



RAYMOND CHARLES HANSON
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GRAND
PIANO

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RAYMOND HANSON

COMPLETE PIANO WORKS

TONYA LEMOH

2 CDs



RAYMOND CHARLES HANSON (1913–1976)

COMPLETE PIANO WORKS

TONYA LEMOH, *piano*

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TONYA LEMOH



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Deborah De Graaff). Lemoh holds performance degrees from conservatoriums in Australia, the US and Denmark, and completed doctoral studies at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music, Australia. A keen interpreter of new music, she has performed in international new music festivals in Australia and throughout Scandinavia. She was a lecturer on the piano faculty of the University of Copenhagen for ten years. Lemoh has performed and recorded for ABC Radio, Danish National Radio and Danish television.

Australian/Sierra Leonean pianist Tonya Lemoh is known for her focus on unusual and exotic repertoire. She made her name on the international scene with her ground-breaking recording for Chandos of solo piano works by Austrian composer Joseph Marx. Praised by *Gramophone* magazine and *All Music Guide*, her concert appearances and recordings have since consistently garnered critical acclaim. Lemoh has won several international awards, including First Prizes in the '21st century Art Competition' (International Association of Art and Education in the 21st Century, Helsingør 2003), and the Royal Academy of Music (Aarhus) Concerto Competition, and a Diplôme d'honneur in the International Edvard Grieg Piano Competition. Her recording of Svend Erik Tarp's piano works was awarded one of Denmark's most prestigious national music awards, the Danish Radio prize for best solo disc of the year. Other recordings include *Harmonies du Soir, Grotesque*, (with pianist Jeanell Carrigan) *The Golden Age and Souvenirs* (Copenhagen Piano Duo), and *Rags, Bags and Tangos* (with clarinettist

- IV. A wind roars down the peaceful valley, it comes wave-like, rocking the trees and the river's surface shivers. Rain follows fast in a wall, and the crops lie low as the hail rattles and tears. The river spreads, a greedy creeping monster. The storm goes on its buccaneering way.
- V. Lonely mountains, sentinels of time, stand proudly in the grey noon.
- VI. Dawn rises stirring the sleeping forest and the little creatures living within the shelter of the undergrowth.

Flight (1974)

Full of minor and major sevenths and blue notes, this piece clearly demonstrates Hanson's penchant for jazz. The waltz section in 3/4 time is reminiscent of Bill Evans' famous *Waltz for Debbie*, composed in 1962.

My Day, Op. 43 (1960)

The pieces are meant to capture moments in a child's day from morning to evening. Different moods and activities are portrayed musically, some humorous and lively, others quiet and reflective. Despite their apparent simplicity, they contain numerous instances of unexpected harmonies and rhythms.

Five Portraits, Op. 23 (1948)

Hanson called Bach his 'second favourite composer after Beethoven'. *Daddy Bach* is an homage to Bach's two-part invention form. The other pieces capture elements from childhood stories and fancies, with titles such as *Scrooge*, *King Arthur* and *Hans Andersen*. The Ginger Meggs character was a lovable, mischievous child whose entertaining escapades were featured in a popular series developed by Australian cartoonist Jimmy Bancks in 1921.

Tonya Lemoh

CD 1

1	ON HOLIDAYS, OP. 1 (1933) *	02:47
2	QUIZZIC, OP. 9 (1940) *	02:17
3	PIANO SONATINA, OP. 26 (1949) *	13:05
	PIANO SONATA, OP. 12 (1938–40, revised 1963)	21:56
4	I. —	08:59
5	II. Andante espressivo	05:43
6	III. —	07:13
7	IDYLLE IN D MAJOR, OP. 15 (1942) *	04:26
8	PROCRASTINATION, OP. 8 (1939) *	04:03
	5 PIANO PIECES (undated) *	06:28
9	No. 1. Briosò	01:35
10	No. 2. Rubato	01:34
11	No. 3. Ben marcato	00:29
12	No. 4. With great freedom	01:59
13	No. 5. Toccata	00:46

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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

TOTAL TIME: 55:23

CD 2

1	EPISODES ON AN ENGLISH FOLK SONG, 'TARRY TROUSERS', OP. 24 (1948)	17:00
2	BALMORAL BEACH (undated) *	01:33
3	THE GARDEN SEAT (1974) *	01:46
	PRELUDES, OP. 11 (1940–41)	13:36
4	No. 1	02:41
5	No. 2	02:52
6	No. 3	02:30
7	No. 4	01:36
8	No. 5	01:35
9	No. 6	02:13
10	FLIGHT (1974) *	02:25
	MY DAY, OP. 43 (1960) *	05:48
11	No. 1. The Morning Sun	00:33
12	No. 2. Off to School	00:33
13	No. 3. Midday Heat	01:50
14	No. 4. Afternoon Swim	00:46
15	No. 5. Feeling Sleepy	01:11
16	No. 6. Song of the Night	00:52
	5 PORTRAITS, OP. 23 (1948) *	10:06
17	No. 1. Daddy Bach	01:46
18	No. 2. King Arthur	02:02
19	No. 3. Hans Andersen	02:03
20	No. 4. Scrooge	02:44
21	No. 5. Ginger Meggs	01:24

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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

TOTAL TIME: 52:40

Episode 5 recalls the Baroque writing of Handel or Purcell in its ground bass and stately rhythmic progression. *Episode 6* is not unlike Prokofiev in its motoric drive and dense harmonies, while *Episode 7* evokes Brahms in its rich choral textures. *Episode 8* captures some of the mystical quality of Scriabin's late works. This leads into the rich, complex finale, which culminates in a joyous flourish of D major.

Balmoral Beach (undated)

Dedicated to 'Master John Nickson', probably a young pupil, this unpublished piece is a beguiling miniature which references the popular British music hall song 'I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside' (written by J. Glover-Kind in 1907).

The Garden Seat (1974)

A serene, unaffected piece, with an understated interplay of jazz and classical harmonies.

Preludes, Op. 11 (1940–41)

These pieces were composed in the Burrator Valley in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. Each prelude is accompanied by a short text, written by mezzo-soprano Marion Boulton. Hanson called them 'mood thoughts' which captured his reactions to the Valley and its atmosphere.

- I. The peaceful valley with its ribbon of river is embraced by wooded arms which creep upward to sheer rocky mountain walls that cut the sky.
- II. The age-old hills of granite which have stood for time; where black feet have trod, and from whose eminence white man has surveyed the world with hopeful gaze.
- III. Sunset through caressing rain. A green cushion lying midst the forest ... the billabong its edge. Kookaburra mates on hurried wings seek their sheltering branch. Night falls ... all is quiet but the crickets, as two mortals wander homeward through the evening light, the soft rain covering them as a veil.

Procrastination, Op. 8 (1939)

This grand fugue with massive textural expansion and highly chromatic harmonies is a structural tour-de-force. It was Hanson's response to a challenge that it was impossible to write a contemporary fugue. The piece took him nine months to complete, and because he kept 'putting it off' the work ended up with the title *Procrastination*.

Five Pieces (undated)

These five short compositions remain unpublished. They show strongly modernist tendencies and a strikingly original harmonic palette.

CD 2

Episodes on an English Folk Song, 'Tarry Trowsers', Op. 24 (1948)

The theme of this work is based on an old British sea shanty and was one of the many songs set by classical composers such as Delius and Vaughan Williams during the English folk song revival (1890–1969). The work was awarded the Harold Brewster Jones Memorial Prize in 1953. It is dedicated to Hanson's wife Moira.

The idea of duality is deftly captured in Hanson's handling of the second interval as a unifying element in the *Episodes*. This correlates neatly with the text of the 'Tarry Trowsers' folk song, which is a narrative involving two sets of people, a mother and her daughter, having a conversation about the daughter and her lover, a sailor.

Each of Hanson's episodes appears to outwardly manifest the influence of other composers, but the music is transformed through Hanson's own individual approach. The opening theme shows the influence of Percy Grainger, in its folk-like accompaniment of the melody and large, modal chords. *Episode 3* is a brief, eerie mood piece with an improvisatory character. The relentless unison passages and rapid modulations recall somewhat the final movement of Chopin's *Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor*, one of Hanson's signature pieces.

RAYMOND CHARLES HANSON (1913–1976) COMPLETE PIANO WORKS

Raymond Charles Hanson was a highly gifted, prolific Australian composer whose career spanned a diverse and complex era in Australian music history. A largely self-taught creative visionary, his career was negatively impacted partly by the lack of support for Australian composers in the first half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, he became the leading lecturer in composition at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music and was later appointed a Member of the Order of Australia. The sophistication and originality of his piano compositions is especially remarkable considering how little formal training he received. During his lifetime, his piano works were performed by several renowned pianists, including Walter Gieseking, Rudolf Firkušný and Ignaz Friedman. The body of work he composed for the piano is unique and unparalleled in 20th-century Australian piano repertoire.

Hanson was born in Burwood, Sydney on 23 November 1913, the youngest of five children. He had a religious upbringing, and at one point wanted to become a missionary. He retained an interest in spiritual matters throughout his life, becoming fascinated by the writings of Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, and setting many of his texts to music, including the *Gitanjali* poems in his oratorio *The Immortal Touch*. Composing and playing the piano started at an early age. His introduction to the piano occurred through hearing his older sister play, and he was later given lessons by Anne Spillane. Due to the family's lack of finances, he received free piano lessons. Hanson completed just three years of high school before he had to leave to earn a living teaching piano and doing odd jobs.

Despite these humble beginnings, Hanson emerged as a concert pianist in the 1930s, playing his own compositions as well as traditional repertoire. He won the Gordon Vickers Scholarship to study composition at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music, but two months later, these studies were interrupted by the Second World War. Joining the Army in 1941, he spent almost two years on an Army base in Tasmania, where he was promoted to Sergeant. Hanson was extremely productive during the years 1939–49, writing some of his most significant piano works in this period. The American servicemen he met in Tasmania brought him into close contact with jazz, which had a lasting influence on him as a performer and composer. In 1946, Hanson resumed his studies at the Conservatorium with Dr Alexander Burnard. He was granted a fellowship in 1948 and taught composition, harmony, orchestration and

piano. In 1956, he married Moira Young, a violin student at the Conservatorium; they had three daughters. Hanson was passionate about social equality and believed music should be accessible and non-elitist. He was involved in union concerts, playing for dock and railway workers. As well as mentoring classical composers, he was much sought after by leading figures in the Sydney jazz scene for guidance in composition.

Hanson taught and mentored some of Australia's most influential musicians, including Larry Sitsky, Roger Woodward, Don Burrows, Nigel Butterley and Richard Meale. Hanson died in 1976, leaving behind a substantial legacy which includes concertos for piano, trumpet, trombone and violin, orchestral works, film scores, songs and choral works, operas and chamber music. This is the first recording of his complete piano works.

CD 1

On Holidays, Op. 1 (1933)

Hanson's first published composition has a fresh, spontaneous character which evokes a carefree holiday mood. Hanson initially performed *On Holidays* without telling listeners who wrote it. He told them the piece was by a British composer and asked them to guess which one it could be. When the listeners suggested composers Frank Bridge or John Ireland, Hanson decided that given the calibre of those composers, the work was good enough for publishing.

Quizzic, Op. 9 (1940)

Discussing this piece in an interview in 1973, Hanson said 'Now, the word *quizzic* comes from *quizzical*, and it is written to represent someone he had known for many years who had a "strange odd sense of humour, who sees humour where most people never see it and vice versa".' It features playful, unpredictable changes of mood and rhythm.

Sonatina, Op. 26 (1949)

In Hanson's manuscript copy, the *Sonatina* is described as having been written by 'Sagittarius'. The bold, adventurous qualities attributed to this astrological sign (which was also Hanson's own) seem appropriate to the character of the work. The outer movements are declamatory and dramatic, with bravura virtuoso passages. The absence of a time signature creates a metric flexibility throughout piece, allowing the phrases to be shaped without the stricture of bar lines.

Piano Sonata, Op. 12 (1938–40, revised 1963)

Inspired by the Fall of Paris in the Second World War, this sonata is considered to be one of Hanson's greatest works. Originally composed in 1938–40, it was later revised in collaboration with the pianist Igor Hmelnitsky and completed in 1963. It is dedicated to Anne Spillane, Hanson's first piano teacher.

A sense of struggle pervades the entire sonata, particularly the first and third movements, expressed through the use of bitonality, heavy virtuoso octave passages, bravura figuration and massive chord structures. Although originally inspired by war, Hanson explained that the work 'developed into more of a personal testament, shall we say, to the difficulties of the individual in life'. Hanson creates a sense of timelessness and meditative reflection in the second movement, using extended *ostinato* harmonic patterns under a limpid melodic line. The climax is rhapsodic and passionate, finally subsiding back into the sombre mood of the opening thematic material. The third movement draws upon elements from the preceding two movements, opening with a restless motoric rhythmic motif which leads into a tranquil, reflective middle section, and culminates in a dramatic coda, marked *molto patetico e bravura*.

Idylle, Op. 15 (1942)

According to Hanson, this piece was 'inspired by the ringing spring song of the Satin-birds, interrupted by the impudent Soldier-birds at Mona Vale, Sydney', and was first broadcast on ABC Radio with Hanson at the piano in December 1942.