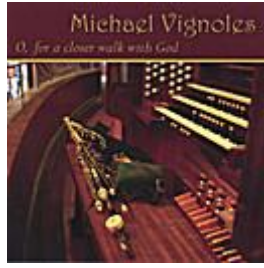


Mp3 Michael Vignoles - O, For A Closer Walk With God



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Hauntingly beautiful music played on the Irish uilleann pipes 23 MP3 Songs WORLD: Celtic, EASY LISTENING: Background Music Details: I find it amusing--and more than a little telling--that when James Horner composed the soundtrack for Braveheart, Mel Gibson's Oscar-winning film celebrating Scotland and its struggle for independence, he wrote practically no parts for Scottish highland pipes. Every time he wants to put a lump in your throat, he introduces the mellow, unforgettable moan of Ireland's uilleann pipes. It's an instrument without peer, capable of expressing a broad range of human emotions. Michael Vignoles first heard the sound of the uilleann pipes as a teenager, growing up in Galway, Ireland, during the '60s. One of his favorite groups at the time was a traditional Irish band called Planxty, whose piper, Liam O'Flynn, was already one of Ireland's most respected traditional musicians. "I heard him play," Vignoles remembers, "and I said to myself, 'I want to get a set of pipes,' because the pipes had a haunting, melodic sound." Vignoles took some of the cash he'd earned working as a maintenance engineer for a large company and bought his first set of pipes, only to have them break shortly thereafter. The pipes' bellows, which are pumped with the elbow to fill the adjoining bag with air (hence the word "uilleann," which literally means "elbow" in Irish Gaelic), split in half. Since the maker of his particular set was too busy and distracted to help remedy the problem, Vignoles drove to see Eugene Lambe, another pipemaker who lived about 50 miles away. Instead of simply fixing Vignoles' bellows and sending him on his way, Lambe convinced him that he'd have no trouble making his own replacement bellows. So Vignoles left with some wood, leather and a pattern that Lambe had drawn up for him. "I was probably 20 or so. And I was delighted with myself--I'd made my first bellows. And he said to come down again the next week and show him what I'd made. So I came down about two weeks later and he gave me lessons on how to make pipe reeds, and I'd come down another time and he'd show me how to do something

else. He was a very kind gentleman, and very willing to share his knowledge. He wouldn't take any money. I'd say, 'I owe you for the reeds,' and he'd just say, 'pass the kindness to somebody else.' I'll always remember him for that." Vignoles was already handy with machinery, from the maintenance work he was doing, so it wasn't long before he'd built a full set of pipes for himself. He was playing gigs 3-4 nights a week at the time, and another piper inevitably noticed his handiwork and offered to buy that first set of pipes. Even though Vignoles was attached to the set, he reluctantly agreed to sell them so that he could afford to buy more pipe-making machinery. As his reputation grew, more people came to him wanting sets of their own, and Vignoles decided soon after to become a pipemaker full-time. Vignoles has been playing pipes now for over a quarter-century and has just released his sophomore album, *O, For A Closer Walk With God*. The project grew out of his love for the 14th-century church music he'd been singing for over a decade with the Galway Cathedral choir, and more recently his performances in the cathedral playing pipes alongside the virtuosic organist Raymond O'Donnell. "We've done some concerts in the cathedral. It's a very large cathedral so the acoustics are fantastic. Putting the pipes along with organ created a really magical sound to me. I've performed for the president, done funerals for bishops, requiem masses, just pipes and organ. People would come up to me afterwards and say, 'My God, we were fine until you played the pipes--it made us cry!'" Even if you're not religious, you'll find the stately, meditative recordings contained on the disc--which range from ancient Latin-titled pieces ("Veni, Creator Spiritus") to classical staples ("Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring") to traditional Irish airs ("Ta'imse Im Chodladh")--exceptionally moving. The organ provides a warm foundation for the crisp, keening sound of the pipes, and the two slow airs that Vignoles composed himself ("Nature's Moments" and "The Whispering Wind") feel so timeless that they blend right in. Michael Vignoles has long been revered for his top-flight pipemaking abilities, but the world is about to recognize, at last, the magic he can create with the instrument once it leaves his Galway workshop.

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