## ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT

VIOLIN CONCERTO · HEXAPODA

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SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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CONDUCTOR · PIANO



Robert Russell Bennett, 1941

## Robert Russell Bennett (1894-1981)

		Concerto (1941)* in A major • in A-Dur • en la majeur ('In the Popular Style') for Violin and Orchestra	23:52
1	I	Allegro moderato – Andante (slow and dramatic) – Tempo I (Allegro moderato) – Sempre animato – (listesso ter Cadenza – Con brio	npo) - 11:22
2	II	Andante moderato – Moderato (meno lento) – Broad and dra Allegretto moderato – Tranquillo, quasi lento – Allegretto – Tempo I	- matic 6:32
3	Ш	Vivace -	1:27
4	IV	Allegro non troppo vivo – Un poco meno vigoroso – Tempo I – Presto	4:24

		Hexapoda (1940) <sup>†</sup> Five Studies in Jitteroptera for Violin and Piano	7:38	
5	1	Gut-Bucket Gus. Very slow and sustained in rhythm	1:52	
6	2	Jane Shakes Her Hair. Animato	1:05	
7	3	Betty and Harold Close Their Eyes. Lazily	1:43	
8	4	Jim Jives. Fast and very strict	0:57	
9	5	Till Dawn Sunday. Vivo caldo	1:54	



# Vernon Duke [Vladimir Alexandrovich Dukelsky] (1903-1969)

		<b>Concerto</b> (c. 1941 – 43)*	28:5
		for Violin and Orchestra	
		Violin part edited by Ruth Posselt	
10	I	Allegro molto - [ ] - A tempo - Subito meno mosso - Tempo I - Cadenza -	
		Allegro giusto - Moderato assai - Adagietto -	
		Pochissimo più (risoluto)	10:20
11	Ш	Tempo di Valse (moderato) - Più mosso - A tempo -	
		Più mosso - A tempo - Pochissimo meno - Rubato sempre -	
		Tempo I	4:5
	Ш	Tema con Variazioni e Coda	
13		[Tema.] Risolutissimo –	1:06
		Variazione I. Non troppo moderato –	1:46
		Variazione II. Poco lamentoso - Pochissimo accelerando -	
		Tempo I -	2:40

15 Variazione III. Giocoso (Allegretto non troppo) – 2:11 Misterioso -16 Variazione IV. Sostenuto e pesante -1:14 17 Variazione V. Andantino – Poco più – Tempo I – Poco più mosso – 2:03 18 Variazione VI e Coda. Ben ritmato (Moderato) - Rubato sempre -Allegretto - Pochissimo meno - Allegro non troppo -Coda (L'istesso tempo) – [ ] – A tempo (giocoso) – 2:37 Subito più mosso TT 60:36

Chloë Hanslip violin
Singapore Symphony Orchestra\*
Markus Gundermann concertmaster
Andrew Litton conductor\* • piano†



#### Bennett / Duke:

#### Violin Concertos; Hexapoda

The most plausible reason why the two violin concertos on the present disc have been unaccountably neglected, for decades, is perhaps the fact that their composers are far better known for their work in musical theatre than for their (substantial but largely overlooked) contributions to the repertoire of the concert hall.

Robert Russell Bennett (1894-1981) orchestrated some of the highest-profile musicals in Broadway history, including works by George Gershwin and Cole Porter, and the perennial Rodgers and Hammerstein hits South Pacific (1949), The King and I (1951), and The Sound of Music (1959). (Richard Rodgers once modestly observed that Bennett's skills in instrumentation had made his music 'sound better than it was'.) Yet Bennett also studied 'serious' composing - like so many of his American classical-music compatriots, with Nadia Boulanger, in Paris, in the late 1920s - and wrote no fewer than seven symphonies. He once laconically pointed out in a programme note that he could write as sophisticated double-counterpoint as anybody, but was particularly pleased that 'Fred Astaire likes my saxophone parts'.

Similarly, Vladimir Alexandrovich Dukelsky (1903 - 1969), who changed his name to Vernon Duke at the suggestion of his friend Jacob Gershovitz (better known as George Gershwin), had received a rigorous training in classical music at the Kviv Conservatory: and one of his best friends was Sergei Prokofiev, whose music influenced his own output. But Duke made his name as the creator of hit shows, such as Cabin in the Sky (1940), and as the composer of numerous songs that became jazz standards, including 'April in Paris' (1932). Audiences seemed largely unaware that he had also written ballet scores for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets russes, in Paris, as well as three symphonies, a piano concerto, and a cello concerto.

Another key figure associated with the repertoire on this disc is the violinist Louis Kaufman (1905 – 1994), who was directly responsible for inspiring the two Bennett works recorded here. Kaufman, too, straddled the worlds of commercial entertainment and concert-hall artistry. Under contract to MGM, in Hollywood, he performed in c. 400 film scores; as Bennett recalled in his autobiography,

For a good many years it seemed impossible to see a love scene in a movie without hearing the tender tones of Louis Kaufman's violin behind it.

Bennett and Kaufman first collaborated in 1936 on Universal's movie of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's Show Boat. Bennett possessed an affinity with writing for the violin (he had played in the second-violin section of the Kansas City Symphony early in his career) which is attested by his later

string instrument [is] a great advantage'.
Lastly, by way of introduction, tribute should be paid to Chloë Hanslip, Andrew Litton, and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra for resurrecting these marvellous works, which they revived at concerts held at Singapore's Esplanade Hall on 20 and 27 October 2023.

opinion that, for a composer or arranger, 'an

affectionate acquaintance with the feel of a

## Bennett: Hexapoda - Five Studies in Jitteroptera

The genesis and early performance history of Bennett's *Hexapoda*, for violin and piano, can to some extent be reconstructed by a parallel reading of Bennett's and Kaufman's autobiographies. In *The Broadway Sound* (written in 1978 and published, posthumously, in 1999), Bennett recalls

how, at a dinner party with the Kaufmans most likely in early 1940 - Louis asked the composer to write a work for him, 'urging me to compose something that would clothe American dance-hall material in the respectable garments of educated music'. Bennett wasted no time: the dinner was on a Friday evening, and (much to Kaufman's astonishment) he had finished the new piece by the following Sunday morning. This account is confirmed by Kaufman's memoirs (A Fiddler's Tale: How Hollywood and Vivaldi Discovered Me, published in 2003), but here the details of the first performances are somewhat vague. Kaufman says the première was slated for his concert at New York's Town Hall in April 1940, while Bennett recalled the concert was in the autumn of that year. In fact, as confirmed by the Bennett scholar George J. Ferencz, the first performance took place at Carnegie Hall on 20 March 1940, on which occasion two of the pieces had to be repeated owing to public demand. The violinist and composer subsequently recorded their new venture for Columbia. in 1941, and the work was also adopted in recitals by Jascha Heifetz.

In considering how to meet Kaufman's remit, Bennett – who felt that the popularity of jazz was then dwindling – decided to exploit 'something not quite extinct called

"iitterbugs"'. Jitterbug (a contraction of the phrase 'jittering bug') was a blanket term for a variety of fast jazz dances marked by nervous energy, spectacular jumps, and other dynamic manoeuvres. Bennett coined the term 'Jitteroptera' for the subtitle of his piece, its main title, Hexapoda (i.e. sixlegged), being the scientific term for insects. As it appears in the published score, the title of the final movement begins with an ellipsis. indicated by hyphens rather than the more usual full stops: '--- Till Dawn Sunday'. This implies that the manic dancing mimicked in the previous movement ('Jim Jives'), and indeed the other movements, has continued throughout all Saturday night, but must eventually cease owing to the need for the dancers to attend church. In a wonderfully understated and evocative moment of irony, Bennett indicates the conclusion of the secular frivolity by having the pianist intone towards the end of the finale a gently dissonant harmonisation of the hymn tune 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' (based on the Lutheran chorale Ein' feste Burg).

#### Bennett: Violin Concerto in A major

The Violin Concerto came hot on the heels of Hexapoda, the latter described by Bennett as a 'bizarre opus', but praised by Kaufman for being 'breezy, brilliant, and poetic'. Kaufman's overall verdict on the style of the duo piece was that it was 'American piquant', and this label might be felt to be equally true of the concerto, which continued to explore the middle ground between popular music and classical music. Indeed, the concerto is sometimes subtitled 'In the Popular Style', as it was when it was first released on disc (see below).

This was not the composer's first attempt to write a violin concerto: Bennett had previously been intending to write such a piece for Fritz Kreisler, but abandoned the project. Instead, the Concerto in A major was another gesture of his admiration and friendship for Kaufman, In 1940, Bennett embarked on his radio series Russell Bennett's Notebook (for WOR Mutual Broadcasting), the format giving him the opportunity to present new music of his own as part of the show's eclectic programming. As the WOR orchestra was of a very high standard. Bennett saw this outlet as the perfect opportunity for launching the concerto which he intended for Kaufman though this meant that the first performance was given, not by Kaufman, but by the WOR's concertmaster, Joseph Coleman, in December 1941. Bennett wrote to Kaufman to say the première had gone well, apart from the fact that it was interrupted by an air-raid drill that

marred the recording. (This was the month of the notorious Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which abruptly brought the United States into the Second World War.) In his letter, Bennett informed the violinist that he still needed to arrange the orchestration as a piano accompaniment before he could send the piece to him - a state of affairs that suggests that the composer had not himself needed the convenience of such a practical score when rehearsing with Coleman, Bennett and Kaufman performed the concerto as a duo at New York's Town Hall, in March 1942, the critic Irving Kolodin subsequently describing the piece as possessing 'the air of musical breeding native to [Bennett's] talent', but lamenting the lack of a 'proper orchestral background'.

At Carnegie Hall, on 14 February 1944, Kaufman performed the concerto with the orchestra of the National Orchestral Association under the Belgian conductor Léon Barzin, for whom Bennett had a high professional regard. The critic of the New York World Telegram summarised the dual stylistic nature of the piece:

Mr. Bennett can no more avoid syncopation than Bach could avoid fugues. But he knows how to dress it up for a Carnegie airing and bring it in classic line with fine graso of technique.

For this concert, Bennett restored some cuts which he had made when the work was performed as a duo for violin and piano, but revealed in a letter to Kaufman that he also intended to give the score 'a good going over sometime before I die'. Soon afterwards, in July 1944, he reported to Kaufman that he was 'rewriting the entire concerto', and gave him the details: changes in the orchestration of the first movement, with a different beginning for the cadenza, but the 'only radical change being practically a new finale'. 'The Scherzo is intact', he admitted, but mischievously concluded: 'God help you in the Finale!'

Kaufman gave a memorable performance of Bennett's revised concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Herrmann at London's Royal Festival Hall on 19 May 1956. (Herrmann was, of course, another unusually versatile composer whose career spanned the commercial and classical arenas, including many fine contributions to film scoring, the concert hall, and the opera house.) On the following day, 20 May. a recording of the concerto was made for the BBC, and the tape was used for at least one radio broadcast. It seems that the idea had been to release the recording on vinyl, but (for reasons unknown) this did not materialise – and more's the pity as, in addition to Kaufman's mesmerisingly virtuosic playing, the recorded performance is a vivid illustration of Herrmann's brilliance as a conductor and mutual empathy with the LSO. In 1976, the year of his death, Herrmann asked Kaufman out of the blue if he had his own copy of the BBC tape, which indeed he did. This surviving copy was processed from the original mono to become 'stereo-enhanced', as was fashionable in the recording industry at the time, and issued on a Citadel LP, alongside recordings of Bennett's *Hexapoda* and *A Song Sonata* (1947), made by Kaufman and his wife, the pianist Annette Leibole.

The present recording of Bennett's Violin Concerto is the first to be made since the Kaufman/Herrmann recording in 1956.

#### **Duke: Violin Concerto**

Jascha Heifetz was fully committed to promoting several violin concerti that were specially written for him – among the most notable were those by William Walton (1936 – 39) and by the legendary Hollywood composer Miklós Rózsa (1953). But, also for reasons unknown, Heifetz seems to have lost interest in the concerto which he encouraged Vernon Duke to compose for him, in c. 1940. Instead of a Heifetz première, the honour of launching the work in public went to the violinist Ruth Posselt (1911 – 2007), who gave

the score two performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, on 19 and 20 March 1943, at Boston's Symphony Hall. (Posselt had a deep commitment to promoting modern violin music, having given the première of Walter Piston's Violin Concerto No. 1, in 1940, and later premièring the revised version of Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, in 1949, She was also noted for her performances of violin concertos by Hindemith and Khachaturian. and Hindemith was moved to bake her a cake as a thank-you present for her interpretation of his piece.) The Boston orchestra's famous music director, Serge Koussevitzky, had been considerably impressed by Duke's concerto, and was keen to programme it for the 1942/43 season; its two early performances were, however, conducted by Richard Burgin, the orchestra's leader and associate conductor. Posselt and Burgin had married a little under three years previously, and Posselt was pregnant at the time with their daughter, Diana, whose knowledge of her family's history has helped us reconstruct the early fate of Duke's concerto.

And an element of fate does appear to have been involved in the rather rapid lapse of the piece into obscurity. After its Boston launch, the work was due to be given two performances by the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, in January 1944, under the

baton of their high-profile twenty-five-yearold wunderkind, Leonard Bernstein – an opportunity that might have been guaranteed to secure its position in the repertoire almost overnight. But Bernstein (at short notice) had to yield his baton to his senior, Artur Rodziński, who had become the orchestra's music director the year before. Rodziński had not prepared the score thoroughly enough, nor been involved in the initial rehearsals, and by all accounts the New York performances were mediocre.

It was not until March 2014 that the work was revived, in the shape of a première recording made by Elmira Darvarova with the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien under the conductor Scott Dunn. The project was co-produced by Duke's widow, the soprano Kay Duke Ingalls, and (in its booklet notes) was enhanced by Diana Burgin's fascinating reminiscences of the work's origins.

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Singapore Symphony Orchestra, with Andrew Litton, its former Principal Guest Conductor



Establishing herself as an artist of distinction on the international stage as a teenager, Chloë Hanslip made her BBC Proms début at fourteen and her US concerto début at fifteen. She has gone on to perform at major venues in the UK (Royal Festival Hall, Wigmore Hall) and on the European continent (Wiener Musikverein, Laeiszhalle Hamburg, Louvre and Salle Gaveau, Paris, Hermitage, St Petersburg), as well as Carnegie Hall. New York, Tokyo Metropolitan Arts Space, and Seoul Arts Centre, her playing leading The Strad to remark that 'Hanslip seduces the senses with a compelling suppleness of dynamic, phrasing and senza-vibrato purity'. She has recently performed concertos with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and Gävle Symfoniorkester, among others, and undertaken a UK tour with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. In June 2025 she performed the last of her three-part series 'Bach and Beyond II' at Turner Sims, University of Southampton, with Danny Driver, and in autumn 2025 will appear on tour with the Aurora Orchestra. Her musical curiosity covers the entire concerto repertoire, from Britten and Delius to Barber and Bernstein. Having a particular passion for contemporary music, she champions works by John Adams, Philip Glass, John

Corigliano, Michael Nyman, Huw Watkins, Michael Berkeley, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and Brett Dean. During the 2024/25 season she took part in the European première of Jake Heggie's Intonations, at the Red Violin Festival, Leeds, inspired by the 'Violins of Hope' that were rescued from Auschwitz. Her broad range is also represented by an extensive discography, having lately released discs of the complete Violin Sonatas by Beethoven with Danny Driver. A committed chamber musician, she is a regular participant at festivals across Europe, including the ones in Båstad, Sweden, West Cork, Ireland, Prussia Cove, England, and Kutná Hora, Czech Republik, her recital partners having included Angela Hewitt, Danny Driver, and Charles Owen. Alongside her performing career, she is a Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music and an Ambassador for the charity Future Talent. She recently led a series of masterclasses and performed at the international festival Accordi Musicali, Pescara. She studied with the Russian pedagogue Zakhar Bron and has also worked with Christian Tetzlaff, Robert Masters, Ida Haendel, Salvatore Accardo, and Gerhard Schulz. Chloë Hanslip plays a Nicolò Amati violin kindly loaned to her through the Beare's International Violin Society by a generous sponsor.

Since its founding, in 1979, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra has been the country's flagship orchestra, touching lives through classical music and providing the heartbeat of the cultural scene with its forty-fourweek calendar of events. From the 2026/27 season, the Orchestra will be led by the Finnish conductor Hannu Lintu, the fourth Music Director in its history after Choo Hoev (1979 - 96), Lan Shui (1997 - 2019). and Hans Graf (2020 - 26). In addition to its subscription series of concerts, the Orchestra is well-loved for its outdoor and community appearances and for its significant role educating the young people of Singapore. It has also earned an international reputation for its orchestral virtuosity, having garnered sterling reviews for its overseas tours and more than fifty recordings, placing third among the finalists for the prestigious *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award in 2021. In 2022, the magazine BBC Music named it one of the twenty-three best orchestras in the world. It performs more than sixty concerts a year at such venues as the Esplanade Concert Hall and Victoria Concert Hall, in Singapore. Bridging the musical traditions of East and West, it regularly showcases Singaporean and Asian musicians and composers in its concert seasons. Its versatile repertoire

encompasses all-time favourites and orchestral masterpieces as well as exciting cutting-edge premières. The Singapore Symphony Orchestra is part of the Singapore Symphony Group, which also manages the Singapore Symphony Choruses, Singapore National Youth Orchestra, Singapore International Piano Festival, and biennial National Piano and Violin Competition.

Music Director of New York City Ballet and Conductor Laureate of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Litton also served as Music Director of Norway's Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, leading it to international prominence through acclaimed recordings and high-profile tours which included performances at the BBC Proms, Koninklijk Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Wiener Musikverein, Philharmonie Berlin, and Carnegie Hall, New York. In recognition of his work, he was awarded the Norwegian Royal Order of Merit (Den Kongelige Norske Fortjenstorden) in 2011. Previously Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, he led its first American tour and many recordings, including a Grammy-winning Belshazzar's Feast. During his tenure as Music Director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, he conducted major European tours, launched an award-winning educational TV series,

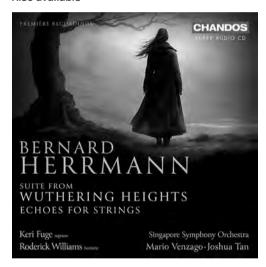
produced twenty-eight recordings, and played a key role in significantly increasing the Orchestra's endowment. He is a frequent guest conductor with leading orchestras around the world, and appears regularly with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (where he is a former Principal Guest Conductor), as well as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and Kungliga Hovkapellet, Stockholm, among many others. He has conducted more than 140 recordings, winning a Grammy Award and France's Diapason d'Or. A seasoned opera

conductor, he has led productions at The Metropolitan Opera, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Opera Australia. He also helped establish Bergen Nasjonale Opera, conducting a wide range of critically acclaimed performances. Born in New York City, he studied piano and conducting at The Juilliard School and held early posts at Teatro alla Scala and the National Symphony Orchestra. His honours include Yale School of Music's Sanford Medal, the Elgar Society Medal, and an Honorary Doctorate from Bournemouth University. Andrew Litton is a noted expert on George Gershwin and serves as advisor to the Gershwin Archives at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.



The artists, in performance at the Esplanade Concert Hall, Singapore

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5-9 Hexapoda (1940) † Five Studies in Jitteroptera for Violin and Piano

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### Vernon Duke

[Vladimir Alexandrovich Dukelsky] (1903 - 1969)

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TT 60:36

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#### Chloë Hanslip violin

Singapore Symphony Orchestra\* Markus Gundermann concertmaster Andrew Litton conductor\* · piano†

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