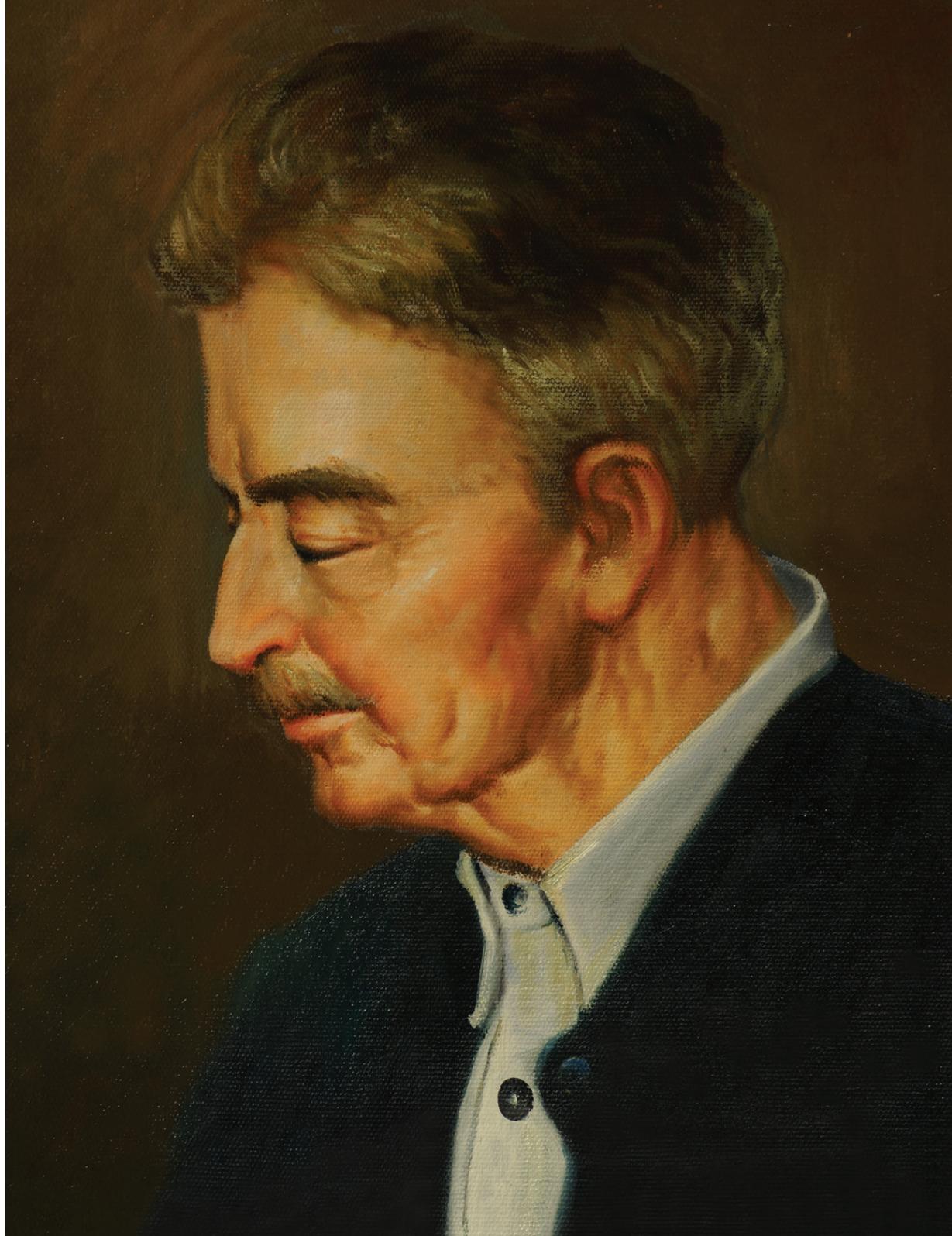


**Alfred
HILL**

**String Quartets
Vol. 5**

**Dominion
String Quartet**



Alfred Hill (1869–1960) String Quartets Vol. 5

While Australian by birth, Alfred Hill lived in New Zealand from the age of two until seventeen, principally in Wellington, after which he began studies at the Leipzig Conservatorium, where he encountered Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and many other luminaries of the era. After completing his studies in violin and piano in 1891 and receiving the prestigious Helbig award for composition, he lived principally in Wellington for almost twenty years with some shorter residencies in Australia. In 1910 he moved to Sydney where he lived for the rest of his life. He was the only significant composer of Australia and New Zealand representing the Late Romantic era. While the influences of his immediate predecessors are clearly obvious in his early works, his style evolved with some absorption of later styles, though he rejected breaking from the long established traditions of Europe. His prolific output included ten operas (some on Maori themes), thirteen symphonies, seventeen string quartets, many choral works, concertos, chamber music, sonatas, songs and short works for a variety of instruments. Researcher and publisher, Allan Stiles, has noted that there are over 2,000 titles attributable to Alfred Hill and of those, many have never been published and relatively few commercially recorded. His use of Maori music and references to Maori culture were enduring and he later developed an interest in the music of the Australian aborigines. Amongst his earliest compositions were a cantata *The New Jerusalem* (1891), the Maori cantatas *Hinemoa* (1895) and *Tawhaki* (1897) as well as the *Maori Symphony No. 1*. The interest in Maori culture continued in later operatic scores *Tapu* (1903) and *Teora* (1928). He is respectfully remembered by Maori as *Arapeta Hira*.

Soon after arriving in Sydney in 1910 Hill became a member of the Austral String Quartet and later wrote string quartets for Henri Verbrugghen's quartet and others. In 1916 the New South Wales Conservatorium (now the Sydney Conservatorium) was established and Hill was

appointed as its first Professor of Composition. *Quartets Nos. 1–3*, spanning the period 1881-1913, reflect his early "New Zealand" style, with strong influence of Dvořák and Tchaikovsky. *Quartets Nos. 4–9* span 1916-1935, his tenure at the Conservatorium, and accordingly offer excellent examples of how much his style evolved during this middle period of his output. The influence of impressionism in *Quartets Nos. 7–9* paved the way for more freedom in his own style following his retirement from the Conservatorium in Sydney. While his orchestrations of earlier quartets into symphonies may seem to imply a return to the nineteenth-century idiom, the later quartets demonstrate that in fact his style continued to evolve, and that the symphonies were simply orchestrations of quartets composed earlier. On 27th December, 1934, following a disagreement with the Conservatorium, Hill tendered his resignation, a year before he was due to retire, and founded the Alfred Hill Academy of Music. While this rebellious venture only lasted until 1937, it attracted excellent teachers and students.

One of Hill's dreams, even long after he had taken up permanent residence in Australia, was to establish in New Zealand a full-time national orchestra and a national school of music, to teach western art music and also to preserve the traditions of Maori music and culture. To these ends he corresponded initially with Joseph Savage, Prime Minister from 1935-1940, and later with Peter Fraser, Prime Minister from 1940-49. In 1936 Hill wrote to Joseph Savage appealing for a National Conservatorium to be established and received a reply saying that "I have carefully noted all that you say in this connection and shall be pleased to place your suggestion before the Government for consideration". The proposal did receive serious consideration even with Hill as its potential director, and during a visit to Auckland in 1938 he gave an interview on the possibility. However, World War II intervened and the project was abandoned. One can only ponder how

differently musical history might have otherwise unfolded. New Zealand did however gain a National Orchestra in the years following the end of the war and while Alfred Hill may not have been directly involved, there is no question that his lobbying for this outcome, since the Christchurch Exhibition of 1906–07, played a significant rôle in preparing the way for this eventuality. Of note is an extract from the reply in June 1946 from Peter Fraser, to Hill's offer to support the venture "An expression of opinion from one of your musical standing and experience is most valuable and you may be assured that your views will carry much weight."

This first recording of *String Quartet No. 12 in E* is based on an edition prepared by Allan Stiles from the autograph manuscript, now in the National Library of Australia. The manuscript bears the inscription '29th February 1936 Sydney'. Stiles notes that "sometime in the 1950s Hill reworked this music to create the *Melodious Symphony in E* for string orchestra. While the string symphony includes 'melodious' in its title, that is nowhere on the quartet manuscript." A cello solo introduces the opening *Adagio*, hinting at E minor and after a short interplay with the upper strings the movement launches into an E major *Allegro*. After an *Adagio-Allegro* development section the recapitulation recalls the opening *Allegro*. As its title suggests the second movement is playful and folksy in character. The trio section in C major features a running melody in the first violin over a chordal texture, in contrast to the E minor outer sections where the melody is shared around. The dreamy melody of the third movement is carried mainly in the cello. The quirkiness of the *Finale* is reminiscent of ideas in the early quartets and the use of a simple sonata form, economical in material, provides unity and conciseness.

Completed in Sydney on 26th March, 1936, *String Quartet No. 13 in E flat* was first performed at the Conservatorium in 1937. In the 1950s Hill adapted the score to create *Symphony in E flat*, which was recorded in 1975 with the WASO under Georg Tintner. We do not really know how Hill regarded atonal music, but in the

opening eighteen-bar *Adagio* his whole-tone melody and texture appears to pay tribute to the impressionist movement – to be immediately abandoned at the *Allegro molto* that follows with a spirited melody in E flat major. A second theme in B flat establishes the sonata form and fragments of the opening *Adagio* appear in the development. The *Scherzo* in C minor with a trio in A flat major features a jaunty dance melody shared mainly between first violin and cello. The gentle meandering melody of the *Barcarole* passes mainly between first violin and viola. The *Finale* is rich in material with multiple lines of melodic interest stated in a complex contrapuntal texture with all four parts featuring prominently.

While the previous quartet was originally numbered as the fourteenth, it was later numbered as the thirteenth, probably implying that the *String Quartet in B minor* was actually his fifteenth. Allan Stiles notes that in 1951 Hill created his *Symphony in B minor 'Australia'* and orchestrated the first, second and fourth movements from this quartet, substituting for the third movement his symphonic poem *Arnheim Land*. After the slow and somewhat serious *Adagio-Andante* opening the music launches into a waltz-like *Allegro* melody that one might imagine in a Tchaikovsky ballet. These two ideas alternate through the movement in an ABABAB pattern. The second movement melody draws from the waltz material in the first movement and is shared between all four parts with material from the Waltz accompaniment becoming thematic material in the middle *Andante* section. The *Menuet* introduces a folk-like melody in E Aeolian mode. After an opening *Finale* statement reminiscent of *Quartet No. 10*, a melody in B Aeolian mode soon develops into a complex contrapuntal texture showing Hill's mastery of this technique, which he studied intensely while a student in Leipzig. Overall this quartet is unified through a combination of sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle thematic references between its movements.

Donald Maurice

Dominion String Quartet

The Dominion String Quartet was formed in 2006, taking its name from the centenary of the creation of the dominion of New Zealand in 1907. This event coincided with the Christchurch International Exhibition of 1906–07 at which Alfred Hill was the conductor of the country's first full-time professional orchestra. His seventeen string quartets provided the perfect initial project for the DSQ as they are not only the first significant examples of the string quartet genre from Australasia, but are also very fine works of international stature. This volume is the fifth of a series of six recordings which will include all seventeen quartets and which also included on volume 4, Hill's *Life* for piano, string quartet and eight solo singers. **Yury Gezentsvey** (first violin), originally from Russia, is a principal first violinist with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, an acclaimed soloist and chamber musician and Artist Teacher at the New Zealand School of Music. **Rosemary Harris** (second violin), previously Associate Concertmaster of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and a first violinist in the Pittsburgh Symphony, plays regularly with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. **Donald Maurice** (viola) is Professor at the New Zealand School of Music, and has been a regular performer and lecturer at International Viola Congresses for over two decades. **David Chickering** (cello), originally from the United States and formerly a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, is former principal cellist of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.



From left to right:
Donald Maurice,
David Chickering,
Rosemary Harris,
Yury Gezentsvey

Photo by Lucien Rizos

Although Australian by birth, Alfred Hill spent much of his youth in New Zealand before embarking on studies in Leipzig, where he met Brahms, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky. A prolific symphonist and operatic composer, he also wrote a sequence of seventeen notable string quartets. His style evolved constantly, the influence of Dvořák leading on to the impressionism of his mid-period. By the time of the *String Quartets Nos. 12 to 14* his mastery of technique – in his younger days he had played in a prominent string quartet – ensure that the music is balanced, subtle, and full of playful wit. This is the fifth of six volumes of the complete Alfred Hill String Quartets.

**Alfred
HILL**
(1869–1960)
String Quartets
Vol. 5

String Quartet No. 12 in E major		20:43	6 II. Scherzo	3:32
1	I. Adagio – Allegro	7:45	7 III. Barcarole	4:48
2	II. Humoreske: Allegretto	4:34	8 IV. Finale	6:52
3	III. Reverie: Andante	3:38	String Quartet No. 14 in B minor	
4	IV. Finale	4:43	24:49	
String Quartet No. 13 in E flat major		20:21	9 I. Adagio – Andante – Allegro	8:41
5	I. Adagio – Allegro molto	5:09	10 II. Adagio	5:02
			11 III. Menuet	4:28
			12 IV. Finale	6:38

ALL WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

Dominion String Quartet
Yury Gezentsvey, Violin I • Rosemary Harris, Violin II
Donald Maurice, Viola • David Chickering, Cello

Recorded at Park Road Post, Wellington, New Zealand, 4 June 2012 (tracks 1–4), 27 May 2013 (5–8) and 28 May 2013 (9–12) • Producer & Editor: Wayne Laird • Engineer: John Neill
Publishers: Stiles Music Publishers • Booklet notes: Donald Maurice
Cover painting of Alfred Hill by Chai Ben-Shan



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Playing Time
66:10



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