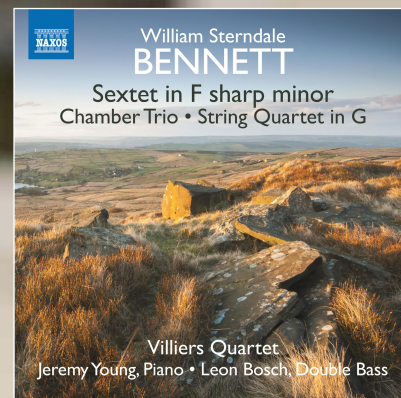


# BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY **news**

DECEMBER 2018



**STERNDALE  
BENNETT**

*Chamber music  
release from BMS*

**‘PURE DEAD  
BRILLIANT’**

*Scottish composer John  
McLeod in search of  
wild musical landscapes*





# Agenda

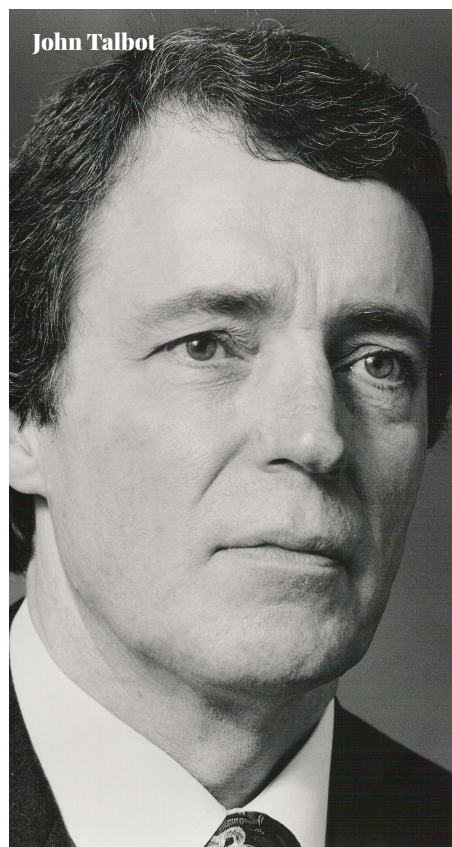
*British Music Society's news and events*

## Honorary life membership for 'much valued' John Talbot

BMS member John Talbot has been awarded an Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Society since he first joined its committee in 1988.

An accomplished pianist and Steinway Artist, John first arrived in the UK in 1966. While still a music student in Queensland, Australia, he appeared as soloist with the Queensland and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, and in later professional years was appointed Lecturer in Music at both Portsmouth Polytechnic and the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne. His interest in British music is all-embracing, although he has specialised in studying the music of E.J. Moeran, editing a thirteen-volume Centenary Edition of Moeran's vocal, keyboard and choral music for Thames Publishing (now in its second edition with Music Sales). His Moeran discography on the Chandos and Naxos labels includes the Violin Sonata (with violinist Donald Scotts), the Complete Solo Songs (with soprano Geraldine McGreevy, tenor Adrian Thompson and baritone Roderick Williams) and the Complete Solo Folksong Arrangements (with tenor Adrian Thompson and baritone Marcus Farnsworth). Among John's CD recordings for the British Music Society are English Cello Sonatas – a recital with cellist Jo Cole of works by John Foulds, Ernest Walker and York Bowen – and October Roses, a collection of solo songs by Brian Blyth Daubney, with soprano Anna Dennis and baritone William Berger.

Pursuing a busy freelance career after 1983, John served as BMS Chairman for two extended periods (1993–1999 and 2005–2011). He was the Society's Recordings Manager between 1991 and 2011, during which time he supervised the release of twenty-six BMS recordings, twenty-two of which he also produced. In 2012 he was awarded the



Society's distinguished Berkeley Medal. Subsequent to stepping down from the BMS committee, John served as Chairman of The British Music Society Charitable Trust (Michael Hurd Bequest) between 2013 and 2018, organising the release on the veteran Lyrita label of Michael Hurd's chamber opera The Aspern Papers and two volumes of his Choral Music coupled with the Complete Solo Songs. The latter project involved preparing a printed performing edition of the songs – now preserved in the Bodleian Library – from original manuscript sources.

– WENDY HISCOCKS

### British Music Society Committee

Wendy Hiscocks (Chairman), John Gibbons (Vice Chairman), Stephen Trowell (Treasurer), Dominic Daula (Journal Editor), Advisory roles: Karen Fletcher

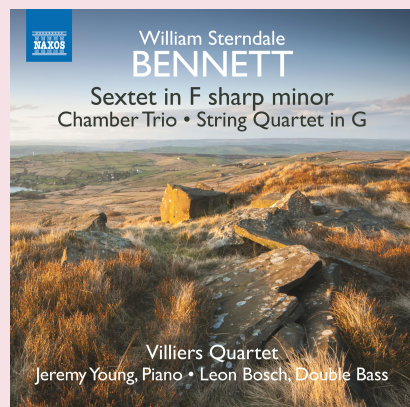
Printed News designed by Revolution Arts

## Chairman's welcome

It will be January by the time you receive this so I'll begin by wishing you all a healthy 2019 full of prosperous endeavours.

Our review panel has been hard at work, so much so that this Printed version can only now be described as a sample of what is now appearing in the monthly E- News. Please provide us with your e-mail address so we can keep you more up-to-date on all the BMS's activities.

One of our News highlights is our latest BMS release through Naxos of the William Sterndale Bennett chamber music performed by the Villiers Quartet.



We also bring you the results from the BASC 2018 masterclass/competition and Journal editor Dominic Daula tells us about our new essay writing competition.

And remember to save the date for the 40th Anniversary Orchestral Concert and AGM at St. John's Smith Square, London on Saturday June 22, 2019. – Dr. Wendy Hiscocks

# Oliver Knussen

## 1952-2018

Composer and conductor Oliver Knussen, born June 12th 1952 died on July 9th 2018 at age 66.

Son of the double-bass player, Stuart Knussen of the LSO, Knussen was a leading figure in contemporary music, and is best known for his two operas, based on the children's books of Maurice Sendak, "Where the Wild Things Are" and "Higgledy-Piggledy-Pop".

# First Holst Society CD released

The first Holst Society CD is now available on EMRCDO49 including Partsongs by Holst and Dyson sung by the Godwine Choir.

Two further CDs are in progress. One is a joint project with the Vaughan Williams Society under the Albion label scheduled for 2019 and devoted to songs by Vaughan Williams and Holst. This will include no less than nine world premières by Holst performed by soloists Roddy Williams and Kitty Whately, with pianist Will Vann.

The other CD also features the Godwine Choir in Holst's Complete music for Christmas to be released in time for Christmas 2019. Holst's only organ works will also be featured performed by John Wright. This CD is also planned to include a transcription of Holst's last orchestral work,

his Scherzo, dating from 1933/34 and transcribed for organ duet by Richard Brasier.

Arrangements are also being made for this Scherzo to be performed at the conclusion of choral evensong at Gloucester's 2019 Three Choirs Festival.

The Holst Society is also appealing to all BMS members to help promote the performance of all of Holst's orchestral repertoire - not just The Planets - as other great works are becoming neglected. The Holst Society is acquiring the full scores of some 14 orchestral works for free loan to amateur orchestras to encourage more performances of Holst's wonderful orchestral repertoire

For more information contact Holst Society chairman Chris Cope on 01769 581581 or [chairman@holstsociety.org](mailto:chairman@holstsociety.org)

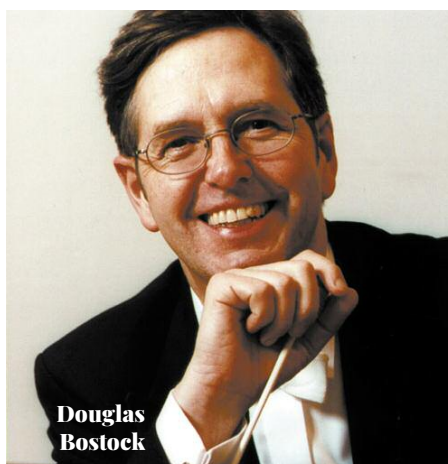


Gustav Holst

# Argovia's Bostock steps down after 18 years

Long standing BMS member Douglas Bostock will be stepping down as principal conductor of the Argovia Philharmonic Orchestra in Switzerland after 18 years.

The 2018/19 season is dedicated to British music, much of which is seldom heard in the UK, let alone on the continent. The subscription concerts A1, A4 and A5 as well as the "Last Night" (of the Proms) are dedicated exclusively to British music. The remaining subscription concerts and other concerts have a British slant, to say the least, and are integrated into the British theme. Two cds will be produced with the



Douglas Bostock

repertoire from the A1 and A5 programmes (Sept and May). There will be manifold other activities, including chamber music concerts, talks etc. during the season, with British music as their main theme.

Members might like to see the season brochure, which contains all the programmes and a host of information about British music amongst other things (in German), including a major article written for us by Lewis Foreman. View it at [https://issuu.com/argoviaphil/docs/magazin\\_argovia\\_philharmonic\\_nr\\_13](https://issuu.com/argoviaphil/docs/magazin_argovia_philharmonic_nr_13).



## McCabe/Ellis chamber works re-released

McCabe and Ellis both came from the Liverpool area, and both attended the famous Liverpool Institute, at the top of Mount Street, in the shadow of the great Anglican Cathedral. Both composers studied with Thomas Pitfield at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Both won the Royal Philharmonic Prize. While McCabe went on to have a dual career as composer and pianist,

Ellis worked from 1964 at the BBC as a music producer, having responsibility for programme planning and administration of the BBC Northern, later Philharmonic, Orchestra. In 1977 he became Head of Music, BBC North.

The chamber works of John McCabe and David Ellis will be issued by ASC Prima Facie in December 2018 on PFCD096.



John McCabe



**British Art Song Competition** Prize winners Erika Mädi Jones and Panaretos Kyriatzidis with pianist Roger Vignoles.

## Cyril Scott Companion just published

Just published, The Cyril Scott Companion explores the life and work of this remarkably creative man. It provides a comprehensive analysis and appraisal of all the available music and includes a complete catalogue and discography.

Altogether the volume gives a broad picture of Scott's entire output in literary, dramatic and philosophical genres.

A review of this substantial work (676 pages) has been commissioned and will appear in a later edition of the BMS E-News.

Unity in Diversity. Edited by Desmond Scott, Lewis Foreman and Leslie De'Ath. Boydell £45.

## British Art Song Competition 2018 finalists

The 2018 British Song Competition and Master Class for voice and piano duos this year took place on 17 November at the Austrian Cultural Forum in London. Given by Roger Vignoles, one of Britain's leading and best-loved Song pianists, and a familiar face at the top international recital venues, applicants were chosen by audition and required to present two songs in English, at least one of which was by set composer, Frank Bridge. The British Music Society donated the prize of £800 which was awarded to Erika Mädi Jones and Panaretos Kyriatzidis. The event was held in collaboration with Nigel Foster's London Song Festival.

2018 Finalists and their chosen songs:  
Laurence Williams & Michael Waldron

Bridge – Adoration  
Hywel-Davies – Whose list to hunt?  
Corinne Cowling, and Lucy Colquhoun (highly commended)  
Frank Bridge – So early in the morning  
Elgar – Like to the damask rose  
Erika Mädi Jones and Panaretos Kyriatzidis (Prize-winners)  
Frank Bridge – E'en as a lovely flower  
Rebecca Clarke – The Seal Man  
Hugo Herman-Wilson, and Lucy Colquhoun (highly commended)  
Frank Bridge – Isobel  
Gerald Finzi – Rollicum Rorum  
Katy Thomson and John Cuthbert  
Frank Bridge – Sonnet  
Rebecca Clarke – The Seal Man  
Liam Bonthron and Marina Staneva

Frank Bridge – The Last Invocation  
Benjamin Britten – The Choirmaster's Burial  
Louise Fuller and Adam McDonagh  
Frank Bridge – Come to me in my dreams  
Benjamin Britten – The Last Rose of Summer  
Lucilla Graham and Michael Leach  
Frank Bridge – Where she lies asleep  
Edward Elgar – Sea Slumber Song  
Rory Carver and Liam Crangle  
Frank Bridge – Fair daffodils  
Ivor Gurney – Sleep  
Ted Black (highly commended), and Rachel Fright  
Frank Bridge – Adoration  
Muriel Herbert – Renouncement

## BMS 40th anniversary essay contest kicks off for £100 prize

Young researchers are encouraged to enter the BMS Fortieth Anniversary Essay Competition, which aims to celebrate the Society as it enters its fifth decade. Furthermore, the competition aims to stimulate an increase in musicological engagement within the field of British Music and cultivate a growth in journal contributions from younger writers around the world.

The author of the winning essay will have their submission published in a future edition of *British Music*, and will be awarded a cash prize of £100.

Guidelines for entrants:

1. The essay should explore a topic that relates to British music at any point during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Should one's paper focus on the work of a more contemporary composer, the composer in question should either be deceased or if alive, born during or before 1929.

2. In their essay, the author should proffer a refined analysis, synthesis and critical evaluation of the relevant literature; and should bring to light their own insights whilst maintaining a clear research focus.

3. The essay is to be written in English, and the word count should be between 3000 to 5000 words.

4. Entrants should be registered students within a recognised institution of higher education in any part of the world. Proof of such registration or studentship is to be submitted as a supplement to the essay in order to form a valid entry.

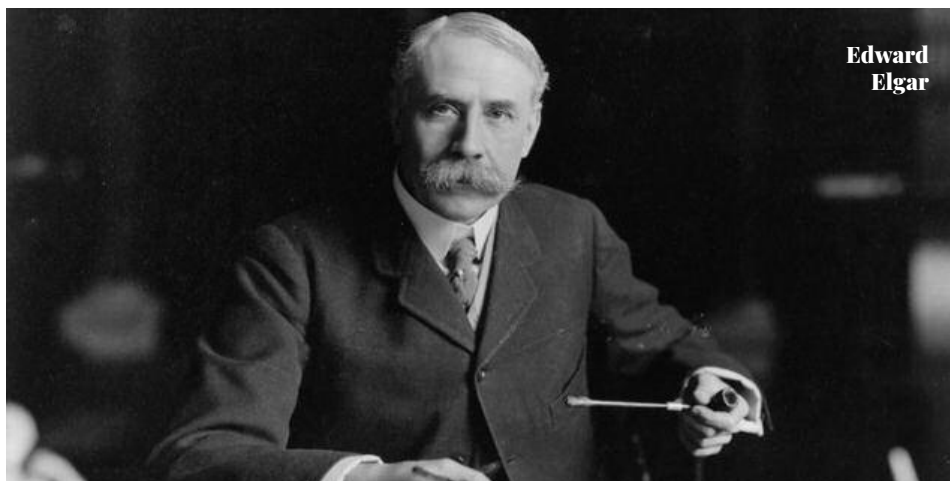
The essay should be submitted as a Word Document (.doc or .docx) to [journal@britishmusicsociety.com](mailto:journal@britishmusicsociety.com) no later than 23h59 / 11:59pm BST (British Summer Time) on 30 June 2019.

The adjudicators' collective decision must be considered as final.

Queries may be addressed by email: [journal@britishmusicsociety.com](mailto:journal@britishmusicsociety.com)

# Inbox

*Send your letters to the Chairman to [chairman@britishmusicsociety.com](mailto:chairman@britishmusicsociety.com) or write to 178 Alexandra Road, Muswell Hill, London, N10 2ES*



Edward Elgar

## Elgar and Britten to be avoided? I'm aghast!

I was somewhat aghast to read the final paragraph of the AGM Agenda under the sub-heading BMS Ambassador programme in the August edition of the BMS News.

It clearly states that the music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Britten should be avoided in future programs. This makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Whilst I am 100% behind lesser known composers having exposure, ignoring the best of what we have to offer to the uninitiated, is surely like shooting yourself in the foot.

To promote British Music at any level it must contain music by those well known and those lesser known. The art is in balancing the two. To educate those wishing to drill down and explore the wealth of the wonderful music we have produced, I believe it is best to inspire first. This would be achieved by promoting some works of the very composers the Society wish to ignore.

After all, if you were introducing people

to classical music for the first time, the last thing you'd do would be to "avoid" Bach, Beethoven and Mozart.

I think a serious rethink is in order.

- DAVID J. L. ASTON

**Chairman's reply:** Your argument is a fair one and I have found that overseas audiences are not necessarily overly familiar with Elgar, Vaughan Williams or Britten's music. I am still not convinced, however, that the BMS should be sponsoring programmes that only focus on music by Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Britten as these composers have Societies acting in their interest and the BMS, while not excluding these composers, exists to promote others and especially those without representation. Perhaps a solution would be to say that Ambassador programmes do not include more than 25% or 30% of music by the three names above.

Your thoughts everyone?

## Searching for Dryden and Davenant

I would like to find if any member happens to have a tape recording of Dryden and Davenant's *Tempest* with the Purcell music as broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 8th January 1950.

The cast included Andrew Cruikshank

and Cyril Cusack. The conductor Constant Lambert. At only 2 hours it probably wasn't complete.

- DOUGLAS BENNETT

[dmbennett616@gmail.com](mailto:dmbennett616@gmail.com)

# The Passions of Vaughan Williams

Ralph Vaughan Williams,  
by Gerald Festus Kelly  
(1879–1972). Photo credit:  
Royal College of Music



**A Film by John Bridcut**  
**Crux Productions**  
**CRUXGZooiDVD**

Elisabeth Lutyens' remark, that Vaughan Williams' work was "cow-pat music", betrayed an ignorance not only of his hugely varied output, but of the pastoral world itself. The richness and emotional depth of folk traditions were the catalysis for his development of a hugely varied musical language, that enabled an almost protean emotional expression, from farcical comedy and devilish gloating to romantic ardour and "nuclear" desolation.

Other than music, the great passion of his life was Woman, and two women in particular. His love for his first wife Adeline Fisher was lasting and true, though cruelly limited, in its physical expression at least, by the onset of her increasingly

crippling and painful arthritis at an early stage in their marriage. However, while Adeline was still alive, he fell deeply, in fact madly in love with the much younger Ursula Wood, and their affair lasted fifteen years, until the death of their respective spouses.

This triangular complex of deep feelings is brilliantly explored in John Bridcut's film, with skilful exploration of the varying complexities of the whole, and a striking account of the composer's anger on the death of Adeline. There are extensive interviews with members of her family (there was some shock from that quarter), friends of the composer (especially female ones), who discuss, in a manner both amusing and genuine, his wholly gentlemanly adoration of the "fair sex", a moving account of one woman's love for him that "never came to anything", and, above all, beautiful film of Ursula in great

old age, her eyes still aflame with love and desire for the man she described as "perfect". Most of the people who appear in the film are in their latter years, and their good sense and human experience greatly enrich their accounts of RVW.

Scholarly comment is by no means lacking, and most of it is first-rate, though the one younger musicologist involved is the only person seemingly unable to resist a smirk at the idea that Vaughan Williams might have had a sex-life. The musical extracts are marvellous, though I found Richard Hickox's tempo for the slow movement of the Fifth Symphony rather fast, and the performance of that wonderful late song "Tired" sounds rushed.

This is a wonderful film, highly recommended – a "must" for any lover of Vaughan Williams and his music.

– NICHOLAS CLAPTON





Benjamin Britten circa 1949.  
Photo: Roland Haupt /  
Courtesy of Britten100.org

# Britten's 'highly charged' masterpiece

## **Britten War Requiem**

**BBC Philharmonic**

**Simon Wright** *conductor*

**Evelina Dobraceva** *soprano*

**Andrew Staples** *tenor*

**Benjamin Appl** *baritone*

**Leeds Festival Chorus, City of Glasgow Chorus, Cantabile Choir (Wakefield)**

**Leeds Town Hall**

**Saturday 17 November 2018**

Benjamin Britten's highly-charged masterpiece, *The War Requiem*, made a lasting impression on a sell-out audience at the celebrated international musical venue, Leeds Town Hall. This was a potent musical depiction of the agonies suffered in both World Wars, setting the traditional Requiem Mass against the powerful words of First World War poet, Wilfred Owen.

It is one of Britten's most acclaimed works and followed many nationwide tributes marking this year's World War One Armistice centenary.

Massive forces – including three

choirs, together with a veritable battery of percussion – were sublimely marshalled by a meticulous Simon Wright. Wright's conducting was sumptuously paced throughout, plundering every last ounce of emotion from Britten's dramatic score.

Impactful delivery highlighted the sharp contrast between well-executed militaristic calls of a brassy forte compared to prayerful pianissimo passages, which featured some fine playing from bridged strings, muted brass and well-controlled woodwind. A chillingly pronounced bell toll also made a telling contribution.

An off-stage chorus originally scored by Britten for a boys' choir but here sung by the Cantabile Choir made up of girls from Wakefield High School, creating an ethereal atmosphere.

The apocalyptic climax, *Libera Me*, erupted with a full orchestra confidently blazing out the horror and terror of battle. The artistic analogy of stuttering gunfire was precisely captured by brass and percussion sections and menacingly rattled around concert hall walls. Generous acoustics added to the impact of this

work, premiered in 1962 in the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral.

War-like, thunderous orchestral outbursts were emphasised by judicious contributions from timpani, tam-tam, snare and bass drums. The forceful orchestration finally wound down into the peace of Wilfred Owen's plaintive *Strange Meeting*, hauntingly delivered by the exquisite breath-control of baritone, Benjamin Appl and tenor Andrew Staples. Owen's dialogue between an English and a German soldier, who encounter each other after death, was sung with a ghostly eeriness.

The concluding wave of emotive benediction and stark warning of meaningless conflict were encapsulated by that oft-quoted line: "the truth untold, the pity of war." Britten's and Owen's salutary message, signalling the foolhardiness, futility and horror of war, was plain for all to hear.

This was a memorable concert successfully espousing deeply felt lamentations and a lasting harmony of hope for the future.

– CHRIS BYE



### Stephen Dodgson String Trios

Harriet Mackenzie *violin*

Sarah-Jane Bradley *viola*

Graham Walker *cello*

NAXOS 8.573856

Naxos' invaluable Dodgson series has reached string music composed between 1951 and 1985. The String Trios bookend the programme, valuably and revealingly, showing how he developed from the very definitive expressive components of the 1951 work to the more complex interweaving of themes to be found in the trio of 1964.

This later work is long-breathed and convincingly explores material, ending in a poignant and moving epilogue. That said, the earlier work is strikingly avuncular and athletic, with an expressive near-ten-minute hymnal slow movement that includes repeated syncopations. This, and the nonchalant, almost whimsical end of the work makes it a most listenable piece.

The Sonatina in B minor, for solo violin (1963) is in the same key as Bach's Partita No.1 and that's probably not a coincidence. The four brief movements manage to pay homage to Bach whilst also retaining Dodgson's own musical imprint, not least in the clever Allegretto third movement, which manages this act of ambiguity and duality with great skill. Written for solo viola in 1978, Caprice after Puck packs a lot into its 14 minutes. Cast in a favourite Dodgsonian, variation form this ripely characterised piece enshrines melancholic as well as unsettled, even unsettling moments and the appositely named Capriccioso section certainly seems to embody Puck's more avuncular spirit.

In 1985 Dodgson wrote a Partita for solo cello. The eight movements are set as four pairs, a slower movement followed by a faster one, with complex interrelations between the movements. Once again variations feature strongly and, as before, Dodgson's control of structural integrity in this work is powerful and impressive. It's not necessarily straightforward to grasp at a single hearing; it's the kind of piece one needs to work away at.

The chamber ensemble Karolos contains some of Britain's most distinguished players and Harriet Mackenzie, Sarah-



Jane Bradley and Graham Walker show once again how attuned they are to Dodgson's expressive language.

- JONATHAN WOOLF

### Sterndale Bennett Piano Concertos Nos.1-3

Howard Shelley *piano*

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Hyperion CDA68178

Hyperion's championing of lesser-known repertoire is quite remarkable and this release, volume 74(!) in the Romantic Piano Concerto series, is no exception and stands alongside previous releases of British concertos such as those by Parry and Stanford, Ireland and Delius, Mackenzie and Tovey, and York Bowen.

In December 2006, Howard Shelley convened the same forces to record Sterndale Bennett's fourth concerto (volume 43) of 1838, arguably his finest. Now he has returned to the three earlier con-

certos; three concertos from three consecutive years: 1832, 1833 and 1834. Shelley, seated at a modern Steinway, acts as conductor and soloist, and in doing so brings a unified artistic vision to the entirety of this fantastic disc. There is so much variety, from the grandeur of the Mozartian tutti's of the first concerto (complete with gestures taken straight out of Don Giovanni), to the later intimate chamber moments in the second concerto, and the more Romantic, more virtuosic, style of the third.

These concertos were all written whilst he was a student at the Royal Academy of Music (between the ages of 16 to 18) and thus we get a rapid evolution of style, but at the same time the musical standard throughout is mind-bogglingly high. This was music that was admired by Mendelssohn and Schumann, and whilst some of his thematic material does not stand up to the sort of repetition it receives (especially in the final movements of the first and third concertos), the overall impression is of a composer who was already writing with an exceptional level of professional polish.

- JONATHAN CLINCH





## Ruth Gipps Symphonies Nos 2 and 4

**Song for Orchestra  
Knight in Armour**

BBC National Orchestra of Wales  
Rumon Gamba conductor  
Chandos 20078

This issue makes me seriously angry. The establishment (which includes one notorious guilty party) have conspired to keep this splendid music out of what they see as harm's way. I doubt that the fact that the composer is a woman is material, rather that she chooses to write in a very attractive tonal idiom in the second half of last century.

Ruth Gipps' Fourth symphony received its first performance in May 1973 when she conducted her own London Repertoire Orchestra. There was a further performance under Sir John Pritchard broadcast in 1983. And that appears to be the sum total of public outings.

We must be grateful that someone has not forgotten and that Chandos has been brave enough to issue this CD. This is right amongst the territory much appreciated by the majority of BMS members and I suggest they have a duty to buy this CD and support the enterprise.

Gipps was an extremely able composer. You only have to listen to the opening of one of the fillers on this disc 'Knight in Armour' (op.8) to realise that at the age of 19 she already had a complete command of orchestral writing with sonorous textures and exciting brass writing.

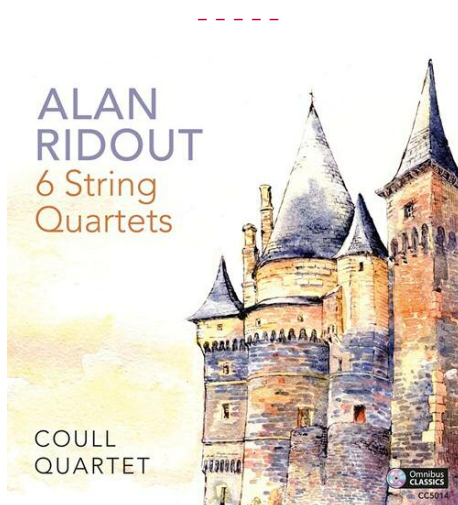
Then there is the 4th symphony which I would honestly claim to be a master-

piece. Conventional in that it has the usual 4 movements, she none the less fills everything with memorable invention. The ghosts of late Holst, VW (her teacher) and, distantly, Sibelius haunt the style but all these aspects are thoroughly digested into an attractive personal manner of expression. Slow sections exhibit a sort of wistful melancholy that I find totally alluring, but there are plenty of more robust sections for contrast.

The closing bars of the finale seem to be drawing the music peacefully to its close but then there is a brief angry closing blast. Is this a two fingered gesture to everyone who has ignored her?

The almost equally fine second symphony has fared slightly better as there was a Douglas Bostock recording some 20 years ago. Lewis Foreman in his exemplary programme note mentions that this work came third in a 1945 competition, where Bernard Stevens and Cedric Thorpe Davie were first and second. This provokes the thought that if the great and good adjudicators were right (doubtful possibly) then these works also are due an airing.

- GEOFFREY ATKINSON



## Alan Ridout: 6 String Quartets

Coull Quartet  
OMNIBUS CLASSICS CC5014

Formed in 1974, the Coull String Quartet still includes two of its founder members. Its repertoire covers a wide range of music by contemporary British composers. The latest CD

presents all six String Quartets by Alan Ridout (1934 – 1996). The Coull players offer six rigorous, extrovert and lucid performances. Ridout's Quartets are remarkably varied in style although common threads can be distinguished between several – the lively numbers two and five in particular.

The Quartets are not in chronological order on the CD. Quartet No. 1 actually comes last. Is this because of its quite desolate aura especially in the outer movements? The programme note mentions Shostakovich as a possible inspiration here. A sparse extensive two-part opening melody and then aggressive stabbed chords would seem to fit that idea while the faster central movement, angular yet just a touch folksy, would fit in with the note's suggestion of Bartók.

The other quartets are very much Ridout's own. The CD opens with Quartet No.2, lively, busy and just a touch jazzy. The central slow movement is tender with a pastoral feel then the syncopated rhythms of the Finale are teasingly off centre.

Two of the Quartets are in a single movement, most obviously Quartet No.5 entitled simply *Energico*, a title to which it lives up sizzilingly.

Quartet No. 4 is also in a single movement but is divided into three quite different sections. In his review in 'The Gramophone', Richard Whitehouse describes this as Ridout's "masterpiece in this medium". I think this is fair. The opening *Adagissimo* has dreamily attractive harmonies, mystic and ethereal. The *Allegro Assai* is light and effervescent, constantly reaching upward through the keys until it reaches an astonishing passage of harmonics, brilliantly performed by the Coull Quartet. These melt into a final section which mirrors the opening, turning even more ethereal.

My favourite however was Quartet No. 6, which is totally unlike the others which are all abstract. Entitled *Le Vitreen*, in five movements, it is a graphic musical portrait of the small Breton town of Vitré. It has a kind of antique simplicity, atmospheric and graphically descriptive, particularly of the Castle, the Church and the Market which each have a movement. I can verify that because in the mid 1960s I spent a year near Vitré and visited the town several times.

- ALAN COOPER

### Finzi: Cello Concerto, Eclogue, New Year Music, Grand Fantasia, Toccata

Paul Watkins *cello*  
Louis Lortie *piano*  
BBC Symphony Orchestra  
Andrew Davis *conductor*  
Chandos CHSA 5214

Finzi fans need have no hesitation in acquiring this highly attractive collection of some of his best, and best known, works. My first observation (not really a criticism) is the super-sonic range of the recording. I set the volume control at what seemed comfortable for the grinding double forte at the beginning of the concerto and then found that the pianissimo introduction to the slow movement was virtually inaudible. So, I needed to boost the sound level by about 20% which then made the opening very loud indeed. However, with no neighbours to worry about, I just settled down to enjoy the results.

For comparison I had to hand the earlier Chandos recording with Raphael Wallfisch and Vernon Handley; this dates from as long ago as 1986. This too is a splendid recording and in some possibly minor respects even better than the newcomer in, for instance, some shaping and rhythmic tension. But this not sufficient to stop me listening with pleasure to the newcomer by any means. There is a slight reluctance to linger (Sir Andrew has form in this respect) but again this is an observation rather than a criticism and one which will not necessarily find agreement elsewhere. Paul Watkins is golden-toned throughout in a highly persuasive interpretation.

My grumbles about speed however have more force in the rendition of the Eclogue which at the beginning, if not elsewhere, is faster than any other recording I have and faster than the (editorially suggested) metronome mark. Thus, I feel that the essential repose of the work is compromised.

It is good to have a new recording of the melancholy Nocturne 'New Year Music'



which has not proved so popular as regards recordings, let alone public performances. I suspect that this is because it is so redolent of that time Finzi felt was the 'saddest of the year'; it thus becomes difficult to programme. (As far as I am concerned, I love listening to it on 31st December – that, rather than absurd par-tying, for me at any rate.)

The weirdly proportioned but nonetheless wonderful Grand Fantasia concludes the disc. Here Louis Lortie's rendition of the very extended cadenza-like passage is spine-tinglingly exciting, and indeed the whole performance is beyond criticism.

– GEOFFREY ATKINSON

### A Vaughan Williams Christmas

Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea  
William Vann *director*  
Hugh Rowlands *organ*  
Albion Records 035

Eight Traditional English Carols (1919)

Two Carols (1945)  
Carols from The Oxford Book of Carols (1928)  
Nine Carols for male voices (1941)

Just in time for both Christmas enjoyment and perhaps gift-giving is this latest disc from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society. Vann's choir lends a fine and sublime interpretation of these arrangements of traditional carols along with four original compositions as well. I had not heard any of the 1919 arrangements and enjoyed them a great deal. RVW's still-fresh-sounding arrangement of 'On Christmas Night' [Sussex Carol] ranks very high against the Ledger arrangement I've known for years. Particularly settling and comforting is RVW's arrangement of 'There is a Flower' [Es ist ein Ros entsprungen].

The energetic tempo the gentlemen undertook in the TTBB setting of 'I Saw Three Ships' lends a gratifying feeling to the text. The entire set of male-voice-choir settings are a wonderful addition to this repertory of more commonly encountered performances for full SATB. For those carols with a more deliberate tempo here enables the listener time to fully enjoy the nuances of word painting, dy-



namics, and crystal clear diction. As with the Albion 034 disc Vann presents an excellent balance and presence of the Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea throughout. This disc is truly a tribute to what RVW had contributed to The English Hymnal published in 1906, a significant volume in the history of Anglican church music.

— JOHN DRESSLER

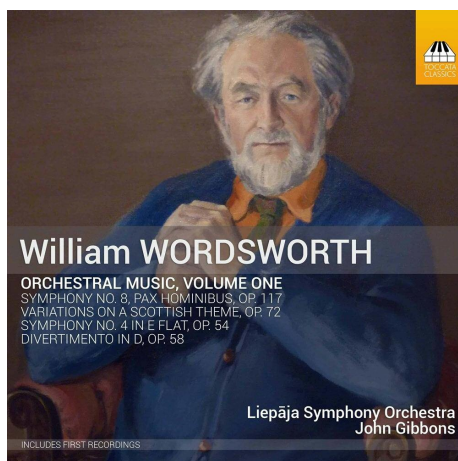
## William Wordsworth Orchestral Music Vol. 1

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra  
John Gibbons *conductor*  
TOCCO480

William Wordsworth, died thirty years ago and Toccata Classics here give us Volume 1 of what may be a survey of this peripheral composer. I have always struggled with his music which seems to hold back more than he gives us and the works here are no exception. He clearly has great technical fluency and a unique sound world, though very close to Rubbra; but what is he trying to say? I hope if this series does end up covering all his orchestral music, I may finally understand.

The Symphony no 4 was first heard, dedicated to and premiered by Sir John Barbirolli at the Edinburgh Festival in 1954. It is a compact single-movement work lasting just over twenty minutes, and while Paul Conway feels it has a 'Sibelian breadth', it has none of the depth or stature of that composer's one movement 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony. Like many one-movement symphonies, this is in several sections, here we have five. The most striking parts are the rhythmic dance ones in what the notes tell us are in 5/8 but sound like 5/4 to me. Much of it sounds like music for a lost Hammer film, and don't get me wrong, there was much excellent music written for those, but I do feel that there is something missing from the purely orchestral score.

The Symphony No. 8, 'Pax Hominibus', was the composer's final completed work, and in a career of enigmatic works this is one of his most enigmatic. It is in two



movements, but the composer indicates that the whole second movement is to be repeated. Here Toccata have given us his alternative versions of this movement, one quiet, the other a more dynamic crowd-pleasing one. In either case they end a work which though well worth listening to, is hard to grab hold of.

The other two works on the disc are pleasant enough but inconsequential, though the slow movement of the Divertimento is a beautiful piece of outstanding lyrical writing.

John Gibbons draws some beautifully shaped playing from the Liepaja Symphony Orchestra who cannot have been familiar with the music and which is captured well by this enterprising label and its engineers. The disc includes extraordinarily detailed notes by Paul Conway which go above and beyond in introducing the composer and his music.

— PAUL RW JACKSON

## Come To Me In My Dreams

Song collection  
Dame Sarah Connolly *mezzo-soprano*  
Joseph Middleton *piano*  
CHAN 10944

Those distinctive and luscious tones that radiate from Sarah Connolly's alluring mezzo-soprano voice are assured to soothe the most agitated of souls. This collection features dream-like songs undoubtedly aimed by slick classical music marketers to becalm the waters of these troubled times.

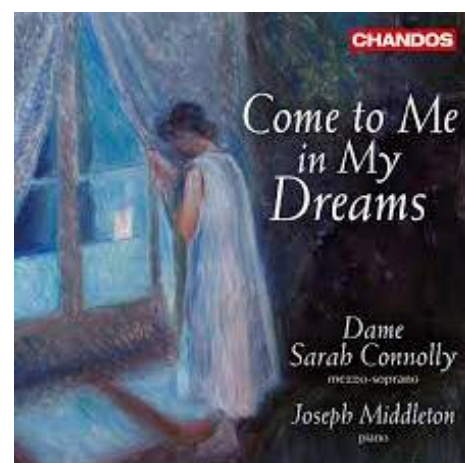
It certainly is a well-thought-through collection drawn from a diverse song-writing talent cleverly cultured over the last 120 years by our highly-esteemed, Royal College of Music.

These all-enveloping sounds, featuring the simple forces of voice and piano, certainly show off the crème-de-la-crème of British composers whose endemic talents were enhanced by the erstwhile RCM.

Big household names including Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett rub shoulders on this release with some lesser-known names such as Rebecca Clarke and Muriel Herbert.

An immaculate key and pedal touch, enhanced by a clear understanding, makes Joseph Middleton a perfect piano partner.

Sarah Connolly's passion for English song is here beautifully endorsed. Other great names such as Gurney, Ireland, Somervell, Howells, Bridge, Dunhill, Parry, Stanford, Gibbs, Holst, and a final touching 'Farewell' from Mark-Anthony Turnage, are all given refreshing air time



on this serene release.

My own emotive gem comes from Ernest 'Jack' Moeran, who makes a rare reference to his own bitter First World War experiences, when he sets the haunting words of John Masefield to music. This could almost summarise the feelings of recent upsetting events, like the tragedy of Grenfell or the horror of the Manchester terrorist bombings.

There is some dark mourning in the Moeran's song 'Twilight':

'I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear long ago in the past.

Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know death cannot last...'

This moody and soothing collection of superbly recorded and contemplative

music can be interpreted in a versatile way. The songs will certainly impact on us all at some time.

- CHRIS BYE

### John McLeod: The Complete Piano Works

Murray McLachlan *piano*

Rose McLachlan *piano*

MÉTIER MSV77207

This double CD containing the complete piano music to date by the Scottish composer John McLeod is hugely generous. The second of the two CDs contains all five of McLeod's Piano Sonatas, composed over a period of thirty-five years from Piano Sonata No.1 (1978) to No.5 (2013). The original score of Sonata No.2 was lost and the piece reconstructed in 2017 using music from an early Harpsichord Sonatina, so this in one sense is the latest of the Sonatas.

The First Sonata is "loosely based" on Liszt's famous b minor Sonata. McLeod's music has a similar demonic power, although the harmonic language is very much 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A fascinating development in expressiveness and clarity takes place across the years but the stylistic power of McLeod's music remains firmly grounded. The Sonatas are a series of musical landscapes reflecting something like the wildness of our magnificent remote Scottish landscapes, especially in the Highlands. We are very much in safe hands (quite literally) in our journey across these landscapes when our guide is the marvellous Murray McLachlan. He leads us through the most complex and exciting percussive passages with a ferocious virtuosity and startling precision, then through quieter music bringing out all the varied depths of feeling that McLeod has imprinted in these full colour compositions. The final work on this second CD is McLachlan's own transcription for piano of Fantasy on Themes from Britten's Opera

"Gloriana" composed originally for guitar. Watch out for the surprising percussive interludes on the body of the piano.



The first CD is more varied. It includes the very early Four Impromptus (1960) along with Twelve Preludes (1984), which are amazingly varied and colourful. In addition to these largely 'abstract' compositions, the Three Protest Pieces (1992) are expressions of ecological concern while Three Interludes from "Another Time, Another Place" (1997) are piano versions of McLeod's incidental music for a television drama.

Best of all, for me, are the twelve very colourful pieces inspired by pictures created by fellow composer Hafliði Hallgrímsson - Hafliði's Pictures (2008). For these, McLeod has written and narrates short humorous poems with a delightful surrealist touch - as they say in Scotland, 'pure dead brilliant'.

The second item on the first CD are the Hebridean Dances (1981) played here by McLachlan's young and talented daughter, Rose - an absolute delight.

- ALAN COOPER

### Lennox Berkeley: The Complete Piano Works

Douglas Stevens *piano*

HOXA HS1806 - 18

Douglas Stevens studied at the University of Bristol earning a PhD centred on the music of Lennox Berkeley. His prowess as a concert pianist, along with his deep knowledge of Berkeley's music makes him the ideal interpreter to present this double CD of Berkeley's complete piano works. His clean, clear, incisive playing matches Berkeley's predominant style of piano composition - brittle, crystalline and often challengingly rapid, full of helter-skelter runs for both hands. Taken together, the two CDs present forty-seven separate pieces, some of them linked together under titles such as 'Three Pieces' or 'Five Short Pieces' making up nineteen individual opus items. Some sixty percent of the pieces are less than two minutes in duration, but often so full of notes that they seem much more generous. These short pieces are abstract, ranging across Berke-



ley's musical career from the piece that opens the first CD, a powerful characterful March dating from 1924 to his opus 101 No.2, Mazurka (1982).

His Sonata for Piano Opus 20 (1945) contains the most extensive sections – four movements, over seven or eight minutes each, although the second, marked Presto, is just over two minutes. The opening movement is unusual in being Berkeley's experiment in monothematic sonata form although he makes it seem so full of variety in texture like a journey in piano exploration. The little Presto is pure busy Berkeley followed by a melancholy yet beautifully luminous Adagio and then an Allegro finale with rich chords, moments of drama or sparkle and a rather splendid finish, very different from some of the shorter pieces which can stop rather abruptly.

Some of the most attractive and delightful pieces have Berkeley using inspiration from other areas of music – Mr Pilkington's Toye with its Elizabethan flavourings, or the Three Impromptus Op. 7 (1935) with Spanish guitar touches followed by a lolloping Andantino and then a Toccata-like Allegro.

Later, Paysage (1944), stands out for being expressively atmospheric and beautifully translucent. There are Three Mazurkas (Hommage à Chopin) and to finish a Polka (1934) which is very jolly and inspired by the spirit of the dance.

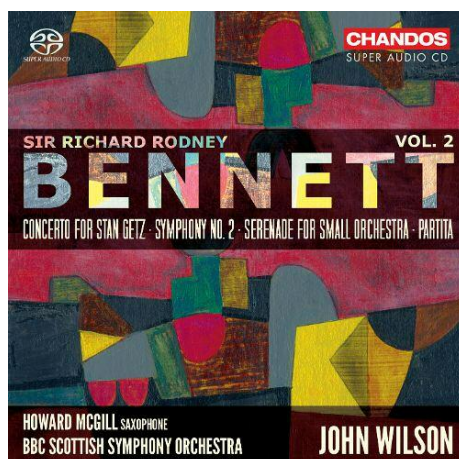
These two CDs are a marvellous introduction to Berkeley's piano music presented by an artist thoroughly at home with this music. Douglas Stevens is also responsible for the very full and informative programme notes.

– ALAN COOPER

## Richard Rodney Bennett: Orchestra Music Vol. 2

Howard McGill *tenor saxophone*  
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra  
John Wilson *conductor*  
Chandos CHSA 5212

Chandos are really looking after those of us who appreciate the wide-ranging skills of this fine



contemporary composer, and this new CD is exemplary in its variety.

The stand-out item in both interest and performance is the Saxophone Concerto, which is given a magnificent account in its range, emotion and swagger by Howard McGill. RRB was of course as fluent in Jazz idioms as he was in 'classical' ones, and the concerto was written for Sax virtuoso Stan Getz in 1990, who sadly died before he could perform it.

The heart of the work is the second movement, a moody 'Elegy'. Here the ghost of the nocturnal prowler, emanates straight out of an Edward Hopper painting. Unknowable sadness and regret stalk this music, played with wonderful subtlety by Howard McGill. This is music which once you have heard it you will never forget it.

The contrast between this movement and its companions is extreme. The sax reverts to being rude and extravert, defiant and naughty – as the liner notes remark, 'its spirit briefly captured, but never tamed'.

RRB's versatility finds expression in the sort-of-atonal Second Symphony (1967), possibly written to show that he could write in a style acceptable to the infamous Glock-Keller faction, but however skilful and varied the music might be, it seems to me that his heart, his real heart, was not in it, and he was surely pleased to be able to move on to warmer, and doubtless more lucrative territory.

Two lighter works complete this programme and they are much more approachable. Occasionally, in these movements I feel he is in auto-compose mode, but then suddenly there is a flash of something interesting or involving, so it is best not to be too critical when listening to, and indeed enjoying, these pieces.

John Wilson and the orchestra play

with great commitment, precision and tightness.

I hope Chandos continue to work through RRB's repertoire and here put in a plea for a pristine new version of his 'Jazz Calendar', a piece which I have enjoyed for many years in an off-air tape recording.

– GEOFFREY ATKINSON

## In Remembrance

Choral music by Ireland, Holst, Parry, Elgar, Fauré, Venables  
Chapel Choir and Pensioners' Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea  
William Vann *Director*  
SOMM CD 0187

This issue marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the first World War in a highly appropriate and imaginative fashion. While the main work in the programme, Fauré's Requiem, is only of passing interest for the BMS two things need to be mentioned: firstly, that this is a very fine performance and recording in every respect, and secondly that the organ accompaniment has been freshly devised by Iain Farrington, and is a great improvement on the familiar alternatives. Iain has also created an effective organ accompaniment for the other substantial work here included, Holst's 'Ode to Death'. This masterpiece of mature Holst is probably not well-known because of its apparently grim topic, but in the event the mood is of consolation and acceptance. The new arrangement should commend itself to choral societies who cannot always afford an orchestra, and who might be looking for something new and very worthwhile.

The rest of the programme consists of mainly well-known anthems and the sort of hymn that is categorised as 'National' in our hymnbooks. For the latter the professional chapel choir are augmented by the Chelsea Pensioners' Choir who have clearly been trained to sing accurately and richly in their singing of 'Jerusalem', 'I vow to thee, my country' and that wonderful old sob fest 'O valiant hearts' which is sung with unusual vigour, doubtless with the intention of ameliorating its somewhat outdated sentimentality.

The anthems include Ireland's

'Greater Love', Parry's 'There is an old belief' and Stanford's 'Justorum animae', and as a special bonus there is the first recording of a lovely new work by Ian Venables – his 'Requiem aeternum'; this exhibits a sort of chaste post-Howellsian mode of expression which is very moving.

These latter works are sung with distinction by the chapel choir, with expert organ accompaniments from James Orford and Hugh Rowlands. Director William Vann's view of the music is unerringly sympathetic, and the generous acoustic of London's Temple Church ensures that this is a recoding to cherish, even if you don't want to hear those hymns all that often.

– GEOFFREY ATKINSON

## Parry: Symphony no 4 / Three movements from 'Suite moderne' / Proserpine

BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales

Rumon Gamba *conductor*

Chandos CHAN 10994

Ever since those turbulent turn-of-the-century days which saw the widespread Hubert Parry revival, persistent questions continue to hang over some of his more expansive works.

Undeniably, these nagging doubts fly in the face of some tremendously popular short pieces, like the evergreen and nationalistic 'Jerusalem' or that 2011 Royal Wedding red-hot favourite, 'I Was Glad'. Indeed, these have endured over the years to become popular achievements. Nevertheless, George Bernard Shaw, Frederick Delius and Arnold Bax are big artistic names who joined many professional critics to pose many searching questions over Parry's larger compositions.

They alleged Parry was a landed gentleman of his day and composed with insufficient creativity. Many of his more substantive works were hampered by his very conventional, upper-middle class lifestyle, they said. The mundane path followed by this Fourth Symphony (1889) does add fuel to this controversial point of view. A passionate pro-Parry camp, in-

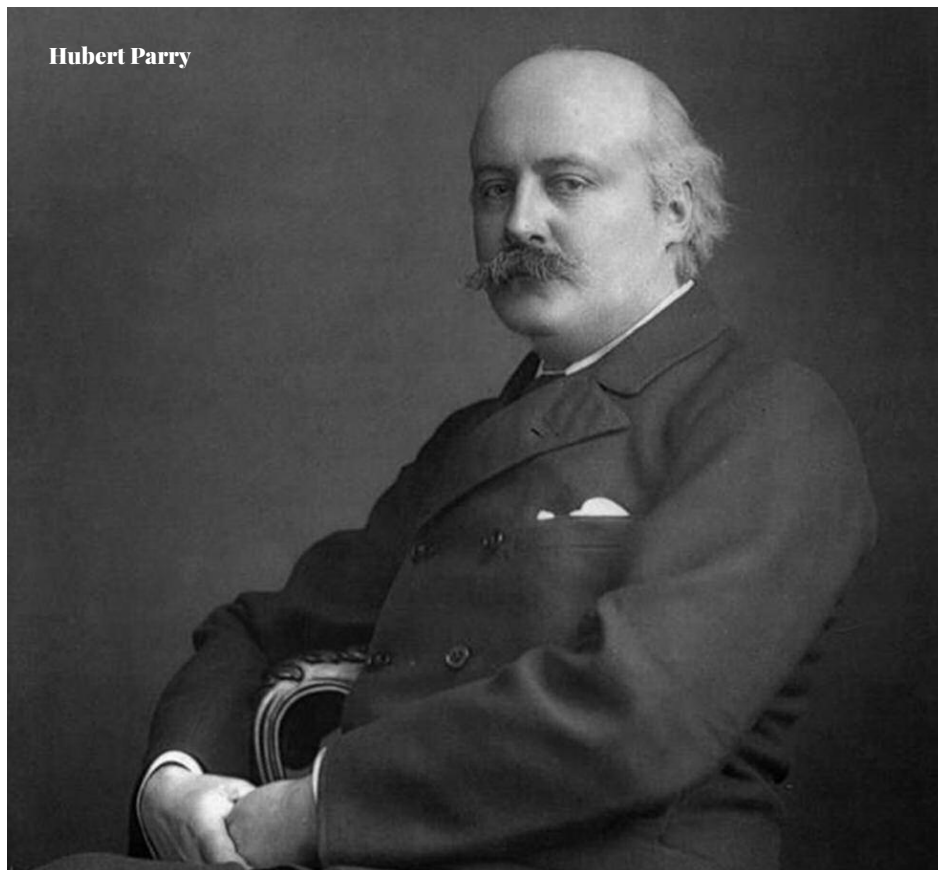
cluding the composer's daughter Dorothea, later vehemently disagreed with what was said to be "unfair attacks".

Rumon Gamba here galvanises his committed Welsh players to stimulate some very impressive orchestral playing

proves that Hubert Parry's controversial musical crown did include some irrepressible gems despite coming under early fire.

– CHRIS BYE

Hubert Parry



and wring the very best from this symphonic score.

This release – a boxed-set of all five Parry symphonies is also available – includes the 'Suite Moderne' (1886) a work which even Parry himself initially had some misgivings about and revised it several years later in 1892. The new substantially rewritten version became a favourite of Sir Henry Wood, who popularised it with a Proms performance, but it remained unpublished until after the composer's death.

In a later short ballet score, 'Proserpine' (1912), the Parry orchestration technique matures to become more expressive. Here we hear Welsh National Orchestra players revel in some impressive orchestral lines. This delicate and colourful score with its chirpy woodwinds and expressive strings swings along with a delightful momentum.

A superbly engineered recording

## 100 Years of Nine Lessons & Carols

The Choir of King's College, Cambridge  
Philip Ledger, Stephen Cleobury, David Willcocks music directors  
KGS0033-D

Christmas without Kings is as unthinkable as Santa without Rudolph. This blissful sound is bound to entrance the most impassive of musical souls.

So, come on: 'Ho, ho, ho! 'Tis the season to be jolly', and all that. It is a fruitful time when avaricious recording companies swamp our seasonal market with countless messages of joy and goodwill. And it must be said that this sales jamboree does successfully stimulate a



widespread ethereal passion. Almost every cathedral in Britain joins the national carol recording sing-song.

In particular these celebrated and time-honoured King's Chapel Choir performances – a veritable must every Christmas Eve! – have always come top of the tree. Move over Christmas fairy! Here is an unrivalled conglomeration of old and new performances which oozes perfection.

Those unique and alluring Kings College chapel acoustics do serve up some superbly directed singing of an unsurpassed quality. Breathing, tempo and timing are all delivered perfectly, like a choirmaster's sweet dream. Rich masterful harmonies are well structured and goose-pimpling treble descants soar magically on high, perfectly blending with a well-disciplined main choir and sumptuous organ lines.

That unique King's Choir polish always seems to give old favourite carols a glittering renewal. Even well-worn favourites like O Come All Ye Faithful and Hark the Herald Angels get a notably refreshing gusto.

A particular feature is a finely crafted version of the cheery In Dulce Jubilo. (Ledger, 1980). The music jogs pleasingly along with a fine bubbly mixture of festive vocal harmonic quality that would even bring a smile to that gnarled old face of grumble-guts, Ebenezer Scrooge. The diction (sung and spoken) is immaculate. It's a convincing Christmas message trumpeted out with confidence.

The King's College Christmas Eve blessing was first performed in 1918. Joyfully, it was the same year that the World War I Armistice was finally declared.

Its message of peace we all should never forget.

Merry Christmas!

– CHRIS BYE

## British Serenade 2

Various composers

Manchester Sinfonia

Rachel Clegg *oboe*

John Bradbury, John Turner *recorders*

Philip Spratley *conductor*

HTGCD186

Choir of King's College, Cambridge



This beautifully recorded and generously filled CD features music by some of the doyennes of what is labelled erroneously 'light music' alongside works by lesser known figures. It is expertly played by the Manchester Sinfonia with some works conducted by their respective composers.

Philip Spratley conducts most of the programme which opens with his own Farewell Suite which paints portraits of his student days in Manchester. No carousing here, all the movements are rather elegant and richly scored from the original piano pieces.

I am a huge fan of Bryan Kelly – his Improvisations on Christmas Carols (available on Naxos) are played in my house from 1st December till 12th Night – here we have two concertante works. In the Concerto da Camera the solo part is for oboe, the excellent Rachel Clegg who is more than up to the work's challenges. Kelly's music often has a French feel perhaps informed from his studies with Nadia Boulanger and this is the case here. The rhythmic opening movement has pungent harmonies followed by a bitter sweet second subject and all is over too quickly. The slow second movement consists of a languorous melody which began life as a

children's song and which bookends a jaunty middle section a la Parisienne. The finale incorporates elements of gigue and tarantella with much joie de vivre. This is a real winner that deserves to be part of the oboe repertory. His Capricorn for clarinet and strings is of a darker hue and consists of a theme and five variations. The elegiac theme is skilfully manipulated becoming by turns jaunty, introspective and moving.

Paul Lewis is represented by two pastoral works of which Ecclesbourne Glen is a wonderfully atmospheric portrait of the beauty spot near Hastings which was destroyed in a landslide in 2014. This speaks to happier times and is greater than the sum of its parts.

Paterson's Recorder Concertino played by the seemingly ever busy John Turner feels like Tudor pastiche thrown off kilter by a 5/8 first movement. Originally for flute and piano it here it is elegantly arranged for strings

Wright's Solus is a miniature rhapsody for harp and orchestra; elegiac and mysterious by turns. He gets the difficult balance between soloist and ensemble just right.

The disc ends with two more energetic works. There are no real bells in

Hope's work but he does a good job in simulating the sound with strings. Hewitt Jones ends the disc with a touch of energetic dance like minimalism.

Heritage have a number of discs of music in this genre which are well worth exploring. Their own website sells them for a fraction of the cost of Amazon.

- PAUL RW JACKSON

## Arnold Cooke: Complete Violin Sonatas

The Pleyel Ensemble

MPR103

Order from:

[www.mikepurtonrecording.com](http://www.mikepurtonrecording.com)

Arnold Cooke's Complete Violin Sonatas consist of four works in all. The first and last works on the CD are Sonatas for Violin and Piano. In between those are a Sonata for Solo Violin and a Duo Sonata for unaccompanied Violin and Viola. They are startlingly different works.

The most instantly appealing is the earliest, the Sonata no. 1 in G for violin and piano (1939). It opens with a rippling piano accompaniment over which floats a sinuous violin melody. As the very full accompanying programme note states, Arnold Cooke has been labelled an 'English Hindemithian'. Hindemith was indeed one of Cooke's composition teachers and in all the sonatas, Hindemith's influence can be discerned, however, in this first Sonata, the Englishness of the music comes through as the stronger flavour in both melody and harmony. There is a strong sense of the English pastoral, especially in the slow sections of the second movement. These are contrasted with Vivace sections which are probably more Hindemithian. The finale has a stirring folksy feel and to quote the programme note, violin harmonics suggest 'the effect of someone whistling in the distance'. This is real music of the English countryside.

The two central works, especially the Sonata for Solo Violin (1969) will appeal more to the technically minded, those who enjoy virtuosity for its own sake. Benedict Holland gives a dazzling performance of

the four movement work which is filled with double stopping, sounding like more than just one instrument. The slow movement, Lento, offers a single line melody beautifully played before harmonics and different sorts of pizzicato return us to harmonic passages.

In the Duo Sonata (1935-35), Benedict Holland is joined by Susie Mészáros on viola. Marvellously clear contrapuntal playing leads on to a truly exciting Molto allegro finale.

The final Sonata, no.2 in A for violin and piano, demonstrates fabulous teamwork between Benedict Holland and pianist Harvey Davies. In this work, the

## Another superb Elgar release

The Music Makers

The Spirit of England

Sarah Connolly *mezzo soprano*

Andrew Staples *tenor*,

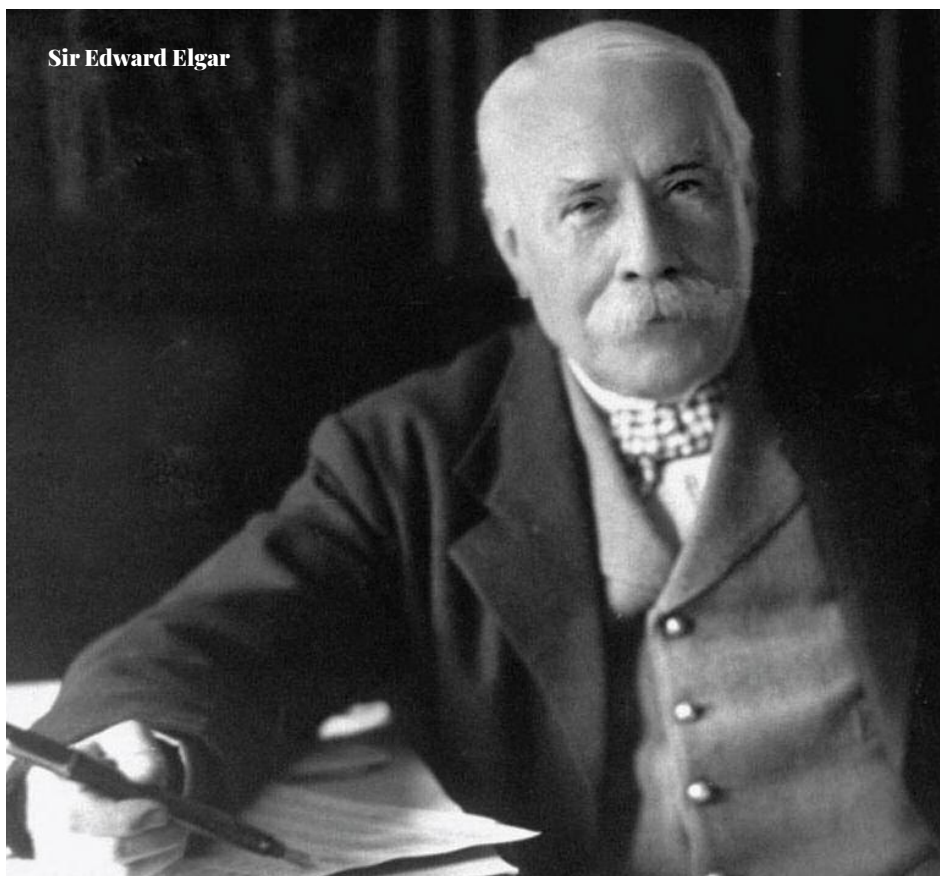
BBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus

Sir Andrew Davis *conductor*

CHSA 5215

This is another superb 'Super Audio' release from Chandos, with excellent performances all round. Sir Andrew projects all the music with con-

Sir Edward Elgar



pianist is given every bit as much limelight as the violinist. Somehow here, the ghost of Hindemith is again married delightfully with the English side of Cooke's writing. The slow movement, Andante con moto, is melodically delicious but it is the finale with its appended fugue that demonstrates Cooke's music at its most joyful and bewitching.

- ALAN COOPER

siderable drive and masterful control of the many transitions, the chorus are confident and well-focussed, and the soloists are satisfyingly authoritative.

It is odd that neither of these works are especially well-known. I imagine that with The Music Makers its extreme technical demands on all concerned mean that only the best forces can cope, while The Spirit of England may appear a little too jingoistic for some tastes. Indeed, Sir Andrew says that this is the first time he has conducted it.

I find it astonishing that The Music



Makers has sometimes been criticised for going over old material. For me, the frequent self-quotation makes the music emotionally very satisfying, and indeed very moving. Interestingly, the booklet notes identify and locate most (but not all, it has to be said) of these motifs, and I have marked my score as appropriate, since much of the music is so characteristic it is sometimes difficult to remember what is generic to the piece, and what is a quotation. It is interesting to note that the sometimes corny verse ('With wonderful deathless ditties, we build up the world's great cities' – pure McGonagall!) introduces the epithet 'movers and shakers' which has now gone into the language, doubtless unrecognised as deriving from O'Shaughnessy.

The Spirit of England is, as remarked above, rarely encountered. It is more straightforward than The Music Makers with clear-cut melodic material and straightforward construction. All the verse is by Laurence Binyon, and the third movement, easily the strongest and most memorable, sets the whole text of 'For the Fallen'. Here there are two soaring melodies that stay long in the memory. This movement contains the immortal sentiments of 'They shall grow not old....' It is really odd that Elgar was allowed to change the original 'grow not' to 'not grow' which, as recent correspondence in 'The Times' has pointed out, subtly changes the meaning and emphasis. Also, Elgar's text says the 'years condemn' where there is some evidence that the original had the 'years contemn' where that latter verb, although archaic, is the more appropriate. Binyon was apparently indifferent in these matters so it seems that this famous text is now come down to us in its altered state.

– GEOFFREY ATKINSON

## Dedications

Works for Clarinet and Orchestra including Finzi's Clarinet Concerto  
Roeland Hendrix *clarinet*  
Sander Geerts *viola*  
London Philharmonic Orchestra  
Martyn Brabbins *conductor*  
Evil Penguin Classic EPRC 0026

The Belgian musician Roeland Hendrix is a superb clarinetist. It is as simple as that, and this disc celebrates his virtuosity and musicianship in ample measure. His tone is limpid and yet voluptuous, and his breath control amazing.

The Finzi concerto is of course the main interest for BMS members, and M. Hendrix has a hot-line to the fountain-head. His teacher was the well-known Thea King who was married to the equally renowned Frederick Thurston (known as 'Jack'). Finzi consulted Jack on many technical points when composing his lovely concerto, and the correspondence has not only been preserved, but has now passed on by Ms King to her eminent pupil. This correspondence is reproduced in the substantial booklet notes, both in facsimile and print copy.

So, in basic terms, this issue becomes the go-to version of this concerto. The string accompaniment is rich and golden-toned and Martyn Brabbins carefully details the orchestral tapestry. He is clearly establishing a fine reputation as a conductor of British music.

Also on the disc is a very sensitive and neatly poised account of the Mozart concerto. Again, it is difficult to imagine it being better done. The music just flows with unforced naturalness.

The third work included here is a rarity – the Double Concerto for Clarinet and Viola op. 88 (1912) by Max Bruch. The notes point out that nearly 50 years separate this piece from the famous first violin concerto yet the style shows no 'advance'. Personally, I do not have a problem with this – music is either good or bad, and all levels between and beyond, it does not matter when it was written. The composition in this piece is well engineered indeed, but its material is not very compelling despite powerful advocacy of Messrs Hendrix and Geerts.

A final point – this CD comes in an attractive cardboard folder which is so much more user-friendly than these wretched 'jewel cases' which crack if you just look at them, and then those bobbles stop you from extracting the booklet notes easily.

– GEOFFREY ATKINSON



## New Music for Oboe Vol. 2

Various composers and performers  
Metier records

The clue is in the title and here is another recording bringing together a number of new works written especially for this project, the Howarth-Redgate Oboe and also the Lupophon, a new type of bass oboe.

Working closely with composers, performer Christopher Redgate has developed, or more specifically, helped create, a new repertoire of music for this specially designed oboe. Using many techniques, both old and new, including multiphonics, microtones, altissimo sounds, both he and the composers certainly provide an interesting palette of experimental tone for us. Needless to say, the fine players involved – Coull Quartet, Stephen Robbings (piano), and Paul Archibold (electronics) play with total focus on the subject matter.

Composers Edward Cowie, Paul Archibold, Dorothy Ker, and Christopher Fox, certainly throw themselves into the project, providing us with new tonal spectra. Indeed, an interesting, experimental soundscape is shown to us, and who knew that the oboe could produce such sounds, as extremes are taken, reined in, then let loose again before our very ears?

This is an interesting album, so if you'd like to hear something a little different, with quite a few unusual tones, forms, etc, then please give it a try. True, there is a feeling of familiarity now and again, which is not a bad thing, and while we may feel we know some of the compositional elements, the main purpose is to 'show off' what can be achieved on the Howarth-

## CD REVIEWS

Redgate Oboe and Lupophon. Also, maybe, if you're an oboe player already, and fancy a change, without really having to learn a new instrument technically, this one could be the one for you.

As a listener, I don't think it's a sit down in front of a roaring log fire, with a nice glass of something, with music washing around you, this is something different, and different can sometimes be a good thing for the musical soul, so to speak. As I said earlier, all music should be heard, new music, new sounds, so you should give it a go. I hope you would want to, so do not be too alarmed at my thoughts; it's a very interesting CD, with total conviction in performance, and absolute commitment from everyone involved in this project.

- PETER BYROM-SMITH

## Rawsthorne and Other Rarities

Various performers

Divine Art

An epic 22 page accompanying booklet comes enclosed with the CD. It is enlightening, informative, and also includes the words from the Chamber Cantata. Because of this, I do not intend to go into too much depth here in this review, as the necessary facts are to be found in the booklet. However, I'll say a few words about the main focus here, Alan Rawsthorne.

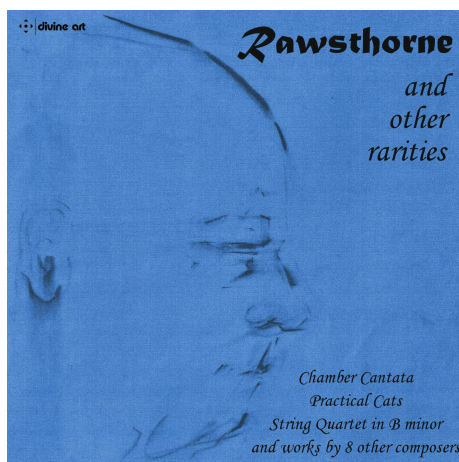
It's good to have another group of his works available, thus reaching out to potential admirers of his compositions, and bringing them to wider musical world.

The 'Chamber Cantata' with Clare Wilkinson (mezzo soprano) singing with Harvey Davies (harpsichord), and the Solem Quartet is the true starting point in this journey into Rawsthorne's world.

'Practical Cats' is an interesting work, here presented as arranged for piano and soloist, rather than the more familiar chamber version. Peter Lawson (piano) leads the way with his fabulous playing, whilst Mark Rowlinson recites the poems of T.S. Elliot. Both performers at times weave themselves around each other nicely. The poems, as ever are enchanting. The piano never gets in the way, and

all seven movements constitute a tight, atmospheric little group.

Bringing together such a terrific group of experienced, and creative musicians as these to this new Rawsthorne



variety of accompaniments. All these short works played with true conviction, enabling the listener to be absorbed in the different composer's original thoughts.

So, to sum up a little, this is a fine recording indeed, with a true balance between the Rawsthorne works with the shorter rarities by other composers interspersed. Please spend a little time reading the aforementioned booklet for more information about the pieces and biographies, while also reading the introduction by recorder player and all-round great musician John Turner, who provides us with much insight.

- PETER BYROM-SMITH



project, guarantees that the finished CD would be an excellent addition to the ever-growing catalogue of Rawsthorne recordings available. Alongside the Rawsthorne works, there are also other auditory delights and rarities - hence the CD title. Included are pieces by David Ellis, Malcolm Lipkin, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Halsey Stevens, Arthur Bliss, Basil Deane, and Karel Janovicky. A truly eclectic mix of pieces they are too, with works ranging from solo recorder pieces, to songs, with a

## Peter Dickinson: Translations

Early Chamber Music  
Prima Facie PFNSCD009

British composer Peter Dickinson has been recognised as a prolific and inspired music writer, and indeed has had a well-respected and established career in music. As well as



composer he is also known as a writer, and teacher/lecturer. Using most compositional forms, from solo works to large symphonic works, Dickinson's works have received much acclaim, and many recordings of his work have been made over the years. Here, we are focussed on a collection of his early chamber works for a variety of instrumental combinations.

So, we have a group of works with a wide variety of timbres, with the whole CD bringing shade into light, and introducing Dickinson's early varied voice, and compositional craft.

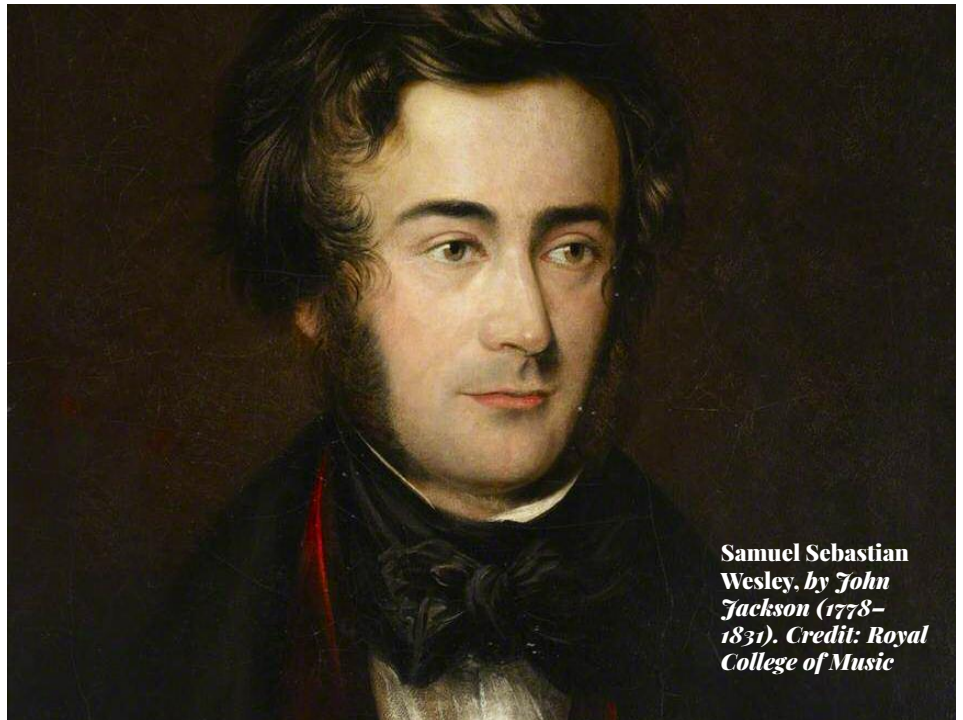
Starting with the bright and breezy 'Sonatina' for recorder and piano, and finishing with 'Lullaby' from his 'The Unicorns' for solo piano, these works sort of 'bookend' the whole recording, and when you listen to the other pieces, such as 'Threnody' for cello and piano, 'Sonatina' for solo bassoon, to name only two, you really start to appreciate what a creative mind was at work here.

Sometimes formal construction, and the quite tonal music feel familiar, while other works create tension, release, and everything in between. 'Translations' for recorder, Gamba, and Harpsichord, uses interesting melodic themes, harmonic structures and inventive instrumental techniques. This work is a little like the 20th Century meets the Baroque - but in a good way! Yes, strange I hear you say, but trust me it works somehow, which is truly a sign of the composer's skill, and it's pretty exciting to listen to. Given this work's modern depth of ideas, and tone, as well as its duration as the longest track on the CD, I can well understand the producer's choice of 'Translations' as the title.

There are plenty of programme notes, biographies of both the composer and performers. Overall, the variety of pieces included here, with different, in some cases unique combinations, is the key to the enjoyment of Peter Dickinson and his early music, as we join him on his journey from early works, developing ideas along the way, expanding his creativity with each new piece, into his individual voice. Added to this of course, each interpretation is provided by some of the best performers around on their instruments.

- PETER ROBERT BYROM-SMITH

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**Samuel Sebastian Wesley, by John Jackson (1778–1831). Credit: Royal College of Music**

## Samuel Wesley: Confitebor Tibi / Domine

Portsmouth Choral Union  
Southern Pro Musica  
David Gostick *conductor*  
PRCD 1186

As a truly heroic endeavour the above forces have joined together to create the world première recording of Samuel Wesley's masterpiece of 1799. Samuel Wesley (the father of the slightly better-known Samuel Sebastian Wesley) is the easily the brightest beacon of English musical creativity in the long period between the death of Handel and the emergence of Parry and Stanford. Yet he still awaits recognition from all except organists, some at least of whom are aware of the excellence of his contribution to their repertoire.

The production of a performance is a major undertaking, even Wesley himself did not achieve this until 1826, partly it is suggested because people at the end of the 18th century were going nuts about the contemporaneous 'The Creation'. Recently there have been a few performances and indeed broadcasts, but here we have a fully professional and highly committed first recording. There are no criticisms to make about the performance: the soloists

are uniformly excellent, the choir sing with confidence, commitment and vigour, supported by the excellent Southern pro Musica, all under their clearly very able and knowledgeable director David Gostick.

The style of the music is, as Wesley himself stated in 1825, 'a judicious mixture of the ancient and more modern church music'. By which he means the spirit of Handel is re-infused with the musical manners and mannerisms of the end of the century, to which is sometimes added Gregorian chant in a cantus firmus.

So, it is all very jolly, although harmonically Wesley was later to develop more pungency. There are some really fine moments, for instance the very extended coloratura aria 'Fidelia omnia mandata ejus', despatched with tremendous energy, vigour and accuracy by Claire Seaton. Another is at the climax of the big chorus 'Mandavit in aeternum testamentum', where, following a dramatic pause, the timpani make a remarkable solo entry which leads to the closing text 'Sanctam et terribile nomen ejus'.

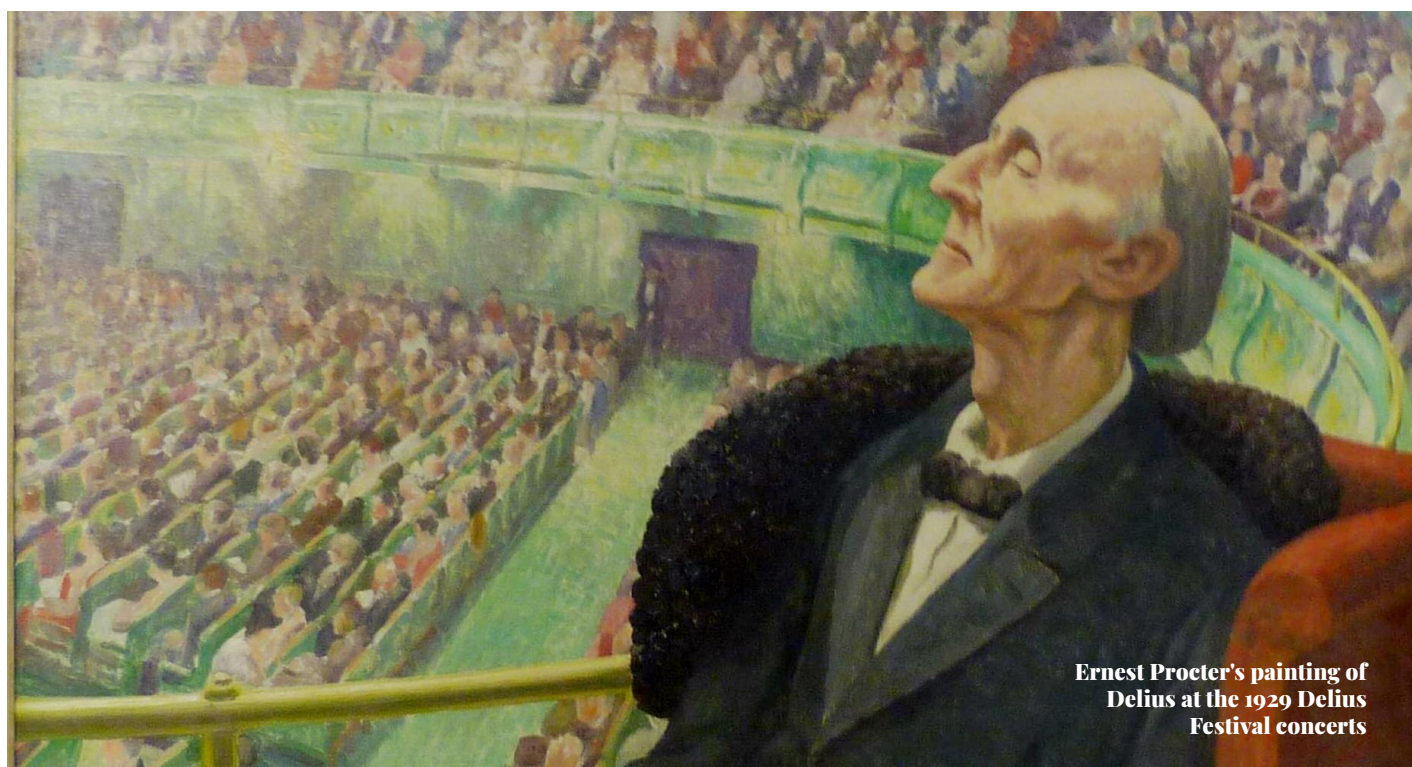
The venture, which has been well recorded by Priory, was made possible by a generous legacy from a previous choir member, and it is to be very much hoped that not only will it sell well, but that it will encourage other choirs with the expertise and resources to present further performances.

- GEOFFREY ATKINSON

**AND FINALLY...**

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# The Pleasures of Delius



Ernest Procter's painting of  
Delius at the 1929 Delius  
Festival concerts

**A Film Portrait by John Bridcut  
Crux Productions**

Having seen many of John Bridcut's films previously on TV, it was a nice feeling when asked to watch this one again; sometimes you miss one or too details, and need to watch again to fully appreciate.

From the very first scenes, of Delius body being reburied in Surrey, questions about him are asked, such as why he hadn't lived in the U.K. for 50 years, etc.? After a great introduction filled with dark foreboding, the film take us on a journey using original buildings, countryside the composer knew well, and as the film develops, this helps build up a feeling that we are beginning to see into his world.

The Thomas Beecham interview is interesting and insightful, filmed in 1957 underlining the influence the great

conductor had in presenting Delius's music to the public.

There are images of his home town of Bradford, to which, after he left for Florida, he rarely returned. In fact he seems to avoid Britain all together, preferring the openness, artistic environments of Scandinavia and Europe, particularly France and Norway. Via imagery and musical soundtrack, we see glimpses of Delius' life in Florida. It is interesting to see his Florida house, complete with piano and some insightful information about his musical inspiration, as well as a little of his private life in the orange groves. The heat, humidity, contours of landscape, the singing of plantation workers, all had a huge influence on both the man and his music.

Alongside all these images and words, we hear some great performances of Delius' works - songs, chamber, orchestral

and operatic works. The relationship between Grieg and Delius is also explored.

We are introduced to Delius' life in Paris where the composer took full advantage of an indulgent, hedonistic, artist's life showing that he indulged in pleasure wherever, whenever, and however he could. We also see a few glimpses of the exquisite countryside that Delius loved, in his travels in France, and the Norwegian mountains.

The film is filled with comments and thoughts from distinguished conductors and musicians from Britain and around the world; including Andrew Davis and Mark Elder.

So, all in all, this is an interesting film, which adds to the documentation of one of Britain's greatest, sometimes slightly elusive, composers - Frederick Delius.

**- PETER BYROM-SMITH**