

# *MacDowell*

**CHANDOS**

Piano Concerto No. 2

Romanze · Suite

Hamlet · Ophelia

*Xiayin  
Wang*

*piano*

*Peter  
Dixon*

*cello*

**BBC**

**Philharmonic  
Orchestra**

**John Wilson**



*Vol. 2*



History and Art Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Edward Alexander MacDowell, New York, 1906

## Edward Alexander MacDowell (1860 – 1908)

### Orchestral Works, Volume 2

#### Hamlet / Ophelia, Op. 22 (1884 – 85) 13:15

Two Poems for Large Orchestra  
Henry Irving und Ellen Terry in Verehrung gewidmet

1 Hamlet 6:54

in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur  
Largamente – Allegro agitato –  
Maestoso (Doppelt so langsam als voriges Tempo)

2 Ophelia 6:19

in F major • in F-Dur • en fa majeur  
Moderato, con tenerezza – Più mosso

- Concerto No. 2, Op. 23** (1884–86)\* 24:46  
 in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur  
 for Piano and Orchestra  
 Dedicated to Mme Teresa Carreño
- 3 I Larghetto calmato –  
 Solo. Largamente – Precipitato – Martellato – Precipitato –  
 Martellato –  
 Tutti. [ ] – Poco più mosso, e con passione – Agitato –  
 [Solo.] Largamente e risoluto – Appassionato – Furioso –  
 [Più allegro] –  
 Solo. Largamente –  
 Tutti. A tempo –  
 [Solo.] A piacere 12:43
- 4 II Presto giocoso – Solo. Più mosso 4:37
- 5 III Largo – Molto allegro – Poco più mosso – Poco più lento –  
 [Solo.] Poco largamente – Con fuoco –  
 Tutti. Più lento –  
 Solo. Quasi a piacere – Poco a poco agitato –  
 A tempo – Poco più mosso – Presto – Prestissimo 7:19
- 6 **Romanze, Op. 35** (1887)<sup>†</sup> 3:49  
 in E minor • in e-Moll • en mi mineur  
 for Cello with Orchestral Accompaniment  
 Seinem Freunde Herrn Professor David Popper zugeeignet  
 Andante melancolico

	<b>Suite (No. 1), Op. 42</b> (1888 – 91, 1893)	<b>19:16</b>
	in A minor • in a-Moll • en la mineur for Large Orchestra	
7	I In einem verwunschenen Walde (In a Haunted Forest). Largamente, misterioso – Allegro furioso – Maestoso (Doppelt so langsam als voriges Tempo)	5:21
8	II Sommer-Idylle (Summer Idyll). Allegretto grazioso	2:11
9	III Im Oktober (In October). Allegro con brio – Poco meno mosso. Dolce – Tempo I (Allegro brioso) – Meno mosso – Allegro molto	3:52
10	IV Gesang der Hirtin (The Shepherdess' Song). Andantino, semplice	3:03
11	V Waldgeister (Forest Spirits). Molto Allegro – Misterioso (♩ etwas langsamer als im vorigen Tempo) – Tempo I (Molto Allegro) – Presto – Prestissimo	4:26
		<b>TT 61:08</b>

**Xiayin Wang** piano\*

**Peter Dixon** cello†

**BBC Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Yuri Torchinsky** leader

**John Wilson**



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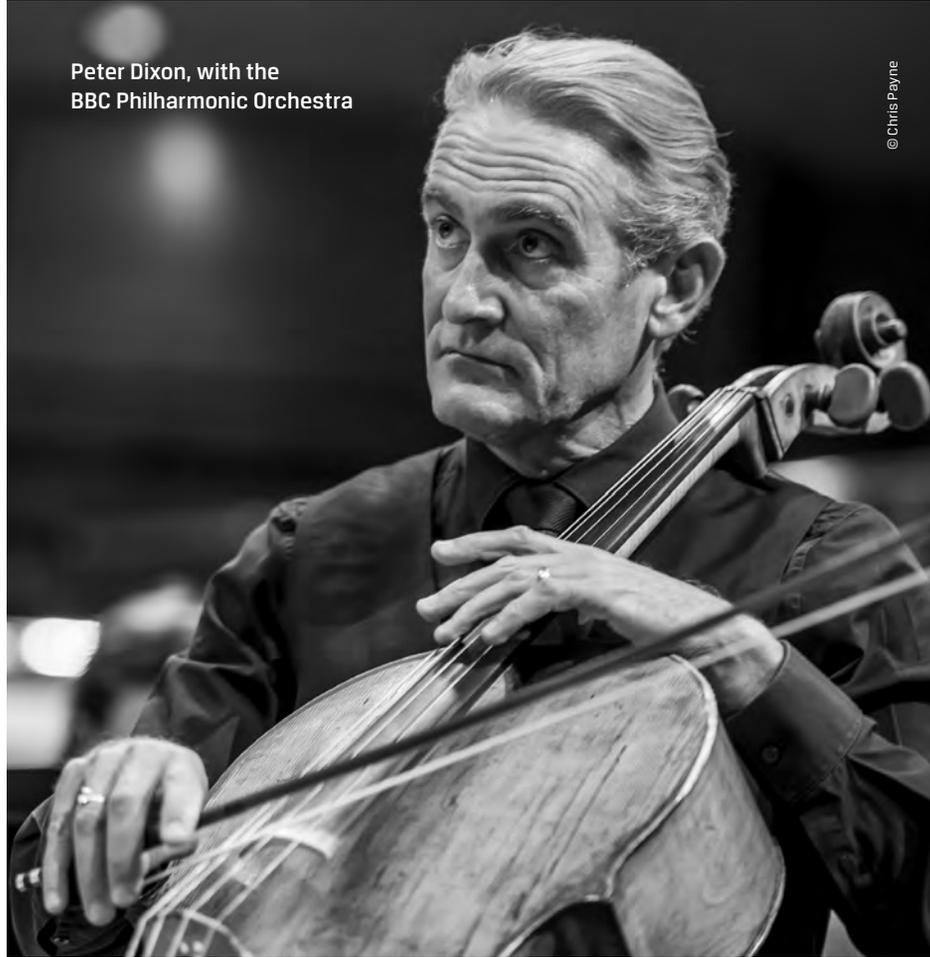
Xiayin Wang



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BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

Peter Dixon, with the  
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra



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## Edward MacDowell: Orchestral Works, Volume 2

### Hamlet / Ophelia, Op. 22

In July 1884, Edward MacDowell (1860 - 1908) married Marian Griswold Nevins, who had formerly been one of his piano pupils. One of MacDowell's future sisters-in-law declared: 'It was a charming wedding - we liked Edward and he behaved like an angel.' The impecunious newly-weds then travelled to England for a honeymoon, in part financed by selling their silverware - some of which they had only just received as wedding presents. After spending time in Exeter and Bath, they moved on to London, where they indulged their passion for the plays of Shakespeare. As Marian recalled, they 'gorged' themselves on sumptuous performances of the Bard's plays at the Lyceum Theatre, starring the famous thespians Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. The highlight was *Hamlet*, in which (according to a retrospective published in 1905 in the *North American Review*) Irving's characterisation of the title role 'made the heart of its mystery glow with a romantic flame', and 'interpreted the play of intellect and the depth of passion with equal mastery'; in short, Irving's was 'the veritable Hamlet, in his dignity, his melancholy, his humor, his blasting irony, in all that was lovable in his nature'.

At this early stage in his composing career, MacDowell was absorbed - under the strong influence of the work of Franz Liszt - by the genre of the symphonic poem. He immediately decided to sketch (initially for two pianos) a series of such pieces inspired by the characters he had seen in the Lyceum's productions of *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Othello*. The original intention was to group them into two triptychs, one covering the principal male roles (Hamlet, Benedick, and Othello) and the other devoted to the females (Ophelia, Beatrice, and Desdemona). In the event, only the Hamlet and Ophelia character-sketches were finished, in Frankfurt later in 1884, and this diptych, described as Two Poems, was published as Op. 22, in 1885, in editions for both full orchestra and two pianos. Not for the only time in his career, the composer had to meet some of the scores' production costs from his own pocket, and he dedicated the pieces to Irving and Terry (in spite of the fact that they had not responded to his request for permission to do so).

MacDowell tried out the instrumentation with orchestras in both Frankfurt and Bad

Homburg, after which the work received performances in several cities in Germany and was generally well reviewed by critics. The composer was somewhat depressed, however, by a poor matinee performance in Wiesbaden on Boxing Day, 1886, at which the musicians' capabilities had quite possibly been adversely affected by the intoxicating effects of the festive season.

**Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 23**

Some of the music that MacDowell had sketched for his abandoned tone poem about the character of Benedick, from *Much Ado about Nothing*, made its way into the second movement – a scherzo marked *Presto giocoso* – of his Second Piano Concerto. (The original 'Benedick' sketch was published in facsimile by the MacDowell Association in 1947.) Ellen Terry was as celebrated in her interpretation of the role of Beatrice as she was as Ophelia, though she objected to what she considered the 'buffoonery' of Irving's production of *Much Ado*. One contemporaneous review of Shakespeare's comedy felt her performance was 'full of an admirable veracity', and achieved a subtle balance between waspishness and tenderness towards Benedick. Unlike MacDowell's musical portrayal of Hamlet and Ophelia, in which the music for the two characters remains

distinct, in the case of Benedick and Beatrice the intention was to depict their famously bickering exchanges by a closer interaction between the two pianos.

The MacDowells lived in Germany during 1885-88, but moved back to the United States in the autumn of 1888, abruptly leaving their old friend George Templeton Strong to tidy up their former home in Wiesbaden. Amongst Strong's discoveries in the house was a draft of the Second Piano Concerto, on which MacDowell had been working for several years. When Strong told MacDowell about this, the latter instructed him to 'chuck the 2nd Concerto sketch to glory!!' (Strong ignored him, and kept the manuscript for posterity; it is now preserved in the Library of Congress.) After the couple had settled in Boston, MacDowell decided to reactivate his career as a pianist, having become somewhat out of practice during the previous years of prolific composing. The completed Second Piano Concerto was a conveniently virtuosic vehicle with which he could return to the performing stage, and he gave the work its première, in New York's Chickering Hall, on 5 March 1889 with the Philharmonic Society of New York under the conductor Theodore Thomas.

MacDowell had a reputation for playing at exhilaratingly fast tempos, and Strong

wrote to him: 'Did you take the second movement at the *awful rate* you did here? God bless me! My head spins and I see notes and sparks and stars when I think of it!' MacDowell reported to Strong that the New York critics were 'much to my astonishment... tremendously complimentary'. A review in the *Musical Courier* declared the piece to be 'at the head of all works of its kind' ever to have been written by an American composer. A further performance followed, in Boston, on 13 April, on which occasion MacDowell was accompanied by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Wilhelm Gericke; the programme included the first performance in the city of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony (which had also been given at the New York concert), one reviewer opining that he preferred MacDowell's work to Tchaikovsky's.

In July 1889, MacDowell performed the Second Concerto at the Palais du Trocadéro, as part of the Exposition Universelle, in Paris, which famously marked the inauguration of the Eiffel Tower. The concerto, conducted by Frank Van der Stucken, was included in a programme of exclusively American music – a nationalistic strategy of which MacDowell had already become notoriously sceptical, as he believed American composers should be considered on a par with their European counterparts and not ghettoised. The

French critics were either lukewarm or downright chauvinistic in their responses to the concert, which did nothing to lift the composer's spirits. MacDowell declined to participate when the programme was repeated, in Washington, DC, in the following year, and refused permission for his concerto to be performed by another soloist in his stead. (Van der Stucken, nevertheless still keen to have MacDowell's music represented in the concert, substituted the concerto with *Ophelia*, from Op. 22, without bothering to ask MacDowell if he approved.) But MacDowell did reprise the concerto himself, on 2 July 1890, at the conference of the Music Teachers' National Association in Detroit, on which occasion he was pleased to be reunited with Theodore Thomas, whom he considered to be a far more sympathetic champion of his music. Thereafter, the Second Concerto was given considerable exposure by the Venezuelan pianist Teresa Carreño (1853-1917), to whom the score is dedicated, and who had previously been responsible for high-profile performances of MacDowell's First Piano Concerto (1882). Bizarrely, she – on her own admission – was forced to stop playing MacDowell's music in the mid-1890s as a result of direct pressure from her husband, Eugen d'Albert, a former composition pupil of Liszt's, who

was pathologically jealous of MacDowell's ongoing successes. Nevertheless, the Second Concerto would remain the composer's most popular large-scale orchestral work, and among its many later memorable performances was one given by MacDowell in London, in 1903, shortly before his final decline.

#### **Romanze in E minor, Op. 35**

The lovely miniature *Romanze*, for cello and orchestra, dates from the same prolific creative period in which the Second Piano Concerto was composed. Written at Wiesbaden in 1887, it was dedicated to the virtuoso Bohemian cellist David Popper (1843 - 1913), who was himself the composer of more than seventy salon pieces for his instrument. Uncharitably, the first book on MacDowell - written by Lawrence Gilman, and published in 1906 - described the piece as 'perfunctory', 'sentimental', and 'unleavened', but (slightly more graciously) admitted that it was 'not without a certain rather inexpensive charm'.

The *Romanze* in fact has a concentrated, Elgarian intensity. Given that its home key, certain rhythmic characteristics, and lyrical cello writing all have much in common with the Cello Concerto which Elgar would compose in 1918 - 19, it is tempting to speculate that the

celebrated British composer might perhaps have been familiar with it.

#### **Suite (No. 1) in A minor, Op. 42**

MacDowell harboured a love for the natural world which was often reflected in his music, most famously in his perennially popular piano miniature 'To a Wild Rose' (the first item in his set of *Woodland Sketches*, published in 1896). In the Suite in A minor, which was the first orchestral work he composed after settling in Boston, he celebrated this passion in a five-part format in which each movement was inspired by either a setting from nature or the spirit life legendarily associated with it. Although none of the music is tied to a specific location or time period, it seems likely that MacDowell was evoking memories of the many woodland walks he had taken with his wife in the vicinity of their cottage in Wiesbaden. Marian MacDowell felt that his Celtic heritage made her husband something of a mystic, who 'half-believed' in tales of spirits and fairies, and who was reluctant to cut down a tree in case (as she put it) 'something more than the tree suffered'.

This first Suite (a second would soon follow) initially comprised just four movements, and was first performed (and published) in this form in 1891. Two years later, an additional piece, entitled 'Im Oktober',

was interpolated as a new, third movement, and the five-part version of the work received its complete première, in Boston, in October 1895, given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Emil Paur.

The earlier première of the (then) four-movement work had taken place on 24 September 1891 at the Worcester Festival, not far from Boston, under the conductor Carl Zerrahn. The occasion vividly illustrated MacDowell's intense dislike of all-American concert programming. Incensed when he came to realise that the Worcester performance would be part of another programme of exclusively American works, MacDowell tried to pull his suite from the event; but (after some tetchy correspondence on the subject) Zerrahn went ahead with the performance anyway, in spite of the composer's virulent objections. MacDowell refused to attend the première, though his wife did – along with his fellow composer George Whitefield Chadwick, who wrote to MacDowell to say the suite was so good that it made 'everything else on the program sound *sick!*' He added that he admired the score's 'conciseness and delicate touch – the purity of its color and freedom from stiff periods and cadences', and also praised the absence of 'modern German style' ('and the Lord be praised if

somebody can get away from *that!*'). Further successful performances were mounted across Germany in 1892, again (somewhat ironically) as part of 'American Composers' Concerts', and also in Vienna, where one critic (who, *pace* Chadwick, noted the strong influence of Wagner on the score) praised MacDowell's consistently 'poetic feeling', which 'happily and colorfully gives expression to the music'.

MacDowell delivered one of his last diatribes on the subject of all-American concerts in 1904, at the time when both his physical and mental health were beginning to fail him. When the visiting Austrian conductor Felix Mottl proposed mounting such a concert in New York, MacDowell wrote to him about what he referred to as Mottl's 'so-called' American Composers' Concert:

I have for years taken a strong stand against such affairs and, though I have not seen the program, fearing there might be something of mine in it, I write to protest earnestly and strongly against the lumping together of American composers. Unless we are worthy of being put on programs with other composers, to stand or fall, leave us alone.

By giving such a concert, you tacitly admit that we are too inferior to stand comparison with composers of Europe.

As it happened, Mottl's concert – although the composer was not aware of this when he wrote his letter – was to have included MacDowell's Suite No. 1. In his impassioned letter to Mottl, MacDowell (with somewhat eccentric generosity) went so far as to offer to reimburse him for any expenses incurred in the process of removing his music from the programme at the last minute. According to a subsequent report in the *New York Times*, the mooted performance of the suite – slated to have taken place at the end of the concert, which was given at the Metropolitan Opera House – was duly axed, in accordance with its composer's wishes.

It is not known whether, in the event, MacDowell had to pay for this strange privilege.

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The pianist **Xiayin Wang** is an artist of keen musicality and sweeping virtuosity, praised by *The New York Times* for her 'estimable grasp of pianistic color and her ability to maintain and illuminate a strand of melody within the thickest of textures'. She has released numerous celebrated recordings and performed throughout the world, from New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to music centres in South America,

Europe, and Asia. As *Musical America* put it: 'She can be at one moment sensual and the next rhythmically driving... with such assuredness, such delicacy, that one forgets the difficulties inherent in the performance, and is left breathless in musical awe.' Having begun piano lessons at the age of five, she completed her studies at the Shanghai Conservatory and garnered numerous prizes for her performances throughout China. She moved to New York in 1997 and holds Bachelor's, Master's, and Professional Studies degrees from the Manhattan School of Music. She has performed with the Baltimore, Houston, Minnesota, Pacific Symphony, Chicago Philharmonic, and Pittsburgh Symphony orchestras, the Wiener KammerOrchester, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma. She has appeared in recital at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall, New York, and the Mozart-Saal, Vienna, as well as in France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, Costa Rica, and her native China. She has made numerous CDs for Chandos, her recording of Alberto Ginastera's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra under Juanjo Mena hailed by *Gramophone* as 'jaw-droppingly impressive' and singled out by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker*. Her recordings of

Rachmaninoff's piano sonatas were lauded by *BBC Music* for their 'flawless' technique and by *Gramophone* for their 'awesome clarity and poise'; her disc of American piano concertos was crowned disc of the month by *MusicWeb International*. Her most recent releases for Chandos, of works by Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, and Granados, are now being followed by recordings of the piano concertos by Edward MacDowell, with the BBC Philharmonic under John Wilson. Xiayin Wang currently serves on the piano faculty at The New School's Mannes School of Music.

After leaving the Royal Academy of Music, in London, **Peter Dixon** joined the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, in 1984, and whilst there was appointed Sub Principal Cello. In 1990 he became Principal Cello of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, a position he has enjoyed ever since. During his time in the Orchestra, he has performed all the great solos in the orchestral repertoire, both at home and abroad, and has appeared many times with the Orchestra as concerto soloist, performances recorded for broadcasting and for commercial release on CD by Chandos Records. The first work he recorded as soloist for the label was Frank Martin's *Ballade*, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Matthias Bamert, and then, with the BBC

Philharmonic for the same label, went on to record concertos and other concertante works by Shostakovich, Fauré, Massenet, Glière, and Korngold, as well as, in 2003, having given it the world première in Japan, Takashi Yoshimatsu's Cello Concerto *Centaurus Unit*, a work specially composed for him. In 2023, he suffered the great loss of his wife of thirty years, Clara, herself a much loved member of the first violin section of the BBC Philharmonic, to cancer and, having established the Clara Dixon Trust, is presently embarked on a project to raise as much money as he can for the oesophageal cancer charity Heartburn Cancer UK by climbing all 214 peaks in the Lake District. By late August 2025, he had forty-five summits left to reach and had raised £26,000. In summer 2025, he enjoyed his forty-seventh consecutive BBC Proms season since his festival début, with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, in 1978! In May 2026, Peter Dixon will join the leader of the BBC Philharmonic, Zoë Beyers, in performances of Brahms's Double Concerto in Hanley and Manchester.

One of the most celebrated broadcast ensembles in the world, the **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra** possesses a distinctive energy, lightning speed, and unique musical character which have moved and inspired

audiences for over 100 years. Founded in 1922 as the ZZY Orchestra, it has played an essential part in shaping the Greater Manchester region into an unmissable cultural destination and a hub for world-class talent in orchestral music. Outside the Philharmonic Studio, its broadcast home at MediaCityUK, the Orchestra presents a flagship series at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall as well as live concerts recorded in venues across the country, at the BBC Proms, and on tour. Whether encountered in the concert hall, heard on the air, seen on television, or streamed on BBC Sounds and iPlayer, its work is enjoyed by millions of listeners every year. Its Chief Conductor is John Storgårds, an inspiring musical leader who has built a close relationship with the Orchestra over many years, and Anja Bihlmaier is the Principal Guest Conductor. The trailblazing musical storyteller Julia Wolfe is Composer in Residence for the 2025 / 26 season.

Artistic innovation and the development of a new audience for classical music have been a keen focus for many years. In June 2024, the Orchestra gave the world première of Huang Ruo's *City of Floating Sounds*, an immersive symphonic experience, at the cutting-edge Aviva Studios, in Manchester. In March 2025, it followed up with its

latest collaboration with these Studios, *Philharmonic Sessions: The Augmented Orchestra*, featuring the UK première of Anna Clyne's *PALETTE*. During the current season it will give UK and world premières of works by Laura Bowler, Edmund Finnis, Gabriella Smith, Julia Wolfe, and Du Yun, her Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Angel's Bone*, produced in collaboration with English National Opera and Factory International. Work engaging with children and young people continues to be a vital part of the work of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. At the end of 2023, CBeebies broadcast *Musical Storyland*, a ten-part television series produced by the Orchestra and featuring a number of its musicians. Using the power of music, the series brings to life famous stories from around the world. This was the first time an orchestra has been commissioned to make a series of films for UK network television. To date, *Musical Storyland* has been requested more than thirteen million times on BBC iPlayer. [www.bbc.co.uk / philharmonic](http://www.bbc.co.uk / philharmonic)

Born in Gateshead and since 2011 a Fellow of the Royal College of Music where he studied composition and conducting, **John Wilson** is now in demand at the highest level across the globe and has over the past thirty years conducted many of the world's finest

orchestras. In 2018 he relaunched Sinfonia of London, which *The Arts Desk* described as 'the most exciting thing currently happening on the British orchestral scene'. His much-anticipated BBC Proms debut with this orchestra, in 2021, was praised by *The Guardian* as 'truly outstanding' and admired by *The Times* for its 'revelatory music-making'. They are now highly sought-after across the UK, the 2024/25 season notable for performances at major UK venues including the Barbican Centre, Bridgewater Hall, and Glasshouse International Centre for Music, as well as a return to the BBC Proms. Their large and varied discography having received near universal critical acclaim, in the autumn of 2024 they released their twenty-fourth album since 2019. Their CDs have earned several awards, including numerous

*BBC Music Magazine Awards*: for recordings of Korngold's Symphony in F sharp (2020), Respighi's Roman Trilogy (2021), Dutilleux's *Le Loup* (2022), Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (2024), and works by Vaughan Williams, Howells, Delius, and Elgar, a disc which won the Orchestral Award and was chosen Recording of the Year. *The Observer* described the Respighi recording as 'Massive, audacious and vividly played' and *The Times* declared it one of the three 'truly outstanding accounts of this trilogy' of all time, alongside those by Toscanini (1949) and Muti (1984). In March 2019, John Wilson was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Musician Award of the Incorporated Society of Musicians for his services to music and in 2021 was appointed Henry Wood Chair of Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music.

Also available



MacDowell  
Orchestral Works, Volume 1  
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Steinway Model D Concert Grand Piano (serial no. 608 528) courtesy of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra  
Piano technician: Dan Carney



## **Philharmonic Orchestra**

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MACDOWELL: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2, ETC. – Wang/Dixon/BBC PO/Wilson

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*Edward Alexander MacDowell* (1860–1908)

Orchestral Works, Volume 2

- |      |   |          |
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| 7-11 | Suite (No. 1), Op. 42 (1888–91, 1893)<br>in A minor • in a-Moll • en la mineur<br>for Large Orchestra       | 19:16    |
|      |   | TT 61:08 |

Xiayin Wang piano\*  
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