERT FARNON

AN AVID / NELSON PRESENTATION  
MADE IN ENGLAND DESIGN: THE CHANGING SEASON

AV HN 101

COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO

mcp

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PRODUCED BY: DAVID FARNON  
CO-ORDINATOR: DEREK BOULTON  
FLUTE: JANE PICKLES  
RECORDING ENGINEER: DICK LEWZEY  
MUSIC PREPARATION: VIC FRASER

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- 1 LOVERS LOVE LONDON (Robert Farnon)
- 2 EN BATEAU (Claude Debussy)
- 3 LAURA (David Raksin)
- 4 LITTLE DID I KNOW (Robert Farnon)
- 5 TO A YOUNG LADY (Robert Farnon)
- 6 OCCASION TO REMINISCE (Robert Farnon)
- 7 FOR EILEEN (Robert Farnon)
- 8 THE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS (Ray Noble)
- 9 INTERMEZZO FOR HARP (Robert Farnon)
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- 11 A VIOLIN MINIATURE (Robert Farnon)
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- 14 FOR "C.K." (Robert Farnon)
- 15 HOW BEAUTIFUL IS NIGHT (Robert Farnon)

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LOVERS LOVE LONDON THE MUSIC OF ROBERT FARNON



André Previn declared, many years ago, that Robert Farnon is the greatest living writer for strings. When he hears this new album, he will be reassured that his opinion was not misplaced.

At the age of 84, Farnon could have been forgiven for merely 'polishing up' a few old friends, which would certainly have been gratefully received by his many admirers around the world. But it is clear that his urge to compose is still as strong as ever, and five of these delicate miniatures are brand new works, while others are given fresh new settings which frequently amaze through their sheer beauty.

Today Bob prefers to leave it to other conductors to interpret his works, and he could have made no better choice than his old friend Jack Parnell.

*"I was very honoured when Bob asked me to conduct his music for this CD" was Jack's opening remark, when asked to reflect on the sessions.*

*"I have known, worked with, and deeply admired Bob for over half a century, and to conduct such beautiful music I considered one of the highlights of my career.*

*"The Orchestra were superb, and the exquisite playing of our leader, Rolph Wilson, and flautist Jane Pickles an absolute joy.*

*"I'm sure everyone who enjoys listening to romantic music will enjoy listening to this CD."*

Robert Farnon was born in Toronto, Canada, on 24 July 1917. Still in his teens, he was well-known to radio listeners playing trumpet and cracking jokes with "The Happy Gang", which became a Canadian institution. He played in Percy Faith's CBC orchestra, and eventually took over the baton when Faith was lured south to the richer pastures of the USA. During this period Farnon composed two symphonies, and he nursed aspirations to become a

'serious' composer. His first symphony was performed in the USA by Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, and both were played by the Toronto and Montreal Symphony Orchestras.

Unfortunately World War 2 intervened, and in September 1944 he arrived in England as Captain Robert Farnon, conductor of the Canadian Band of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. Working alongside Glenn Miller and George Melachrino (who fronted the American and British bands), he undertook a punishing schedule of numerous broadcasts and concerts for the troops. Although the AEF Programme of the BBC was aimed at the Allied Forces, its broadcasts were popular with the civilian population as well, and by the end of the war Farnon was highly respected by fellow musicians and his many fans.

In Britain Robert Farnon had discovered that Concert Music was very popular, thanks to the influence of composers and

conductors such as Eric Coates and Haydn Wood. Films also needed a steady supply of background music. Farnon decided that there were opportunities for him to develop his composing skills that were absent back home, so he chose to remain in England when he was demobbed from the Canadian Army.

He was soon in demand from radio, recording companies and the film industry. But perhaps the most significant turning point in his career came when Teddy Holmes, boss of the Chappell Recorded Music Library, put Farnon under contract to compose a steady stream of light music cameos covering many varied moods. In retrospect it seems that this event was akin to a dam being burst; dozens of wonderful melodies that had probably been kicking around in Farnon's subconscious for years, suddenly found an outlet. Chappells was pleased to publish anything that Farnon created, allowing us all to marvel at miniature masterpieces such as *Jumping Bean*,

*Portrait of a Flirt, A Star is Born, Journey Into Melody, Peanut Polka and Westminster Waltz.*

The arrival of the long playing record brought Robert Farnon's brilliant arrangements and compositions to the notice of music lovers worldwide, and he was soon in demand to work with international stars such as Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan, George Shearing, Lena Horne, Jose Carreras, Eileen Farrell, George Benson, Tony Bennett and Eddie Fisher.

The need to support a large family meant that Farnon had to provide the kind of music that would pay the bills. However, he has never forgotten his early ambitions to compose more serious works, and occasionally this has been possible. One of his first film scores was "Captain Horatio Hornblower, R.N." which contains some tender love themes among the stirring, swashbuckling excitement demanded by the script. In 1958 the BBC commissioned *Rhapsody*

*for Violin and Orchestra*, a beautiful romantic work, which has been unjustly neglected by concert promoters. The harmonica virtuoso Tommy Reilly persuaded Farnon to write specially for him, which resulted in *Prelude and Dance for Harmonica and Orchestra*, a work which forced harmonica manufacturers to redesign their instruments.

*Saxophone Triparti* is a three movement work for soprano, tenor and alto saxophones, which the Musicians' Union commissioned in 1971 for Bob Burns. Other important scores include *A La Claire Fontaine, Lake of the Woods, The Frontiersmen* and *A Promise of Spring*.

This latest collection opens with a new composition *Lovers Love London*. According to Robert Farnon, his inspiration was an affection for lighting-up time on the streets, and the parks, of Westminster, and along the river. Some of this magic can be seen in the cover photograph of this CD.

*En Bateau* is a delightful work by Claude Debussy, which Farnon once orchestrated for the 1948 film "Spring In Park Lane", a very successful British movie starring Anna Neagle and Michael Wilding. It was Farnon's first major film score, and could have resulted in a Hollywood career, had he not decided to remain on this side of the Atlantic. On this CD the work takes on a simplified setting of the two main themes, with a lovely music conversation between Jane (flute) and Rolph (violin).

*Laura* has always been one of Farnon's favourite film themes. He first orchestrated it back in the 1940s, and hoped that one day he would hear it performed by a large orchestra in a major concert hall. He has had his wish fulfilled on more than one occasion (including a memorable concert at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1974), and he could not resist allowing the Strings of the Royal Philharmonic to weave their special magic with David Raksin's timeless melody.

*Little Did I Know* is the second brand-new Farnon score, and he plans to write a lyric to this pensive tune:

"Little did I know about her,  
Not even her name.  
She was shy  
So was I ..."

*To a Young Lady* is a proud father's tribute to his daughter Judith.

*Occasion to Reminisce* is one of the many works that Robert Farnon originally composed for the Chappell Recorded Music Library – a vast storehouse of music that can be used by film, radio and television companies around the world. Although first published over forty years ago, this is the first time that it has been available on a commercial recording.

The 'Eileen' in the title of *For Eileen* is a very special lady who is held in high esteem in North America – the opera singer Eileen Farrell. During the 1990s Robert Farnon arranged and conducted four albums with her, and as a surprise

item on the last of these he included this purely instrumental tribute.

*The Touch of Your Lips* is one of the enduring melodies written back in the 1930s by the British bandleader Ray Noble. It has become a popular 'standard' in the true sense of the word, and this superb string arrangement, like the others, is a joy to listen to.

During his long career Robert Farnon has worked with many of the finest musicians on the London scene. One of the most charming was the harpist Marie Goossens, who was frequently in the orchestra for its radio and television programmes, and numerous recording sessions. *Intermezzo for Harp* was composed by Bob especially for Marie, and it has become a firm favourite with the many harpists who have performed it subsequently.

*Lady Barbara* is the main love theme which Robert Farnon composed for the "Hornblower" film in 1951. Although it was an integral part of the score, it stands alone as a tender portrayal of the searing passions – both happy and sad – which mark all great love affairs. Lyrics have been added, and the title of the song version is *On the Lips of Lovers*.

*A Violin Miniature* comes from a suite "Showcase for Soloists" highlighting many instruments of the orchestra. It bears a passing resemblance to Farnon's longer work *Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra*.

*Coeur Brisé* (literal translation 'Heartbreaks') is another new composition, receiving its premiere recording on this CD.

*Peacehaven* - also a new work – is a tone poem in the finest Farnon tradition, dedicated to the children's home founded by Gracie Fields on the south coast of England.

In August 1998 Robert Farnon arranged and conducted an album for the great Scottish jazz singer Carol Kidd. For "C.K." (his fifth new composition on this CD) is Bob's present to her, reminding them both of a joyous occasion which resulted in some superlative performances of great songs of the last century.

*How Beautiful is Night* reveals Robert Farnon at his most lyrical. Written in the 1940s, it has become a standard thanks to vocal recordings by Tony Bennett and Sarah Vaughan, and remains one of his best-known works. The title comes from a poem by Robert Southey, which provided the young Robert Farnon with the necessary inspiration.

**Jack Parnell** is one of the best-known and most popular British jazzmen. Born 6 August 1923, he is fondly remembered as drummer with the famous Ted Heath band, before his long association with Associated TeleVision. For years he conducted the theatre orchestra for the legendary 'Sunday Night at the London

Palladium', and provided the orchestra for many of ATV's top musical shows, culminating in 'The Muppet Show'. Later in his career he returned to his jazz roots, conducting Laurie Johnson's London Big Band. Widely admired in the music profession, he has worked with Robert Farnon on numerous recordings, and was a natural choice to conduct this album.

## David Ades

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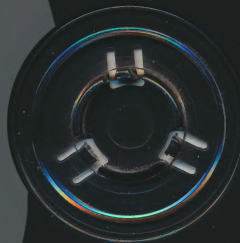
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