



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

From the American “Symphonic ‘30s”

William Levi Dawson

Negro Folk Symphony

Texas Music Festival Orchestra, Houston
Mei-Ann Chen, conductor

Howard Hanson

Symphony 2 - Romantic

Moore School Symphony Orchestra, Houston
Franz Anton Krager, conductor

Percy Aldridge Grainger

Lincolnshire Posy

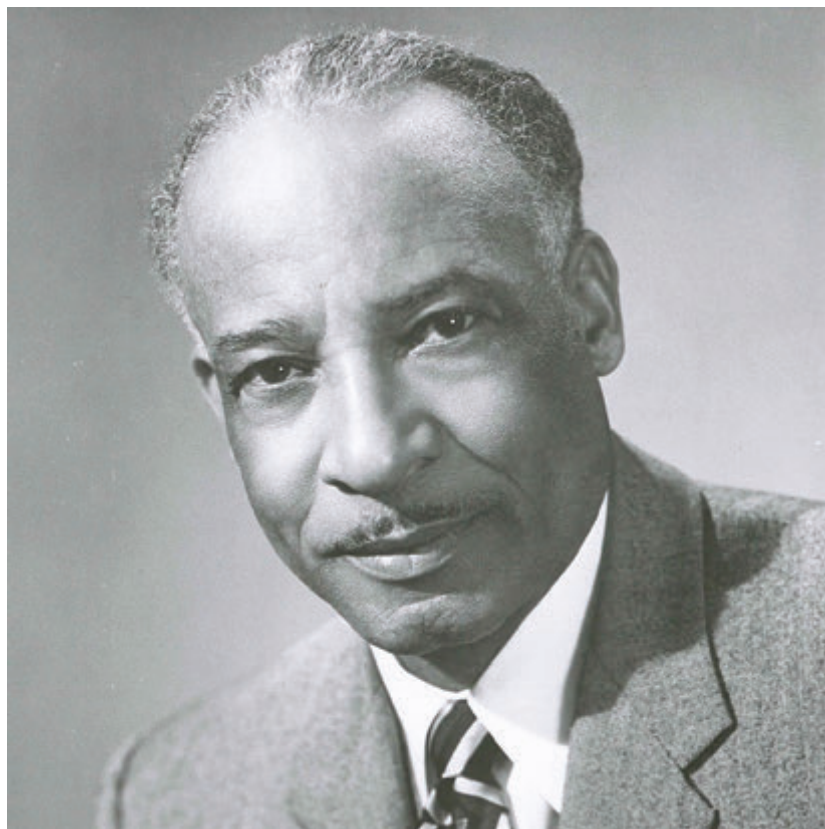
Texas Music Festival Orchestra, Houston
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WILLIAM LEVI DAWSON (26 September 1899 – 2 May 1990) was born in Anniston, Alabama. At age 13, he ran away from home to the Tuskegee Institute, where he studied music, wrote his first pieces, and graduated in 1921. Ten years later, after earning a Master's degree, he returned to the historically Black institution to launch its music school, while making its choir internationally famous, singing his many arrangements of spirituals.

He completed his Negro Folk Symphony in 1934. The work consists of three movements:

1. The Bond of Africa
2. Hope in the Night
3. O, Let Me Shine, Shine Like a Morning Star!



Its world premiere on 20 November 1934 in Carnegie Hall, New York City, was given by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Dawson had begun composing the piece at least 4 or 5 years earlier while living in Chicago, where he had been studying at the American Conservatory of Music and playing in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago as a trombonist in the late '20s. By 1930, Dawson had accepted a position at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, heading its School of Music, and in that capacity he led Tuskegee's renowned 100-voice choir on a tour to New York in the early '30s. While in New York, he met with Stokowski who took a look at the new score and suggested some expansions. These ideas resulted in the work that Stokowski then premiered in 1934 to great acclaim.

In an interview given in conjunction with the premiere, Dawson had this to say about "his first Negro symphony":

"It is not religious, but classical in the modern idiom. It is melancholy, a type of theme related to jazz in its rhythm. It is an attempt to develop Negro music, something they said again and again could not be developed. I made up my mind four years ago to stop talking myself and let others do the talking. Ever since, I have been writing the music. I have never doubted the possibilities of our music, for I feel that buried in the South is music that somebody, someday, will discover. They will make an-

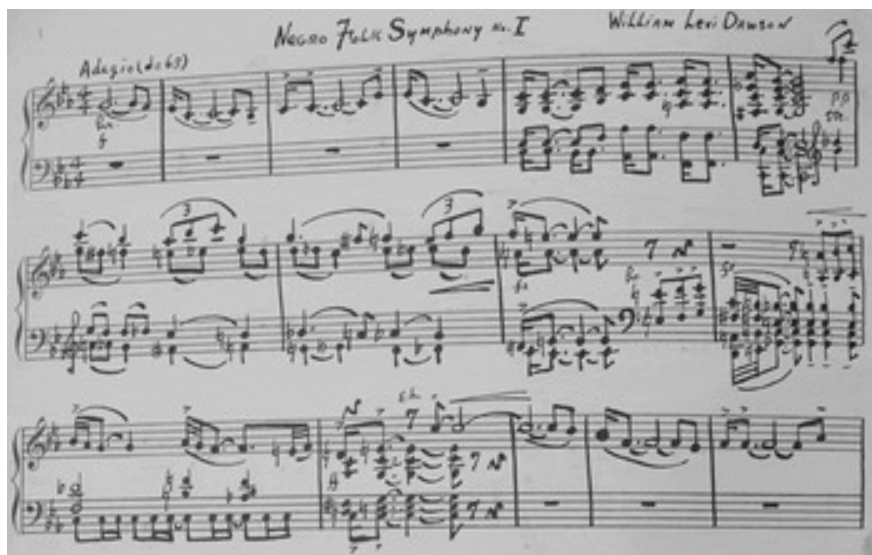
other great music out of the folksongs of the South. I feel from the bottom of my heart that it will rank one day with the music of Brahms and the Russian composers."

The three-movement work is modeled on Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, while exhibiting Dawson's own distinctive mastery and development of his emotionally charged and rigorously constructed themes. Dawson said he wasn't out to imitate Beethoven, Brahms, or Dvorak, but wanted those who heard it to know that it was "unmistakably not the work of a white man." He found inspiration for the piece in traditional spirituals, which he preferred to call "Negro folk-music."

"The themes are taken from what are popularly known as Negro Spirituals," Dawson wrote for the program notes of the Carnegie Hall performance. "In this composition, the composer has employed three themes taken from typical melodies over which he has brooded since childhood, having learned them at his mother's knee."

The heart of Dawson's symphony is its central movement, titled "Hope in the Night," which is not based on a spiritual. After three soft strokes of a gong, Dawson gives a plaintive melody to a lone English horn soaring over a lumbering, march-like beat in plucked strings. Dawson described it as an "atmosphere of the humdrum life of a people whose bodies were baked by the sun and lashed with the whip for two hundred and fifty years; whose lives were proscribed before they were born."

In a dramatic moment later in the movement, Dawson lets the entire orchestra take over the theme. In an article published in the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, Gwynne Kuhner Brown, professor of Music History and



Music Theory at the University of Puget Sound, notes that Dawson didn't simply build his symphony by quoting singable melodies from spirituals. "The themes are handled with such virtuosic flexibility of rhythm and timbre that each movement seems to evolve organically," she writes, adding that Dawson offers a "persuasive musical bridge between the 'Negro Folk' and the 'Symphony.'"

Praising the new work, conductor Leopold Stokowski said he was

happy to introduce the composition to American audiences because he believed it to be a distinct achievement in American music. "Dawson has succeeded," he said, "in portraying that aspect of American life which he has seen and lived and felt most profoundly. It is a work which is both vital and personal. He has voiced the spirit of his people struggling in a new land; the ancient voice of Africa transferred to America and here expressed through the medium of the white man's most highly developed musical instrument, the symphony orchestra."

Critics from the New York World Telegram and The New York Times, writing of the Carnegie Hall concert, praised the Negro Folk Symphony's warmth and orchestration. It was heralded as an important milestone in the establishment of an American symphonic canon – alas, a sentiment soon to fade from the musical consciousness.

Such was its success the night of the Carnegie Hall premiere that Dawson, who up to this point had centered his career on choral music, reckoned he would dive into more orchestral composing. It didn't happen. The Negro Folk Symphony is the only one he wrote. The piece embodied all the promise that would merit a busy schedule of performances and recordings over the coming years and decades. And for a long time, they didn't come.

It wasn't until about 30 years later that it was first recorded, by Stokowski and the American Symphony Orchestra. This period of obscurity and neglect between the Carnegie Hall premiere and the 1963 first recording by Stokowski is explained thusly by Vanderbilt University's Associate Professor of Musicology Doug Shadle, that the classical canon has been born of and sustained by a "conscious selection performed by individuals in positions of power." This power has been overwhelmingly held by white leaders who, for far too long, have excluded Black composers from the canon. Even so, Dawson continued

to nurture his symphony, years after its premiere.

During a trip to West Africa in 1952, he heard, assimilated, and incorporated African rhythms into the piece, complementing its Negro spiritual foundations. This revised version is heard in



this HDTT recording.

At the time of the Carnegie Hall premiere, Leopold Stokowski conducted four back-to-back performances of the piece, one of which was nationally broadcast by CBS radio. One New York critic called it "the most distinctive and promising American symphonic proclamation which has so far been achieved." Olin Downes, writing in *The New York Times*, noted: "This music has dramatic feeling, a racial sensuousness, and directness of melodic speech."

The immediate success should have made Dawson a household name and buoyed him to write more symphonic works. But after just a handful of performances over the next 18 months, the symphony dropped off the radar, and Dawson never wrote another.

HOWARD HANSON (28 October 1896 – 26 February 1981) was an American composer, conductor, educator, music theorist, and leading champion of American classical music. His legacy is inextricably associated with his four-decades-long directorship of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, to the extent that his dominating personality as a musician influenced the artistic development and careers of a multitude of his students and colleagues, while providing opportunities for commissioning and performing American music.

He belonged to that select group of American composers born in the last decade of the 19th century - Walter Piston (1894), Roger Sessions (1896), Randall Thompson (1899), Roy Harris (1898), Virgil Thomson (1896), and Aaron Copland (1900) - all of whom personified the emergence of American classical music as a distinctly national, as opposed to European, cultural phenomenon to be taken seriously. He was the leading practitioner of American musical romanticism, much in the tradition of Jean Sibelius, Edvard Grieg, and Carl Nielsen in Scandinavia. Hanson dedicated his professional life to the encouragement, creation, and preservation of beauty in music, believing it to be an art form possessing unique power to ennoble both performer and listener and, by extension, mankind.

Hanson, speaking at an Eastman School of Music convocation in 1936, had this to say about his personal philosophy:

"Music has a strange physiological and psychological power. We rediscover music not only as a tremendous emotional force in the lives of men, but also as a sociological force in education. We realize that these simple vibrations which proceed from the elastic string of the

violin are potent - potent both for good and ill. We ponder upon the intricacies of the human mind and the unfathomed depths of the human soul. We salute music not as an abstract art but as a great social force. We call upon ourselves to use this force for the benefit of mankind. We call upon the spirit of beauty to make clean our hearts that we may be fit servants of so great an art...a divinely great art. We study an art that is part of infinity itself. It is tangible, it is intangible. It is science, it is art. It is emotion, it is intellect. It is part of society, yet it carries us to heights where we exist for a moment in the fearful and awesome isolation of interplanetary space. It calls for our deepest emotional development, the greatest use of our intellectual powers, and a supreme devotion to beauty."

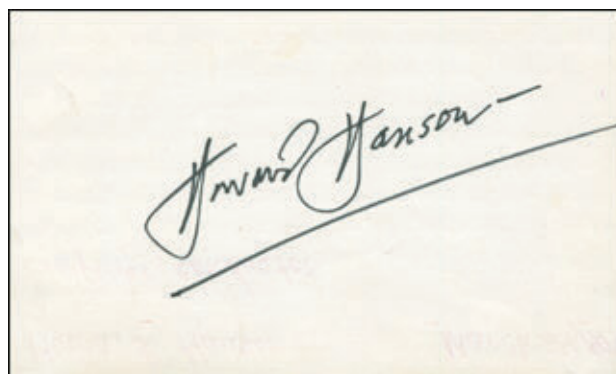
Throughout his musical life Hanson never departed from his cherished ideals of beauty, clarity, and simplicity of utterance, and his conviction that musicians and their audiences would respond openly to each other on this basis. He abhorred ugliness in music, dismissed as worthless intellectual abstraction for its own sake, and fought what he perceived as the growing alienation between composer and audience. A lifetime of composition reflects this conviction, as did his lengthy tenure as a teacher and administrator.

The years following his retirement in 1964 were a time of increasing frustration and bitterness for the composer and teacher who saw his life-work and ideals rejected as hopelessly old-fashioned by his academic colleagues. His death in 1981 came just before personal vindication through such Hanson champions as Leonard Slatkin and Gerard Schwarz, whose best-selling recordings of Hanson's music found a receptive and enthusiastic public. Ironically, perhaps his most widespread public exposure came with the 1979 blockbuster science-fiction film *Alien*, which famously used Hanson's *Romantic Symphony* as the music for its closing credits.

Hanson's place in music history is inextricably linked with the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. After his three-year 1921 - 1924 residency in Italy as a winner of the *Prix de Rome*, Hanson was tapped by George Eastman, the inventor of Kodak film and founder of the



Eastman Kodak company in Rochester, NY, to head the University of Rochester's fledgling Eastman School of Music. Eastman knew little about music - beyond what he liked! - but was a shrewd judge of talent in others. His judgement in the case of the young Hanson would have long-lasting and profound consequences not only for the Eastman School of Music but also for the whole course of American music and music education. Hanson would hold the position of Director until his retirement forty years later, and during that remarkable tenure he would elevate the school to a commanding position in the American musical community as the leading force behind the cultivation and propagation of American music.



Dozens of musicians who became well-known composers and educators themselves were trained by Hanson and his Eastman staff. His annual American Music Festivals became the proving ground for works by such as Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, Virgil Thomson, Peter Mennin, Randall Thompson, Roger Sessions, Roy Harris, and Leo Sowerby. All told, during his tenure in Rochester, Hanson presented works by over 700 composers, featuring over 1,500 different compositions - a remarkable achievement by any measure.

During his Eastman years and in retirement Hanson wrote a total of seven symphonies: Symphony 1, "Nordic", of 1923; Symphony 2, "Romantic", of 1930, which became his most popular and frequently performed work; Symphony 3 of 1938; Symphony 4, "Requiem in Memory of My Father", of 1943; Symphony 5, "Sinfonia Sacra", of 1954; Symphony 6, of 1967, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic; and Symphony 7, "A Sea Symphony" after Walt Whitman, of 1974, commissioned by the Interlochen National Music Camp.

Symphony 2 in D-flat major, "Romantic", was written for standard orchestra in 1930 as a commission from conductor Serge Koussevitzky for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1930. It is in three flowing movements, with thematic material shared throughout. The composer commented that his goal for the piece was "to create a work young in spirit, romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression." He later added that he saw it as "a protest against the growing Schoenbergism of the time." The lyrical, haunting second theme of the first movement has become known as the "Interlochen Theme", as it is regularly performed at the conclusion of concerts at the Interlochen Center for the Arts. This signature theme is

repeated with growing emphasis and opulence in the following two movements. In his comments, Hanson considered himself a "perfect fifth" or "major third" composer, but in the Romantic Symphony it is the "perfect fourth that plays a prominent part throughout the symphony in both melody and harmony."

The Romantic was premiered by Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony on 28 November 1930, with a performance following shortly by Arturo Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic. The composer himself conducted and recorded it with the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, twice. Other conductors who have performed and recorded the Romantic Symphony include Franz Anton Krager, Charles Gerhardt, Erich Kunzel, Neville Marriner, Gerard Schwarz, David Montgomery, and Leonard Slatkin. Hanson was reportedly displeased that the famous theme was used for the closing credits of the movie *Alien* - without his permission - but he decided not to fight it in court. In any event, the cinematic *Alien* exposure was without a doubt the widest dissemination to the widest audience possible of any of his music! The movements of the Romantic Symphony are as follows:

[1] Adagio - Allegro moderato - Lento molto espressivo - Tranquillo - Animato - molto meno mosso, meno mosso, molto meno mosso

[2] Andante con tenerezza

[3] Allegro con brio - molto meno mosso - piu mosso - animato - largamente

Australian-American composer PERCY ALDRIDGE GRAINGER (8 July 1882 – 20 February 1961) lived a wide-ranging life and career. He began as a noteworthy teenage pianist in Melbourne before his extended musical studies in composition in Frankfurt, followed by a 14-year stay in London and a generally permanent residence as a touring pianist, educator, and progressive-minded composer in the New York area for the final 47 years



of his life.

Lincolnshire Posy, Grainger's band arrangement of English folk-songs, was completed in 1937, though his adaptation stemmed from hearing these songs performed or recorded by actual British folk singers during his earlier London years. Those folksingers employed free rhythms and vocal inflections natural to their speaking voices, in contrast to the trained voices of concert singers.

This subsequently became a source of Grainger's fascination with "free music" manifested in the rhythms, harmonies and formal structure of his original compositions. Characteristically, he called Lincolnshire Posy "a bunch of musical wildflowers" in his own commentary on the music.

The suite consists of six songs: "Lisbon" (Sailor's Song), "Horkstow Grange" (The Miser and his Man – a local Tragedy), "Rufford Park Poachers" (Poaching Song), "The Brisk Young Sailor (who returned to wed his True Love)", "Lord Melbourne" (War Song) and "The Lost Lady Found" (Dance Song). Merlin Patterson arranged Lincolnshire Posy for full symphony orchestra in 2012, with the goal of "trying to replicate, as closely as possible, Grainger's mastery of timbre and colour."

The Immanuel and Olshan Texas Music Festival® was founded in 1990 to provide young professional musicians with a high-level environment in which to develop skills in orchestral, chamber music, and solo performance. The TMF Orchestra is the largest ensemble gathered for the summer festival.

The intensive Orchestral Institute on the University of Houston campus is guided by distinguished artist-faculty from the Moores and Shepherd Schools of Music, principals and members of the Houston Symphony, Houston Grand Opera, and Ballet orchestras; and internationally recognized guest artists. TMF faculty members perform as soloists with the Festi-



val Orchestra and as part of the PERSPECTIVES chamber music series.

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- All TMF Orchestra Fellows receive fellowships covering tuition and weekly lessons valued around \$3,500
- International musical community
- Master classes with renowned musicians as well as principals and members of the Houston Symphony and other major orchestras •
- Cynthia Woods Mitchell Young Artists Competition
- Weekly private lesson instruction

The Moores School Symphony Orchestra is conducted by UH Director of Orchestras, Franz Anton Krager. As a major ensemble with over 110 members, the orchestra performs is a leading ensemble in the area of new music as well as being an important repository for the standard literature, presenting works from all major orchestral genres including full orchestra, chamber orchestra, opera, oratorio and ballet.

The orchestra collaborates on a regular basis with the Moores Opera Center, MSM choirs and the Houston Ballet Academy. The high level of its performances has been hailed by international artists and critics alike as a student ensemble of professional quality and versatility.



Taiwanese American con-

ductor Mei-Ann Chen is a regular guest conductor with the summer Texas Music Festival, Houston. Mei-Ann Chen is acclaimed for infusing orchestras with energy, enthusiasm and high-level music-making, galvanizing audiences and communities alike.

For HDTT High Definition Tape Transfers, she and the TMF Orchestra can also be heard on Blu-ray Audio and CD in Symphony 10 by Dmitri Shostakovich, Romeo and Juliet by Tchaikovsky, Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra [St. John Flynn, narrator] by Britten, and Petrushka by Stravinsky.

Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, she has just been appointed as an artistic partner with Washington state's Northwest Sinfonietta. Ms. Chen has been Chief Conductor of Austria's Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since fall 2021 after two seasons as the orchestra's first-ever Principal Guest Conductor, making her the first

female Asian conductor to hold this position with an Austrian orchestra. She continues as the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, a post she was named to in 2019. Ms. Chen also has served as Artistic Director & Conductor for the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival since 2016. Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and an innovative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, Ms. Chen continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide - over 110 orchestras to date.



Franz Anton Krager is Music Director of the Immanuel and Helen Olshan Texas Music Festival, held each summer at the University of Houston, and is also the Hourani Endowed Professor of Music, Director of Orchestras, and Chair of the Conducting Department at the University of Houston Moores School of Music, where he has brought the Moores School Symphony Orchestra and the conducting program to international prominence.

The Texas Music Festival Orchestra and the Moores School Symphony Orchestra are both heard on National Public Radio and have commercially recorded the music of Thomas Fortmann, Percy Grainger, Michael Horvit, Peter Lieuwen, Robert Nelson, and Stephen Shewan on the Divine Art (Métier), Albany, MSR Classics, and Newport record labels.

For HDTT High Definition Tape Transfers in its “Immersive Surround-Sound” series of multichannel Blu-Ray Audio discs and digital downloads, Krager has recorded music of Bruckner, his Great Mass in F-Minor and Symphony 7; of Respighi, his “Roman Trilogy” Tone Poems; of Leonard Bernstein, his Jeremiah Symphony, Symphonic Dances from West Side Story, and excerpts from “Candide”; of Mahler, his Symphony 2, “Resurrection”; and with organist Robert Bates, the Symphonie concertante of Jongen and the Organ Concerto of Poulenc. Forthcoming releases include the symphonic arrangement of “Death and the Maiden” by Schubert; Concerto for Orchestra by Rob Smith; Cityscape by John Wineglass; and Also sprach Zarathustra by Richard

Strauss.

Krager has made his artistic presence felt both at home and abroad with performance engagements in some of the world's most celebrated concert halls and musical centers. Since making his prize-winning European conducting debut in Copenhagen's Tivoli Koncertsalen in 1978, Krager has led orchestras in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Moscow's State Kremlin Palace, Manchester's Bridgewater Hall, Birmingham England's Adrian Boult Hall, Guangzhou China's Xinghai Music Center, the Sydney Opera House, The Hague's Congresgebouw, Kazan's State Philharmonic Hall in Russia, Guadalajara's Degollado Theater, and Sarasota's Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall.



His affiliations with leading music festivals include the Lancaster International Concert Series and Lichfield and Aberystwyth International Arts Festivals in the U.K.; the Festival Internacional de Santa Lucía in Mexico; and the Texas Music Festival and Interlochen National Music Camp in the United States.

Krager has led the Houston Russian State Traverse City, Michigan, and Florida West Coast Symphony Orchestras; Romanian and Kazan State Philharmonics; and orchestras in Berlin, London, Chicago, Paris, Singapore, Leipzig, Bratislava, Monterrey, Pordenone, Ingolstadt, Neuss, and Honolulu.

In 2015, he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the North Shore Chamber Arts Ensemble in Chicago. Krager is the Founding Co-Artistic Director of the Virtuosi of Houston, Artist-in-Residence at The Kinkaid School, and Evaluator/Clinician for the Orchestra America National Festival.

From the American “Symphonic ‘30s” from the Great Depression to World War II, Symphonic Music of Uplift and Inspiration

William Levi Dawson (1899 - 1990) – Negro Folk Symphony (1934)

[1] The Bond of Africa 13:01

[2] Hope in the Night 12:09

[3] O Let Me Shine, Shine Like a Morning Star 09:09

Texas Music Festival Orchestra, Houston

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor

Howard Hanson (1896 - 1981) – Symphony 2 in D-flat major, Romantic (1930)

[4] Adagio – Allegro moderato – Tranquillo – Molto meno mosso 13:38

[5] Andante con tenerezza 06:14

[6] Allegro con brio – Molto meno mosso – Animato – Largamente 07:24

Moore School Symphony Orchestra, Houston

Franz Anton Krager, conductor

Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882 - 1961) - Lincolnshire Posy (1937; 2012)

[7] Lisbon 01:34

[8] Horkstow Grange 03:08

[9] Rufford Park Poachers 04:36

[10] The Brisk Young Sailor 01:49

[11] Lord Melbourne 03:29

[12] The Lost Lady Found 02:47

Texas Music Festival Orchestra, Houston

Franz Anton Krager, conductor

Recorded in the Moores Opera House, University of Houston
Dawson 25 June 2022; Hanson 20 November 2021; Grainger 10 June 2017

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