

## Fantasia on Greensleeves

**Ralph Vaughan Williams**  
**Born: October 12, 1872**  
**Died: August 26, 1958**

influence on him that many of them ended up in his own compositions.

The *Fantasia on Greensleeves* is one example. This music first appeared in Vaughn Williams' opera *Sir John in Love*, in which he used not only the familiar "Greensleeves" folk tune but also another song from his collection, "Lovely Joan." When Vaughan Williams arranged the *Fantasia on Greensleeves* for the concert hall, he brought the two songs together.

The word *fantasy* or *fantasia* has several meanings. You may know a fantasy as a daydream. In music, it is sometimes used to describe a work that does not follow any set form or pattern. Or, it can be used for compositions that are based on another musical work, like the *Fantasia on Greensleeves*.

Do you know the song *Greensleeves*? It actually dates back to the 1500s, and was even used by Shakespeare. Shortly after the American Civil War, William Chatterton Dix wrote the words for his Christmas carol, *What Child is This?* using the melody to *Greensleeves*. See if you can hear the familiar carol as you listen to the *Fantasia on Greensleeves* by Vaughan Williams.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of England's leading 20th century composers. As a child, he knew he wanted to be a composer, and he followed his dream even though members of his family weren't very supportive. In the end, Vaughan Williams played a key role in reviving his country's music. He composed many, many works, including songs, operas, ballets, choral pieces, and nine symphonies.

Vaughan Williams was dedicated to collecting and studying English folksongs to preserve them for the future. A folksong is a traditional song that is passed on from person to person. They are rarely written down, so many of them are lost or changed from their original form. Vaughan Williams loved the songs of England, and worked hard to record them. He collected over 800 folksongs and they had such a big



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Answer these questions as you listen *Fantasia on Greensleeves*

1. Circle the first two instruments you hear.



flute



french horn



cello



harp

- The strings on the harp are played with \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. fingers      b. a bow      c. pedals
- The melody is first played by which family of instruments?  
a. woodwind      b. brass      c. string
- What well-known Christmas carol gets its tune from *Greensleeves*?  
a. *Silent Night*      b. *Jingle Bells*      c. *What Child is This?*



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**Use this space to write your own story about what you would do on a snowy day. Maybe this picture will help you “daydream.”**

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A **fantasy**, or **fantasia**, in an instrumental musical composition that is in a free form. While writing a **fantasy**, the composer lets his imagination prevail over the rules that govern musical forms. Often the fantasy is based on a well-known tune or on a folk song, as is the case with Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *Fantasia on Greensleeves*.

**Vaughan Williams’ first name is pronounced “Rafe,” in the old English style. The composer was known to become quite angry when mistakenly called “Ralf.”**

### Match that Holiday

Many different cultures celebrate this time of year with special traditions and music. Match the name of these winter holiday songs to its heritage.

- Jingle Bells**
- In the Window**
- O Christmas Tree**
- Lift every voice and Sing**
- Feliz Navidad**
- Go Tell it on the Mountain**
- Here We Come A-Wassailing**



- Kwanza Song**
- Traditional Winter**
- English Carol**
- Spanish Carol**
- Hanukkah**
- German Carol**
- African-American Spiritual**

Here's your chance to create your own piece of art for “*Fantasia on Greensleeves*.” Draw or write your own story about this month's music selection. Use a blank 8 1/2" x 11" paper. We will choose one story/picture each month to feature in this space. Send yours to:

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