



The Art of **Alfred Deller**

The Counter-Tenor Legacy

Vanguard Classics

TRADITIONAL SONGS

The Three Ravens King Henry
I Will Give My Love an Apple
The Oak and the Ash Greensleeves

ENGLISH MADRIGALS & AIRS

Handel: Eternal Source of Light Divine

EUROPEAN VOCAL MUSIC

Lassus Monteverdi Passereau etc.

VOCAL MUSIC OF PURCELL

Sound the Trumpet & many more
(total: 29 recordings)

alto

The Art of Alfred Deller

TRADITIONAL SONGS

[1]	<i>The Three Ravens</i>	3:23
[2]	<i>The Cuckoo</i>	1:45
[3]	<i>Barbara Allen</i>	2:12
[4]	<i>Hey, Ho, the Wind and the Rain</i>	1:59
[5]	<i>I Will Give My Love an Apple</i>	1:45
[6]	<i>The Oak and the Ash</i>	2:23
[7]	<i>King Henry</i>	2:44
[8]	<i>Greensleeves</i>	2:18
Alfred Deller, <i>countertenor</i> • Desmond Dupré, <i>lute</i>		

ENGLISH MADRIGALS AND AIRS

[9]	Anonymous: <i>Sumer is icumen in</i>	1:44
[10]	Morley: <i>Now is the Month of Maying</i>	1:45
[11]	Byrd: <i>Come, Pretty Babe</i>	1:33
[12]	Wilbye: <i>Thus Saith My Cloris Bright</i>	1:28
[13]	Weelkes: <i>To Shorten Winter's Sadness</i>	2:04
[14]	Parsons: <i>Pandolpho</i>	4:08
[15]	Morley: <i>In Dew of Roses</i>	2:48
The Deller Consort		
[11], [14]	with Wenzinger Consort of Viols of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis	
[16]	Handel: <i>Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne, HWV 74:</i> Eternal Source of Light Divine	6:58
Oriana Concert Choir and Orchestra • Alfred Deller, <i>conductor</i>		

EUROPEAN VOCAL MUSIC

[17]	Lassus: <i>Matona mia cara</i>	2:15
[18]	Monteverdi: <i>Lasciate mi morire</i>	2:15
[19]	Passereau: <i>Il est bel et bon</i>	1:22
The Deller Consort		
[20]	Saracini: <i>Da te parto</i>	3:10
Alfred Deller, <i>countertenor</i> • Desmond Dupré, <i>lute</i>		
[21]	Des Prez: <i>La Déploration de Jehan Okeghem</i> "Nymphes des bois"	5:13
The Deller Consort		
[22]	Schütz: <i>Erhöre mich, SWV 289</i>	2:53
Alfred Deller & Mark Deller, <i>countertenors</i> Ensemble of Baroque Instruments		

VOCAL MUSIC OF PURCELL

[23]	<i>Oedipus, Z 583: Music for a While</i>	4:05
[24]	<i>The Indian Queen, Z 630: I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly</i>	2:19
Alfred Deller, <i>countertenor</i> • Walter Bergman, <i>harpsichord</i>		
[25]	<i>Come Ye Sons of Art, Z 323: Sound the Trumpet</i>	2:44
Alfred Deller (II) & Mark Deller (I), <i>countertenors</i> Oriana Concert Orchestra		
[26]	<i>The Fairy-Queen, Z 629: Secrecie's Song</i>	2:03
[27]	<i>The Fairy-Queen, Z 629: Mystery's Song</i>	0:56
Alfred Deller, <i>countertenor</i> • Leonhardt Baroque Ensemble Gustav Leonhardt, <i>harpsichord & director</i>		
[28]	<i>King Arthur, Z 628: Fairest Isle</i>	2:41
[29]	<i>If Music be the Food of Love, Z 379</i> (1st version, 1692)	2:38
Alfred Deller, <i>countertenor</i> • Walter Bergman, <i>harpsichord</i>		

Alfred Deller • The Deller Consort

April Cantelo, Eileen McLoughlin, Honor Sheppard, Mary Thomas, Sally Le Sage & Eileen Poulter *sopranos*

Alfred Deller, *countertenor and director*

Robert Tear, Gerald English, Wilfred Brown, Max Worthley & Philip Todd, *tenors*

Maurice Bevan, *baritone* • Geoffrey Coleby, *bass*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Alfred Deller's recorded career could only have developed in the way that it did at a label like Vanguard with its founder and owner Seymour Solomon at its helm. Independent record labels, like most small businesses, thrive on a connection between an owner and their obsessions. Seymour Solomon loved baroque and renaissance music at a time when the World's exposure to music of those eras was generally much more narrow than now. Today's landscape reveals concrete superhighways to Hildegard von Bingen where there were once only cow paths.

According to Vanguard legend, Seymour heard Deller sing a Purcell song on an HMV 78, was suitably impressed, but didn't pursue the artist. Then Gustav Leonhardt suggested Deller for a recording. Through working with Deller, Seymour saw an opportunity, and a small cottage industry was born. Audiences responded to Deller, and subsequently his Consort, and Vanguard recorded quite a few – 50 LP releases between 1952 and 1967 all of which were hugely successful.

Considering how folk music was the DNA of the Vanguard label, even before the explosion of their Joan Baez-driven sales of the 1960s, Deller resonated with Seymour Solomon on a musical and a personal level. Deller's recordings of early folk songs and madrigals fit in perfectly with how the company expanded in the 1950s, except that Deller sang of English lads and ladies from history. The other recordings released by Vanguard at the time were from The Weavers and other such folk artists and there was even some inter-century crossover with for example, "Wraggle Taggle Gypsies" which was performed by Deller and several other contemporary folk artists in Vanguard's overall catalogue. What happened at Vanguard was a meeting of obsessions between Deller and Seymour Solomon – a love of folk music and a love of the emerging new field of "early" music.

Wearing his hat as a businessman, Seymour had to be attracted to the small ensembles and devotees – they weren't extravagant superstars, and merely wanted to put their music on tape. As a

result, Seymour could record several LPs worth of releases in one month in England or Vienna – for a fraction of the cost of an orchestral recording. In the vast archives left by Seymour Solomon, letters between him and Deller uniquely resonate. Deller's jolly talent for letter writing is matched with Seymour's more professional but incisive responses. They reveal a warm rapport which must have been crucial in leading to the remarkable body of work that they produced. One was an unparalleled vocalist who helped to create the "historical performance" world so important in today's musical scene, the other a man who paved the way toward capturing important performances for posterity, and to both of them for endeavouring to toil in the mines and bring forth gold nuggets that have stood the test of time. One letter from 1962 is worth mentioning, where Seymour enthuses in capital letters to his brother about a recording he was making with Deller in Vienna. "It is possibly the greatest moment we have ever recorded with him...there is a duet with a baroque trumpet that is quite out of this world...the recording, as Alfred said, should be a real cracker!" This excitement was all for the first movement of the *Ode on the Birthday of Queen Anne*, entitled "Eternal Source of Light Divine". And it may just be the most transcendent recorded moment in the Deller Vanguard catalogue.

It is quite a feat to distill this monumental body of work into one CD. Luckily Solomon and Deller already did the work with a double LP "The Art of Alfred Deller" which provided the basis for this selection covering as it does the range of his work.

The various genres covered are:

- Folksongs
- English Madrigals and Airs
- European Vocal Music Renaissance to Baroque
- Purcell

This breakdown is well suited to Deller's Vanguard recordings as summarized here.

Without enough room here to comment in detail on every work in

this album and with mention already of one work, it remains to single out three more pieces worth describing. Simply as a musical experience, in “King Henry” you hear Deller’s voice as a truly astounding solo instrument. And “The Oak and The Ash”, without even the slight assistance that the lute provides, leaves Deller with the story line, and with that exposure, we hear where Deller is not only a supreme vocal talent but a world class interpreter of a song. There’s something there – the originality of thought matched with a physical, natural talent: a marriage of talent and repertoire every bit as significant as Rubinstein playing Chopin.

Another such moment comes in the Air “Pandolpho” by Robert Parsons. In four minutes and a few seconds, Deller shows he is not just a madrigalist or folksong specialist, he is an operatic singer as well, bringing depth, and again, remarkable interpretative skill. Considering how much of the song is a repetition of “Oh, pity Pandolpho”, each repetition tells a different moment in the unhappy demise of that unlucky lover. Purcell’s “Dido and Aeneas” was once described as “Tristan in a teapot” and it is that image that comes to mind when listening to this recording.

And the last point goes not just to the man himself, but to the ensemble that he surrounded himself with. **The Deller Consort**, which appears with several different rosters here, starts at the level of Deller’s talent, and works as both a supporting stage for Deller’s voice and a musical “atmosphere” that places the music in a brilliant context. The recordings selected here both showcase Deller’s voice but also the remarkable talents of his ensemble. The madrigals show off the group of singers as being technically unsurpassed and fully committed to the ensemble concept. Their contribution in the European vocal section of this compilation again finds them as a superlative group of accompanists, an ensemble that would today be regarded as the finest group of voices, a veritable “supergroup”. Yet they were all really explorers and pathfinders, all together on the good ship Deller Consort, led by a perfectionist, but happy taskmaster.

Greg Barbero

NOTES ON THE ARTIST

The English counter-tenor **Alfred Deller** (May 31, 1912, Margate, England — 1979, Bologna, Italy), was the man most responsible for the renaissance of music for that voice in the 20th century. Before he established himself as a soloist, the role of counter-tenor had been limited to the lay-clerk tradition of English Cathedral choirs which were all male. He was a pioneer in popularizing the current practice of authentic early music performance, and he revived the counter-tenor voice as a vehicle for accurate performances of Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music. His considerable repertoire embraced music of many periods and styles, from Guillaume de Machaut to Carl Orff, though his main specialty was the Tudor and Elizabethan periods.

Deller was virtually self-trained, and studied voice with his father. He began to sing as a soprano boy chorister in his local church choir and later developed the counter-tenor range. He went on to sing professionally as a counter-tenor in the cathedral choirs of Canterbury (1940-47), and St. Paul’s (1947-62). Michael Tippett heard him with the Canterbury Cathedral Choir and, struck by the unique range of expressiveness in his vocal artistry, invited him to London for his solo debut.

In 1946, a radio broadcast of Purcell’s *Come, ye Sons of Art*, brought him to the attention of the English Public. During the early years of his career, he concentrated on performing English Baroque and pre-Baroque composers such as Purcell and Dowland. His scholarship and musicianship brought him international admiration and he widened his repertoire over the years through study of early English folk song, madrigal composers such as Monteverdi and a wide range of European vocal composers from the Renaissance and Baroque eras. In 1948 Deller formed his own vocal and instrumental ensemble, the Deller Consort, acting as conductor and soloist in early English music. The group dedicated itself to authentic performance practice. This enterprise of distinguished singers and instrumentalists toured internationally, significantly expanding popular notions of Renaissance and Baroque masterpieces with their high vocal standards and original

instruments. With this group, Alfred Deller expanded his activities into the world of conducting so that his work would not be limited to compositions with a counter-tenor solo part. This played an important part in establishing his unique place in the 20th century.


In 1960, he sang the role of Oberon in the premiere of Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This was the first important counter-tenor role in a 20th century opera. He repeated the role at Covent Garden Opera House the following year. Other composers who wrote works for Deller included Fricker, Mellers, Ridout, and Rubbra.

Alfred Deller set the standard for counter-tenors for many years. His voice was very light with a wonderful lyric quality. In its prime it was of a singular timbre, clear and penetrating, allied to an exquisite musicianship. One quality in Deller's singing which was often remarked upon was the fullness of his tone, unlike the piping boy-soprano sound often heard. He was most effective in the more contemplative pieces, but when necessary he was equally able to sing florid passagework extremely well. Although he could sing the dramatic arias of Händel, he never allowed his voice to be pushed beyond its basically light sound. Though the Händel operas were not in fashion during the height of his career, he sang counter-tenor in many of the oratorios. His expressive voice literally caused the discovery of an entirely new repertoire for concert-goers.

SOURCES FOR THIS RELEASE

All selections on the release are drawn from tape masters originally released on Vanguard and its Bach Guild subsidiary. Catalogue numbers listed below are those of the original LP releases, with recording years.

[1]-[8]	VRS 479	"The Three Ravens" (1955)
[9]	BG 602	"Tavern Songs, Volume 2" (1960)
[10], [17], [19]	BG 604	"Madrigal Masterpieces" (1959)
[11], [14]	BG 557	"Byrd and His Age" (1956)
[12]	BG 578	"The English Madrigal School, Volume 4" (1957)
[13]	BG 553	"The English Madrigal School, Volume 1" (1955)
[15]	BG 577	"The English Madrigal School, Volume 3" (1958)
[16]	BG 661	"Ode on the Birthday of Queen Anne" (1963)
[18]	BG 639	"Madrigal Masterpieces, Vol. 2" (1962)
[20]	BG 565	"Italian Songs" (1956)
[21]	BG 671	"Madrigal Masterpieces, Vol. 3" (1966)
[22]	BG 691	"Duets for Countertenors" (1966)
[23]-[25], [28]-[29]	BG 570/1	"Hommage to Henry Purcell" (1957)
[26]-[27]	BG 547	"Music of Henry Purcell, Jenkins and Locke" (1954)



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Original recordings produced by **Seymour Solomon**

Mastered for alto by **Paul Arden-Taylor**

Reissue producer: **Robin Vaughan**

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