

William WORDSWORTH

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN A MAJOR, OP. 60

PIANO CONCERTO IN D MINOR, OP. 28

THREE PASTORAL SKETCHES, OP. 10

Arta Arnicane, piano
Kamila Bydlowska, violin
Liepāja Symphony Orchestra
John Gibbons

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by Paul Conway

In a personal tribute to William Wordsworth (1908–88), the Rev. Campbell M. Maclean, a close friend of the composer, offered this character portrait:

Bill was a hard man to know. He was chronically shy, reticent and impenetrably private. His taciturnity was such as to inhibit conversation. The most he could contribute was a laconic phrase or, more likely, a curt adverb, the most characteristic of which was ‘possibly’.¹

The Rev. Maclean continues with a telling description of Wordsworth’s reaction to the highly successful premiere in March 1973 of his *Symposium*, for violin and orchestra, Op. 94, in Edinburgh, after which he was invited to join the performers on the platform and receive a well-deserved ovation:

If ever an event called for some additional celebration, say a jubilant carousal with a few select friends, here we had it. Conversation an hour later at my home:

SELF: ‘I thought Leonard Friedman played the solo part superbly.’

W.W.: ‘Did you?’ in his dry, clipped tones.

SELF: ‘There must surely be additional performances after such a convincing first.’

W.W.: ‘Possibly’ in his languid, posh accent.

Now is the time, I said to myself, to uncork the champagne bottle and toasts all round.

W.W.: ‘well, bed for me.’²

This lack of self-indulgence is reflected in Wordsworth’s compositions. Much of their distinction lies in the absence of empty rhetoric. Ironically, for someone so reticent in speech, he gave many of his works titles which suggest a form of discourse,

¹ Rev. Campbell M. Maclean, ‘William Wordsworth (1908–88)’, *Music Current*, No. 1 (September 1988), p. 1.

² *Ibid.*

such as *Conversation*, for two cellos and piano, Op. 74 (1962), *Dialogue*, for horn and piano, Op. 77 (1965), *Conversation Piece*, for viola and guitar, Op. 113 (1982), and the aforementioned *Symposium*. The ‘discussion’ involved in these scores is obviously of a musical nature, and in this sort of interaction he was a master, as evidenced most authentically by his cycle of eight symphonies and series of six string quartets.

William Brocklesby³ Wordsworth, a great-great grandson of Christopher Wordsworth, brother of the great Romantic poet, was born in London on 17 December 1908. As he was considered too delicate a child to attend school, most of his non-musical education came from his father, a Church of England parson. His interest in music became all-consuming when he was about twelve years of age. At this time, he was receiving piano lessons from a Miss Sterry, a member of the Religious Arts Society, which used to meet at the Wordsworths’ home in Hindhead, Surrey. She suggested he might enhance his musical training by studying with the composer George Oldroyd, who was choirmaster and organist at St Michael’s, Croydon. Thus he became a chorister at St Michael’s and, between 1921 and 1931, studied harmony, counterpoint, singing and three instruments (viola, piano and organ) with Oldroyd. At the end of this period, his first acknowledged piece, *Three Hymn Preludes* for organ, Op. 1 (1932), was published.

In 1934 he was invited to become a pupil of Sir Donald Tovey in Edinburgh. His three years of study with the eminent composer, teacher and musicologist were a result of sending his *Phantasy Sonata* for violin and piano, Op. 3 (1933), to this eminent figure, who, impressed by the talent displayed in the score by this young unknown, immediately consented to receive him as a pupil. From Tovey he acquired a respect for and command of traditional genres, though his approach to these forms was always deeply personal. Wordsworth wrote of his inspiring tutor: ‘One felt one knew for the first time what words like “genius” and “greatness” really meant, when one had been in his company’.⁴ Much later, with characteristic hesitation, he was to dedicate his Symphony No. 2 ‘To the memory of Donald Tovey, whose understanding love of music has been an abiding inspiration.’

³ His mother’s maiden name.

⁴ W. B. Wordsworth, ‘Tovey’s Teaching’, *Music & Letters*, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 60.

After leaving Edinburgh without taking a degree at the University, and being of independent means, he was able to follow his instincts and devote himself entirely to composition, producing his first large-scale works in the late 1930s. Pacifism was an essential part of his character, and for several years before the outbreak of the Second World War he was associated with the Peace Pledge Union and acted as secretary of the Hindhead Fellowship of Reconciliation Group. During this time he knew the pacifist writers Max Plowman (1883–1941) and John Middleton Murry (1889–1957) very well and also counted among his friends Nellie ‘Kay’ Gill, a professional violinist and musical patron who organised chamber concerts in her house next-door to the Wordsworths. He always maintained that his long friendship with her much strengthened his development both as a composer and as a pacifist, and she may also have been something of a surrogate mother figure to him, his own mother having died when he was sixteen. It was inevitable that he should take his stand as a conscientious objector, and when war came, he was consigned to work on the land, music giving way to agriculture as the primary claim on his time.

Nevertheless, after the day’s farm work was done, he still took an opportunity to write music at night. In fact, the compositions dating from this period, such as the First and Second String Quartets, Opp. 16 and 20, and First Symphony, Op. 23, were the first to attract critical attention, his earliest breakthrough arising when his String Quartet No. 1 won the Clements Memorial Prize in 1941. His vocal music from this time met with less success: *The Houseless Dead*, Op. 14 (1939), a setting of D. H. Lawrence for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra, remains unperformed; and his largest work, the oratorio *Dies Domini*, Op. 18, for three soloists, chorus and large orchestra, written between 1942 and 1944 and praised by Vaughan Williams, is also still awaiting its first performance (it was rejected by the BBC for broadcast on the Third Programme and Home Service in 1960⁵). While working in Hampshire, he met Frieda Robson, also an ardent pacifist, and in 1945 they were married. After the war, he became even more

⁵ In a letter dated 21 September 1960 from Harry Croft-Jackson, Chief Assistant, Music Programme Organisation, BBC, to William Wordsworth; ref. 38/M/HC-J (held in the Wordsworth archives at the Scottish Music Centre, Glasgow).

prolific, and many of his earlier works were published for the first time. The next fifteen years or so were his most productive in terms of performances and recognition.

He served on the Executive Committee of the Composers' Guild of Great Britain for five years, from 1955, and was elected Chairman four years later. Arising from his work with the Guild, in the spring of 1961, along with Thea Musgrave, he undertook a two-week tour of the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Union of Soviet Composers of Moscow, where he met, among other composers, Shostakovich and Khachaturian. He gave a speech during the tour, which began in a characteristically self-deprecating tone:

I believe I share with your most famous composer, Shostakovich, one characteristic – an extreme distaste for speaking in public. For an occasion such as this, I could wish that the floor would open and I could disappear. I could wish also that the resemblance between me and Shostakovich did not end there, but I cannot be so arrogant as to pretend that my compositions are on a level with his!

In 1961 he moved, with his family, from Hindhead to the Scottish Highlands, to live at Kincaig in Inverness-shire. The view from his study window across the top of the pines to the mountains above Glen Feshie was a rich source of inspiration to him. During the course of a 'Composer's Portrait' broadcast by the BBC in July 1967, he confessed:

I have always had joy in the grander aspects of Nature – mountains, storms, spacious views, and in the ever-changing colours of the Scottish Highlands. I cannot say if there has been any change in my style of writing since we came to live in Scotland, but I would like to think that it is becoming clearer and less complicated, more direct in its expression. In fact, all the things it should not be, if one wants to be successful in the present musical fashions.

In 1965 Wordsworth was appointed Regional Representative of the Composers' Guild for Scotland and (with Robert Crawford, his predecessor in that office) was largely responsible for the formation of a Scottish Branch of the Guild in 1966, of which he was Chairman until 1970. His social awkwardness did not extend to fellow composers, and he hosted weekends at his house for members of the Scottish Branch such as Robert Crawford, Shaun Dillon, David Dorward, John Maxwell Geddes and Thomas Wilson

(who became a good friend). As well as providing an opportunity for dealing with the business matters of the Guild, they were very social affairs, involving walking, sightseeing, fishing and wine-making, as well as offering a chance to listen enthusiastically to tapes of one another's music and discuss it constructively in a supportive environment.

Apart from music, which was the focus of his life, Wordsworth enjoyed reading, especially poetry, and among his works may be numbered many settings of poems, by such writers as Walter de la Mare, William Blake and Gerald Manley Hopkins. His hobbies included gardening, golf, beekeeping, fishing, chess and woodwork. He regarded himself as a 'handyman', making and putting up his own shelves and constructing a transistor radio with the aid of a soldering iron. He also made model steam engines in his workshop, equipped with a lathe. Gadgets were a particular passion and one of his treasured possessions in later life was an electronic chess set.

Two deep sorrows darkened his last decades. In 1971, his elder son, Tim, was killed at the age of 23, in a motor accident near Pitlochry on his way back to London. Though the composer was devastated, he initially suffered in silence. His grief eventually found expression in two works. The first, *Adonais*, for mixed voices, Op. 97 (1974), is an imposing setting of words taken from Shelley's long poem written in memory of Keats and a moving evocation of the transience of life. The second, Symphony No. 6, *Elegiaca*, for mezzo-soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, Op. 102 (1977), is dedicated simply 'In memory, Tim'. This work also sets words from Shelley's 'Adonais', as well as John Donne's 'Meditation XVII' and Edna St Vincent Millais's 'Dirge without Music'; regrettably, it is still awaiting a first performance. The second blow came in 1982, when his wife died. According to the Rev. Maclean, 'Bill was lost. Lovely, fresh, engaging Frieda spoke for him, managed him, decided for him. Without her, he became a bundle of untidy clothes, a vagrant in search of dependency'.⁶ In the same year as her death, Wordsworth wrote a work for string quartet, later rescored for string orchestra, which he called *Elegy for Frieda*, an eloquent love-song of enraptured, fond recollection and cherished intimacy. Ill health dogged his final years and his creativity all but dried up before his death in Kingussie on 10 March 1988, aged 79.

⁶ Maclean, *loc. cit.*, p. 3.

William Wordsworth's large and varied output embraces many forms, including orchestral, chamber and instrumental music, songs and music for radio. His scores are consummately well crafted and draw their inspiration from the wellsprings of the mainstream rather than any shallow side-channels. Both in inspiration and content, his music displays a rugged individuality mirroring his physical environment, and an integrity that isolated him from the influence of the latest musical trends. He was, however, a man of his time, and if the music demanded it, he would unhesitatingly include quarter-tones and electronic tape, for example, in his works. There are no sensational tricks, no compromises to fashion, and his is generally a quieter, more contemplative voice than that of his contemporaries. Various influences, such as Sibelius, Bartók, Nielsen and, to a lesser extent, Bax and Vaughan Williams, may be detected fleetingly in some of his writing, but he went his own way and the best of his music, of which there is a significant amount, is passionate, tough, direct and sincere.

Three Pastoral Sketches, Op. 10 (1937), is Wordsworth's earliest acknowledged orchestral score. Each of its three movements evokes a different aspect of the English countryside. A modest-sized orchestra is employed, consisting of two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

'Sundown' [6] is based on two contrasting themes. The first is heard at the outset, a hesitant, descending arpeggiated figure in $\frac{12}{8}$ introduced on flute, answered by horns and first violins and then further elaborated upon by undulating oboes and clarinets. The second is a stately, chorale-like theme in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, first heard on woodwind and brass. Elements from these two themes are combined in the baleful closing section.

'The Lonely Tarn' [7] begins with hypnotic alternating chords which suggest Wordsworth was an admirer of 'Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age' from *The Planets* by Gustav Holst. A florid flute solo presently answered by the first violins leads into a more relaxed and animated central section before the opening material returns, the first violins now shrouded in eerie harmonics. There is a brief reminder of the emancipated central episode before the grave conclusion.

‘Seascape’ [8] is cast in three sections. An atmospheric slow introduction dominated by woodwind leads into the main *Allegro*, which features a stormy principal idea and a plain-spoken secondary theme, proceeding stepwise and initiated by the oboe. After these two elements have been explored fully, the music returns to the enigmatic material of the introduction. The online catalogue of the Scottish Music Centre refers to a version of the score with the title of this closing movement listed as ‘Mountain, wind and sky’, an appellation which some listeners may think captures the mood and narrative of this tripartite structure more faithfully than the composer’s final choice.

Although Wordsworth’s **Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 28** (1946), is dedicated to Clifford Curzon, it was John Hunt who took up the work and he who was the soloist, with the London Symphony Orchestra under Charles Hambourg, at its first performance at a concert in the Royal Albert Hall in London in April 1947. The Concerto is cast as a single, continuous movement subdivided into sections and attempts to emphasise the dramatic conflict of the solo instrument with the orchestra inherent in the form. The orchestra consists of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, tenor trombone, bass trombone, timpani, cymbals and strings.

In a talk, ‘Thinking in Music,’⁷ Wordsworth revealed that, when writing this piece, he felt strongly the verbal-literary idea of the impotence of the individual in the modern world, and at the same time held to the faith that it is only through the individual that the mass can be tamed and redeemed. This idea is reflected in the rhetoric of the Concerto, with the soloist-as-individual pitted against the orchestra-as-crowd. Though the piano may, at times, seem in danger of being overwhelmed by the orchestra, it finally emerges as dominant, not by force, but by starting a melody in which the orchestra can be persuaded to join. Wordsworth was at pains to point out, however, that ‘the mental-verbal idea of the relation of the individual and the crowd is not necessary to an understanding of the music, because it is (I hope) quite clear in the music itself what is going on, and there is a very good musical reason why it should work out so.’⁸

⁷ Undated manuscript notes for a talk held in the ‘Correspondence, etc.’ file in the William Wordsworth archives of the Scottish Music Centre in Glasgow.

⁸ Manuscript held in the Wordsworth archives of the Scottish Music Centre.

A short introduction (*Poco adagio* [1]) leads to an exposition (*Allegro feroce* [2]) of the main themes of the work by the orchestra alone. The solo instrument enters, and expands and develops the themes, leading to a gradual relaxation of tension. The central, nocturne-like *Adagio* [3] is the most lyrical and tranquil part of the score. It is mainly concerned with an expansion of a short phrase from the introduction in contemplative dialogue between piano and orchestra. The soloist then leads the orchestra in a resumption of the *Allegro feroce* [4], which increases in intensity until the soloist brings in a new, highly decorated version of one of the original themes. The cadenza follows, ending with a reference to the theme of the *Adagio* section. The coda [5] consists of a new version of some of the themes of the introduction, in D major, in which piano and orchestra co-operate. It includes a brief reappearance of the *Adagio* theme.

Reviewing the Concerto in *The New Statesman*, Desmond Shawe-Taylor suggested that Wordsworth was

now emerging into the secure enjoyment of his talent. It [the concerto] is singularly free from modern inhibitions about direct emotional appeal and beauty of sheer sound. The solo part is for the most part decorative rather than showy; this fact should not deter our pianists from taking up a work which makes so valuable and attractive an addition to their repertory.⁹

It is that beauty of sound and subtlety of gesture which sets the Concerto apart from more obviously virtuosic examples in the genre. Perhaps Wordsworth was remembering a note he made at one of Tovey's history and analysis of music classes: 'The piano is not an instrument of percussion, but of suggestion.'¹⁰

Dedicated to Robert Masters,¹¹ the **Violin Concerto in A major, Op. 60** (1955), is one of Wordsworth's most extended and impressive orchestral works. It is scored for

⁹ *New Statesman*, 26 April 1947.

¹⁰ W. B. Wordsworth, 'Tovey's Teaching: With Three Letters from the Late Sir Donald Tovey', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1941), p. 61.

¹¹ Robert Masters (1917–2014) was leader of the London Mozart Players for nineteen years, helped to establish the Yehudi Menuhin School and served as director of the first Menuhin Violin Competition. While studying at Dartington Hall, he founded the Robert Masters Piano Quartet, which premiered Wordsworth's Quartet in D minor for Pianoforte and Strings, Op. 36 (1948), a work dedicated to the Quartet.

solo violin and a large orchestra consisting of two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, two tenor trombones, bass trombone, timpani, harp, percussion (three players: cymbal, gong, side-drum, bass drum, wooden box), vibraphone and strings.

Marked *Moderato e sostenuto*, the first movement [9] begins without preamble with the first in a series of lyrical melodies, introduced by the strings. The soloist enters presently with a freely expressive tune in high register adorned by relaxed triplet figurations. Both of these themes are then repeated and followed by a fanfare-like figure on trumpets. This three-note motif will feature prominently in rhythmic form throughout the movement. Taking the place of a traditional contrasting second subject is a rigorously fugal version, introduced by the orchestra, of the principal theme, followed by an elongated version of the melody first introduced by the violin. Punctuated by harp glissandos, the development explores and reassesses the main material, which is then reasserted in the recapitulation, illuminated by the vibraphone. The use of this instrument creates for a few moments an atmosphere specific to the mid-1950s, such as that encountered in Vaughan Williams' contemporaneous Symphony No. 8. The short coda is galvanised by the three-note motto-rhythm.

The *Adagio cantabile* slow movement [10] unfolds gently with a glorious outpouring of melody from the soloist. Muted violas introduce the melancholy main theme, answered by woodwind. The theme is repeated on cellos before the soloist enters with another important idea, eloquent and spacious. At one stage there is a nostalgic duet between the soloist and two solo horns. The movement ends on a dramatic note with the solo violin ascending stealthily above an expectant sustained chord in the horns, timpani and basses, punctuated by soft gong strokes.

While the final gong stroke is still resonating, the soloist casually ushers in the finale without a break [11]. After a brief, measured introduction (*Allegretto*) setting out the predominant theme of the movement, the main section, *Allegro spiritoso*, brings dynamism and playfulness to the score, with the aid of the judicious use of percussion. The wooden box is brought into play at one point, tapping out the rhythm under the unceasing melodic flow of the solo line. A wide-ranging solo cadenza recalls the main

themes from both previous movements. Bold and decisive, the closing bars round off imposingly this substantial and deeply expressive statement.

Michael Kennedy felt that Wordsworth's Violin Concerto was the composer's 'best large-scale work to date, showing an extra warmth and ease of melodic style' and argued that 'violinists should welcome this addition to their repertoire, a concerto free from academic restraints and inhibitions'.¹² The solo writing treats the violin as a songlike instrument. No special effects – even pizzicatos, which are avoided throughout – are allowed to interrupt, or deflect from, the clearly articulated, lyrical discourse. Large and colourful orchestral forces are deployed with restraint, for maximum impact. The result is one of Wordsworth's most cogent and atmospheric large-scale pieces.

It is to be hoped that this series of releases will renew interest in the music of a composer whose body of work is still a largely untapped resource.¹³ His scores must be performed to give them life. In his own words, 'Music is what you hear. It is not a set of dots and lines on a piece of paper; it does not exist until the written symbols are translated into an aural experience which matches that imagined by the composer in the first place'.¹⁴

Although Wordsworth was socially diffident, he had no false modesty regarding his compositions and was fully aware of what he perceived to be their lasting value. In a forthright letter to the Controller, Music at the BBC in 1957 about the decline in the number of broadcasts of his symphonic works, he wrote:

I am quite convinced that I have something to say, and an individual way of saying it which the ordinary music-lover is capable of responding to if he is given sufficient opportunities.

I would not go through the labour of creation were I not so convinced.¹⁵

In articles about Wordsworth and his music, commentators have occasionally quoted the following lines from his ancestral namesake: 'Enough if something from our hands

¹² Michael Kennedy, 'Provincial Events: Music in the North-West 1956–57', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 98, No. 1374 (August 1957), p. 444.

¹³ Released in 2018, Volume One (Toccat Classics TOCC 0480) contains the *Divertimento* in D (1954), *Variations on a Scottish Theme* (1962) and Symphonies Nos. 4 and 8, *Pax Hominibus* (1953 and 1986).

¹⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Music in the Dark', *The Times*, 6 March 1961, p. 13.

¹⁵ Letter to R. J. F. Howgill, Controller, Music, BBC, dated 4 December 1957.

have power to live, and act, and serve the future hour'.¹⁶ These words apply aptly enough to the composer William Wordsworth, dedicated, serious-minded and reserved in character, but profoundly expressive and directly communicative through his music.

Paul Conway is a freelance writer specialising in twentieth-century and contemporary British music. He has reviewed for The Independent, Tempo and Musical Opinion, provided programme notes for The Proms and the Edinburgh, Spitalfields and Three Choirs Festivals and contributed chapters to books on John McCabe and Robert Simpson.

A ready communication with audiences and a talent for creating a special concert atmosphere have taken the young Latvian pianist **Arta Arnicane** to a large variety of performance venues across the world, among them the Rudolfinum in Prague and the Zurich Tonhalle.

Born into a family with a long-standing musical tradition, she started playing the piano and composing at the age of four. Supported by the award of numerous scholarships and by such eminent artists as John Lill and Homero Francesch, she has studied in several countries, graduating with distinction from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (2004), the Latvian Academy of Music (2008) and Zurich University of the Arts (2010 and 2012).

Her professors – Sergejs Osokins, Norma Fisher and Homero Francesch – influenced the artistic development of her personality and guided her into the international music scene. She has won many prizes at international music competitions, including the Vianna da Motta (2001), Premio Iturbi (2010) and Prague Spring (2011).

Arta Arnicane has an extensive solo repertoire and her interpretations of the Mozart piano concertos and of Impressionist music have won special appreciation. She works regularly with the conductors John Gibbons and Martin Lebel, and is in demand as a soloist with youth orchestras for her temperament and ability to inspire. Arta is also an enthusiastic chamber musician and frequently performs in a duo with her husband, the cellist Florian Arnicans. The



¹⁶ For example, Scott Goddard in his sleeve-note to Discurio Records DC 001, released in 1964 and reprinted in *The Music of William Wordsworth*, published by the composer in 1977.

first 'Duo Arnicans' album was released by Solo Musica in 2015, with sonatas by Chopin and Dohnányi.

She is especially devoted to creating thematic and narrative programmes, as well as to the discovery and performance of rare repertoire. Her creative collaboration with John Gibbons has included performances of both piano concertos by William Alwyn and, most recently, the discovery and this recording of the powerful and expressive piano concerto by William Wordsworth.

The Polish violinist **Kamila Bydlowska** performs as a soloist, chamber musician and collaborator across multiple genres. She has appeared in venues and festivals in Europe, Asia and America, among them the Royal Albert Hall, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Jazz Café, the London Electronic Arts Festival and the iTunes Festival in London, Holywell Rooms in Oxford, Kioi Hall in Tokyo, the Tengiz Amirejibi International Music Festival in Tbilisi, I Palpiti Festival of International Laureates in Los Angeles, MIDEM in Cannes and the UK International Tango Festival. She has broadcast on Classic FM in the UK, WNYC in New York and RAI in Italy. A winner of multiple awards, she is also the recipient of a Ministry of Culture of Poland Scholarship and an Artistic Excellence Award from Indiana University.



Born in Słupca, in central Poland, into a family of non-musicians, she started to play the violin at seven and went on to study at the Jacobs School of Music of Indiana University in Bloomington, with Mauricio Fuks and Kevork Mardirossian, and at the Royal College of Music in London with Ani Schnarch.

This recording was made on a violin by Carlo Giuseppe Testore made in Milan around 1700, on kind loan from Tarisio, London.

John Gibbons has conducted most of the major British orchestras, including the BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, City of Birmingham, Bournemouth, BBC Concert, Ulster and, most regularly, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has recorded Skalkottas with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the string concertos of Arthur Benjamin with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Dutton Epoch), Mozart piano concertos with Idil Biret and both the London Mozart Players and the Worthing Symphony Orchestra, and Bruckner's Ninth Symphony,

including a completion of the finale by Nors Josephson, with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (Danacord).

John Gibbons has been Principal Conductor of the Worthing Symphony Orchestra – the professional orchestra of West Sussex – for over twenty years and, in addition to their regular concert season, they have appeared at the annual Malcolm Arnold Festival in Northampton. Renowned for his adventurous programming, he has given many world premieres of neglected works, among them the *Third Orchestral Set* by Charles Ives, the Violin Concerto by Robert Still and both the Second Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto by William Alwyn. He recorded Laura Rossi's film score *The Battle of Ancre* (Pinewood Studios) and conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in her score to *The Battle of the Somme* at the live screening in the Royal Festival Hall to commemorate the centenary of the ending of this battle.



Overseas work includes Walton's First Symphony with the George Enescu Philharmonic in Romania, concerts with the Macedonian Philharmonic, the Çukurova Symphony in Turkey, the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, and performances of Malcolm Arnold's Fourth Symphony in Latvia and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* in Worms, Germany.

John Gibbons studied music at Queens' College, Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, winning numerous awards as conductor, pianist and accompanist. He assisted John Eliot Gardiner on the 'Leonore' project – semi-staged concert performances with the Monteverdi Choir of Beethoven's *Leonore*, the first version of *Fidelio*, in Europe and New York, including the BBC Proms – and the Monteverdi Choir recording of music by Percy Grainger on Philips; he was also Leonard Slatkin's second conductor for a performance of Ives' Fourth Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

He has conducted numerous opera productions at Opera Holland Park, with particular emphasis on Verdi, Puccini and the *verismo* composers, including Mascagni's *Iris* and Cilèa's *Adriana Lecouvreur*. He conducted *La bohème* for the Spier Festival in South Africa, toured *Hansel and Gretel* around Ireland with Opera Northern Ireland and Opera Theatre Company and conducted a number of productions for English Touring Opera. His orchestral reductions include Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* for Opera St Louis, Missouri, and Karl Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*.

A renowned communicator with audiences, John Gibbons is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, vice chairman of the British Music Society, and choral director at Clifton Cathedral. His own music has been performed in various abbeys and cathedrals as well as on the South Bank, London.

The **Liepāja Symphony Orchestra** – formerly also known as The Amber Sound Orchestra – is the oldest symphonic ensemble in the Baltic states: it was founded in 1881 by Hanss Høhøpfel, who also served as its conductor. The orchestral strength in those early days was 37 musicians, joined in the summers by guest players from Germany and Poland. With time, both the structure and professionalism of the Orchestra grew, as did its standing in the eyes of the general public.

After World War II the LSO recommenced its activities in 1947, under the wings of the Liepāja Music School, and was conducted for the next forty years by the director of the School, Valdis Vikmanis. A new chapter in the life of the Orchestra began at the end of 1986, when it was granted the status of a professional symphony orchestra, becoming only the second in Latvia. That formal recognition was made possible by the efforts of two conductors, Laimonis Trūbs (who worked with the LSO from 1986 to 1996) and Jēkabs Ozoliņš (active with the LSO from 1987 to 2008).

The first artistic director of the LSO, as well as its first chief conductor, was the Leningrad-born Mikhail Orehov, who took the ensemble to a higher standard of professionalism during his years there (1988–91). Another important period for the LSO was 1992 to 2009, when Imants Resnis was artistic director and chief conductor. He expanded the range of activities considerably: in addition to regular concerts in Riga, Liepāja and other Latvian cities, the Orchestra also went on frequent tours abroad, playing in Germany, Great Britain, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden and elsewhere. During this period a number of important recordings were made, some of them during live appearances on Latvian radio and television.

In the early days of the LSO Valdis Vikmanis began a series of summer concerts which always sold out, and so, in 2010, the festival 'Liepāja Summer' was launched, to renew that tradition of a century before. As well as orchestral performances (some of them in the open air), the festival includes sacred and chamber music.

The Liepāja Symphony Orchestra holds a special place in the cultural life of Latvia. It received the highest national music award, the 'Great Music Award', in 2006, as well as the Latvian Recordings Award in the years 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2010 the Liepāja Symphony Amber Sound Orchestra was granted the status of national orchestra. The

current chief conductor, the Lithuanian Gintaras Rinkevičius, made his debut with the LSO in 2017.

This is the ninth of a series of recordings planned with Toccatà Classics. The first featured Paul Mann conducting the orchestral music of the Norwegian composer Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the next three brought Volumes One, Two and Three of the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299). The fifth release featured music by the German composer Josef Schelb (TOCC 0426), conducted again by Paul Mann, and the sixth presented the Symphonies Nos. 17 and 18 of the Finnish composer Fridrich Bruk (TOCC 0455), conducted by Māris Kupčs. John Gibbons then conducted the LSO in the first of these William Wordsworth recordings, in a programme including the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies (TOCC 0480), and then Paul Mann returned to the orchestra to conduct an album of tone-poems and the Symphony No. 15 – itself inspired by the Liepāja coast – by the English composer David Hackbridge Johnson (TOCC 0456).



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Producer-engineer: Normunds Slava
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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH Orchestral Music, Volume Two

Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 28 (1946)

23:07

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Poco adagio</i> – | 1:16 |
| 2 | <i>Allegro feroce</i> – | 6:01 |
| 3 | <i>Adagio cantabile</i> – | 5:51 |
| 4 | <i>Allegro feroce</i> – | 7:47 |
| 5 | Coda | 2:12 |

Three Pastoral Sketches, Op. 10 (1937)

17:59

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 6 | I Sundown | 5:11 |
| 7 | II The Lonely Tarn | 4:27 |
| 8 | III Seascape | 8:21 |

Violin Concerto in A major, Op. 60 (1955)

38:33

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 9 | I <i>Moderato e sostenuto</i> | 15:08 |
| 10 | II <i>Adagio cantabile</i> – | 9:40 |
| 11 | III <i>Allegretto – Allegro spiritoso</i> | 13:45 |

Arta Arnicane, piano 1–5

Kamila Bydlowska, violin 9–11

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra

John Gibbons, conductor

TT 79:41

FIRST RECORDINGS