

Thomas PITFIELD

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

CONCERTO LIRICO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

FANTASIA FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

LYRIC WALTZ FOR STRING ORCHESTRA

EPITAPH FOR STRING ORCHESTRA

BUCOLICS: FOLK SONG STUDIES

SINFONIETTA

Emma McGrath, violin
Liepāja Symphony Orchestra
Paul Mann

THOMAS PITFIELD, ALL-ROUND ARTIST

by John Turner

Thomas Baron Pitfield (the middle name was indeed a name and not a title) was born in Bolton in 1903 and died in 1999 in Bowdon, Cheshire, in a house designed by himself, with furniture designed and made by himself. His father was a joiner and builder, and his mother a dressmaker. Although from infancy he had first artistic and then musical leanings, they were denigrated by his conformist family, and at the age of fourteen he was ‘pitchforked unwillingly’¹ into a seven-year apprenticeship in engineering. His savings during this period did, however, afford him a year’s study of piano, cello and harmony at the Royal Manchester College of Music (RMCM). After attempting a freelance career as a musician, financial pressures dictated a change of direction, and he won a scholarship to study art and cabinet-making at the Bolton School of Art. During his years as an arts-and-crafts teacher in the Midlands, he became increasingly well known as a composer, thanks to the help and encouragement of Hubert Foss, head of the Oxford University Press (OUP) music division, who published many of his compositions and commissioned for the Press cover designs (including that for Britten’s *Simple Symphony*), cards, folksong translations and book illustrations. In 1947 Pitfield was invited to teach composition at his old college, and remained on its staff (through the transition to the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM)) until his seventieth birthday in 1973. In a long and happy retirement, he continued to pursue both his musical and artistic interests until well into his nineties.

As a composer Pitfield was essentially self-taught. Many of the works in his substantial output are collections of miniatures, often written for children or

¹ Thomas Pitfield, *A Cotton Town Boyhood*, Kall Kwik, Altrincham, 1995, p. 18. Pitfield wrote three other volumes of autobiography: *No Song, No Supper* (Thames Publishing, London, 1986), *A Song after Supper* (Thames Publishing, London, 1990) and *Honeymoon: Incidents from a Sixty-Year Holiday Diary* (Kall Kwik, Altrincham, 1998). All three are republished in *Endless Fascination: The Life and Work of Thomas Pitfield, Composer, Artist, Craftsman, Poet*, ed. Rosemary Firmin and John Turner, Forsyth, Manchester, 2024.

amateurs, for whom he seemed to compose with an innate understanding of their capabilities. Larger works include a five-movement *Sinfonietta*, written at the request of Sir John Barbirolli for the Hallé Orchestra, and concertos for piano, violin, recorder and percussion, and there is a quantity of chamber music, composed for many distinguished artists of his own and subsequent generations, including Archie Camden, Carl Dolmetsch, Osian Ellis, Leon Goossens and Evelyn Rothwell. A speciality was writing for unusual instruments, including solo works for accordion, harmonica, clarsach, timpani and xylophone, and he even invented his own instrument, the 'patterphone', to produce rain-like sounds.

Although he was hardly a professional performer on the piano, Pitfield was strongly attracted to the instrument throughout his life, and one of his earliest publications was the *Prelude, Minuet and Reel*, still by far his best-known work. It was taken up by the Australian pianist Beatrice Tangye, who recorded it for HMV Sydney, and to whom he gave the manuscript. The work is melodically and harmonically beguiling, and later in his life it became a favourite piece of his student John McCabe, who recorded it twice. He also played the cello, writing several early pieces for it, and he learnt the guitar so that he could compose for it, too.

***Sinfonietta* (1946)**

Pitfield's Oboe Sonata was written for Evelyn Rothwell, the wife of the conductor John Barbirolli, and as a result of his admiration for the piece Barbirolli asked the composer to write a symphony for the Hallé Orchestra. At that stage in his career, Pitfield felt that he was not ready to write such a large orchestral work. As he states in his second volume of biography, *A Song after Supper*, 'I felt unable to measure up to such an imposing title and offered a Symphonietta'.² The work had two performances and a broadcast with the Hallé, a broadcast in Sweden and a performance in Oslo. The opening of the work does seem rather more portentous than one would ordinarily expect in a (lightweight) *sinfonietta*, and the composer's conflation of the two titles in *A Song after Supper* might lead one to wonder whether he had in fact originally embarked on a full-scale

² *Endless Fascination*, p. 124.

symphony but subsequently changed his mind. The subsequent rejection of the work by the BBC reading panel seems to have led to a crisis of confidence (Barbirolli's request to programme it in the Cheltenham Festival was turned down by the BBC), and though it remained in the OUP hire catalogue, he withdrew the work. The material of the second-movement Polka [2] was used in a later oboe piece and that of the Pavan [3] in the recorder suite *Dancery*. The form of the work as originally written is ingenious and falls somewhere between a suite and a set of variations.

As Jeremy Dibble points out in his extensive contribution to *Endless Fascination*,³ Pitfield's multiple rejections at this time by the BBC were totally disgraceful, despite the efforts of friends such as Maurice Johnstone, Barbirolli himself and many others. The wheel began to turn only when his former RCM pupil David Ellis became Head of Music for Radio 3 North and persuaded London to take Pitfield seriously. Full circle came when the former Radio 3 producer Leo Black, having loved the cello sonata played by his wife, bravely wrote 'Prejudice in Music: Pitfield and other Animals',⁴ in which he acknowledged the gross miscarriage of justice by the reading panel and sought to identify the culprit(s).

***Concerto Lirico for violin and orchestra* (1958)**

This remarkable concerto, in one continuous movement but three distinct sections, was completed at the composer's home in Bowdon in August 1958. It was broadcast by Peter Mountain with the BBC Northern Orchestra under George Hurst, having had an earlier play-through with piano with, and advice from, his violinist friend Clifford Knowles, then leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and given the thumbs-up. But Pitfield felt that Hurst did not like the work, totally ignored its composer and gave the music short shrift. In despair he went home and destroyed the manuscript, tearing the first and third movements out of the bound folder, and retaining only the central elegy [18], dedicated to the memory of an RNCM colleague, the pianist Albert Hardie, who had died while the piece was being written. Pitfield's pupil John McCabe heard the

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177–263.

⁴ *Manchester Sounds*, Volume 9, 2011–13, pp. 15–21; reproduced in *Endless Fascination*, pp. 440–45.

broadcast, and thought it a very fine piece. The hurt was deep, and the concerto is not even mentioned in any of Pitfield's three main autobiographies. However, after his death, a microfilm of the work, which Pitfield had clearly forgotten having made, was found by me, as his executor, when clearing out his garden shed. So the work had survived, and Peter Mountain, who had played and adored the piece, generously offered to typeset it from a print-out of the microfilm. Pitfield's programme note reads as follows:

Though played continuously, the work divides clearly into three main sections. The first begins with an embryonic compound rhythm, chiefly on timpani. This and three descending crotchets (fah, me, ray) form between them the mottos of the work. The three notes expand into a phrase which is soon revealed as the origin of a set of three variations, respectively in $\frac{7}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$, this latter one becoming an obvious completion of the phrase referred to above. More than any section, this helps to earn the Lirico in the title. The $\frac{6}{8}$ is a Jig and a March, running concurrently, the March being an augmentation of the Jig. When they repeat their vertical order is reversed. Section 2 (the slow movement proper) is an elegy, with an air of subdued tragedy. The saxophone introduces it. A link for the solo violin, reflecting on past material, leads into the final section, titled Release, which begins with a lightweight theme in somewhat extreme contrast to the Elegy. After certain approximate restatements of material from the first section of the work, the coda works up together the compound rhythm motive, and the theme of the Elegy. From this, in a rather steep diminuendo, the work tails off with a very brief farewell from the solo violin, with the background of a solemn receding.

The link, or cadenza, following the Elegy, had given Pitfield much trouble in getting it into shape, and while he was attending Albert Hardie's funeral, where he noted the rather sudden transition (common to such occasions) from acute tension and solemnity to relaxation and relief among the leave-taking mourners, the idea – or at least the emotional impulse – for this passage emerged. Hence the heading 'Release' at the end of the third section of the score, which is intended to bear a comparable relationship to the preceding musical events.

Lyric Waltz for string orchestra (1988)

This short piece, with its delicious and memorable tune [10], was initially written for recorder, cello and piano, with later versions for melody instrument (recorder or flute or clarinet or violin or cello) and piano, and solo piano.

Epitaph for string orchestra (1981)

This short work [22] was inspired by a poem of Pitfield's own, from his collection *A Sexton's Dozen*,⁵ which he set to music as a cantata in 1963⁶ and dedicated to the bass Owen Brannigan, who gave the premiere.

The village ancients lie
Each under leaning stone,
With graven legends, dimmed,
Moss-overgrown.

Fantasia on an Old Staffordshire Tune for violin and orchestra (1950)

Pitfield loved folksongs, whatever the country, and himself collected 'The Little Room', a Staffordshire folksong, from the singing of a friend, Harold Small (Pitfield had lived in Staffordshire). He then wrote to Vaughan Williams to consult him about its status; VW responded that he knew a folksong with those words but thought that Pitfield might be the only source of the tune.⁷

'The Little Room' provided the basis of Pitfield's *Fantasia on an Old Staffordshire Tune* [6]–[9], premiered during the Festival of Britain of 1951 by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbiroli in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, with Lawrence Turner, leader of the Orchestra, as soloist.

Bucolics: Folk Song Studies for orchestra

The movements of this undated (probably late) suite, based on Scottish, Irish and English folk-tunes, can be played continuously or as separate pieces. Two of the tunes

⁵ Privately published, undated.

⁶ Published by Stainer & Bell, London, in 1970.

⁷ *Endless Fascination*, p. 201.

exist as song-settings with piano: 'So Far from my Country' [13], an Irish tune discovered by Pitfield in the Sneyd Collection,⁸ brought to his attention by Raymond Richards of Gawsorth Hall, the historian of old Cheshire churches and Chairman of the Ancient Monuments Society; and the humorous 'Carriion Crow' [16], about a poorly aimed pistol shot killing a farmer's sow instead of the intended victim, a crow. 'The Little Room' [15] was previously used as the theme of the *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra.

John Turner is one of the leading recorder-players of today. Born in Stockport, he was Senior Scholar in Law at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, before pursuing a legal career, acting for many distinguished musicians and musical organisations, alongside his many musical activities. He has played as recorder soloist with the Hallé and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras, the Manchester Camerata and many other leading ensembles. Many distinguished composers have written music for him, among them Arthur Butterworth, John Casken, Arnold Cooke, Gordon Crosse, Peter Dickinson, Howard Ferguson, John Gardner, Anthony Gilbert, John Joubert, Kenneth Leighton, Robin Orr and Ronald Stevenson. He now devotes his time to playing, writing, reviewing, publishing, composing and generally energising.

THE VERY EPITOME OF UNJUST NEGLECT

by Paul Mann

Even after making more than 30 recordings for Toccata Classics, spanning a wide range of previously unknown music both new and old, my first encounter with the works of Thomas Pitfield presented in this album, most of them unrecorded, was a considerable surprise. Here was a composer with a lifetime spanning almost the entire twentieth century and whose works had been virtually ignored by English musical history. Why had I never heard of him? Although one possible explanation seems to be a long life beset by an unhappy combination of low self-esteem and an

⁸ Pitfield gave a lecture on the Sneyd Collection ('five boxes containing music of the last century') to the University College of North Staffordshire on 23 November 1955, published in *Ancient Monuments Society's Transactions*, Volume 4, 1956, pp. 147–56. The text can be downloaded from <https://hbap.pdfsrv.co.uk/customers/HBAP/CQ56694/Vol%204%201956/8/%E2%80%98The%20Sneyd%20Collection%20of%20Music%E2%80%9999%20by%20Thomas%20B.%20Pitfield.pdf>.

excess of bad luck in his dealings with the (largely self-appointed) musical establishment, surely that couldn't be the only reason. It certainly cannot be that there is no room for such a brilliant and singular musical mind, and I hope that this recording will go at least some way towards restoring him to his rightful place.

One of the few important musical figures of the time who did value Pitfield was John Barbiroli, who commissioned the opening work on this recording, the *Sinfonietta* of 1946. Although one might interpret as typically self-effacing Pitfield's reluctance to compose the symphony he was asked for, opting instead for the lighter, freer form of the *Sinfonietta*, what it really indicates is how well the composer knew himself, even at the relatively early age of 43. The most cursory of glances at the score reveals how tightly in control he was of his material, and the attentive listener will easily trace the thematic journey of a work that John Turner, above, describes as 'falling between a suite and a set of variations'.

Pitfield outlined the structure of the first movement as an 'Introduction and Dance-Variants'. The basic melodic idea is formed in the deceptively ominous slow introduction [1], assembled note for note, at first on the solo horn, the pitches rising from phrase to phrase and spreading throughout the orchestra. The ensuing *Allegro* takes off like a firework, and a syncopated version of the theme is heard in the woodwinds over an intensely rhythmic accompaniment in the strings and horns, together with gently clashing cymbals. Incessantly and ingeniously varying this basic material, the music darts around with the carefree velocity of a flock of birds on a summer's day, constantly hovering between light and shade, from minor to major and back again. Although a return to the introduction casts a brief cloud, nothing seriously threatens the playful good nature of it all, and the folkloric inflections that are so much a part of Pitfield's musical language give the music an appearance of easy familiarity.

For the second movement, the melody is transformed into a rather roguish Polka [2]. Over a slightly acidic accompaniment, spiked with deliberate wrong notes and jagged *pizzicati*, the tune appears to take on the guise of a cheeky barrow-boy, with hat cocked at a rakish angle and more than a touch of impudent charm. The score requires a set of

keys to jingle alongside the tambourine in the percussion section, as if from inside the lad's pocket.

The opening of the profoundly touching Pavan [3] recalls the sombre opening of the first movement, and then presents yet another variant of the theme, heard this time in a solo violin soaring high above the orchestra. Pitfield creates the subtlest and richest of orchestral textures using only the most modest of means, with delicate string divisions, a prominent part for the harp and a striking fusion of flutes and trumpets. After barely two minutes, this powerfully evocative nocturne is swept away by the mercurial Jig [4]. Here the theme is treated as a $\frac{6}{8}$ fugato of ever-increasing contrapuntal ingenuity. For the first time, though, the lightness of touch becomes increasingly jagged, with snarling in the brass and cannonades in the timpani. Although there is a brief attempt to restore geniality, in the form of a further variant in $\frac{2}{4}$, the music is disturbed by some strange contortions in the double basses, and a slightly panicked fluttering in the flutes. The movement ends with edgy syncopations and without resolution.

The finale, *Allegro risoluto* [5], occupies almost half of the total duration of the work, and gives perhaps the strongest hint of what Pitfield might have written had he chosen to accept Barbirolli's original commission of a fully fledged symphony. The material is of course all based on the theme that has driven the entire piece. The sombre hues of the first-movement introduction are now transformed into a kind of *Carmen*-ish dance-rhythm, and although the tempo never lets up, the mood remains predominantly lyrical, and there are dark colouristic touches here and there which maintain the sense of ambiguity.

An accompaniment of repeated notes leads to a contrasting section, in $\frac{3}{4}$, with a new syncopated variation of the tune in the cellos. An *accelerando*, made up of agitated canonic iterations of the theme, leads to an unexpected return of the aggressive ending of the Jig, and much of the music that has previously been heard in such light-hearted and playful circumstances now becomes hostile and combative. The metrical complexity is considerable: without leaving its newly established $\frac{3}{8}$ metre, the arrangement of the bars is deliberately booby-trapped with awkward asymmetries and sudden surprising elisions.

There is a recapitulation, in which the music tries once again to recapture its former liveliness, but it never seems to recover from this onslaught. The main theme reaches something of the expected exultant peroration, but the sky has now become permanently overcast, and although the major key is touched upon, the work ends quietly, and with more than a hint of the closing bars of Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*.

It is one of the most appealing ironies of Thomas Pitfield's *Sinfonietta* that in his reluctance to indulge in the grand statement of a symphony, he nonetheless succeeded in writing a work of immense technical sophistication and expressive ambiguity, all the more effective for its restraint and truly symphonic economy of material.

The spirit of Vaughan Williams hovers benevolently also over the *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra, a brief but deeply moving work, based on 'an old Staffordshire tune', scored for the most modest of orchestras: single winds, a pair of horns, one each of trumpet and trombone, with timpani, glockenspiel and strings.

After the initial statement of the folk-tune [6], the contrasting *Allegro marcato* [7] is an arresting and brilliant variant, not without an occasional touch of belligerence. A ruminative cadenza [8] for the soloist is followed by a return of the folk-tune, *Andante contemplativo* [9], this time treated as a hushed and solemn canon. A surprisingly intense and even rather fierce *appassionato* climax is reached (somewhat oddly marked *Poco trionfale*, to be played just 'a bit triumphantly'), with the violin struggling against the momentary hostility of the orchestra. Calmness and serenity are restored as the music settles into a strange trance-like passage in $\frac{7}{8}$ time, with the violin aimlessly drifting over it all, until coming uneasily to rest with otherworldly harmonics over a sparse and cold accompaniment.

Pitfield's gifts as a composer of light music are evident in the *Lyric Waltz* for strings [10]. Composed in the late 1980s, surprisingly, it seems to be a product of a much earlier age, an affectionate glance backwards. Its harmonic sophistication and unfailing avoidance of the obvious, along with some uneven bar-groupings and the subtlety of the string-writing, betray the hand of a master, wearing his learning lightly and with refinement.

Bucolics, with the subtitle *Folk Song Studies*, similarly displays some of Pitfield's lighter touches, but the work is not without its darker hues or deeper insights. Many of the melodies will be familiar to British listeners, making it all the easier to follow the skilful and sharp-witted variations to which the composer subjects them.

The first movement [1] combines two Scottish tunes, 'Comin' through the Rye' and 'Faithful Johnny', both of which are good-naturedly forced into an unyielding $\frac{7}{8}$ time. They are also subjected to some fairly complicated harmonic contortions, and shadowy brass colourings, all of which add to the sense of benevolent teasing. The second movement [2] is a high-spirited rendition of 'Where are you going to, my Pretty Maid', treated to various quicksilver transformations, including a rather pompous augmentation delivered by the po-faced brass section. A short modulation in the woodwinds and horns leads directly into the Irish melody 'So Far from my Country' [3], scored for strings and horns only. The emotional involvement that Pitfield manages to elicit in his setting of this apparently simple little tune is such that one hardly notices at the end when the strings play a much-slowed version of the English country-dance tune 'Gathering Peascods' to tease the way into the next movement [4]. The brilliance of the writing is a genuine virtuoso challenge to the orchestra, and the effect is boisterously good-natured.

Another linking passage, transforming the joyful refrain of the dance into the minor key, leads into the heart of the set, 'The Little Room' [5], a 'Staffordshire Folk Carol', which turns out to be the same melody as that on which the *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra had been based. Its treatment here, however, is even more dramatic than in that earlier work. The climax, with its shrieks in the horns and pounding funereal bass drum and timpani, attains a pitch of genuine tragedy, and the hushed close a rapt intensity that far outweighs the nature of its source material.

The last movement, 'Carrion Crow' [6], is, by comparison, a gentle throwaway with which to end, but even so it cannot remain entirely unaffected by what has preceded it. Although the tune is essentially lightweight, it is coloured with restraint, and there is a final moment of reflection in the brass ensemble, before the bassoon cheekily interjects and the final two chords are hammered home.

In his note above, John Turner, the driving force behind this recording project, relates Pitfield's shameful treatment at the hands of the conductor George Hurst, at the premiere of the *Concerto Lirico* in 1958. For a composer of such fragile self-esteem, the experience must have been extremely demoralising, and it is only by the merest accident of history that this magnificent work did not die the death that its disheartened composer temporarily wished upon it. Of all the works presented here, this is the one that deserves wholehearted adoption into the mainstream repertoire. Everything about it is perfectly conceived. Spanning a single movement of twenty minutes or so in duration, it is direct and subtle, concise and sophisticated, structurally unimpeachable and emotionally devastating.

It opens [17] as if on the outskirts of a military zone, the atmosphere threatening, with fragments of melody heard amidst menacing basses and warlike tattoos in the timpani and percussion. A lyrical theme emerges which fights to attain supremacy, and the noise is silenced. It is this theme that will form a pathway through much of the concerto. The soloist enters with her own version of the military music, as if trying to tame it, but soon takes over the lyrical theme, and the orchestra finally unites with her, attended by gentle chimes of the glockenspiel. The music suddenly starts to dance, in a graceful and increasingly joyful *gigue*, but towards the end of the section the composer marks *Poco alla marcia*, and the military music returns, this time with a vengeance. The soloist is now placed under siege by the antagonistic orchestra, with a bombardment of timpani and snare drum. The danger passes as suddenly as it began; there is a long poetic prayer-like passage, based on the lyrical theme, and this time the soloist is allowed to rhapsodise unimpeded. A distant (perhaps military) trumpet sounds an augmentation of the tune within the texture, as if in consolation.

The heart of the work is now reached with the 'Requiem' [18] in memory of Albert Hardie. In a highly original and effective touch, the lamenting voice is given to an alto saxophone, which is otherwise silent for the rest of the work, and which sings 'with dignity' over a funereal tread in the strings, timpani and bass drum. The soloist takes over the melody, like a feminine voice at the graveside, and the section ends with the two voices woven together.

A Word on the Editions

Notwithstanding his many other fine qualities, it would be fair to say that Thomas Pitfield was not the most careful or thorough editor of his own music. His manuscripts are full of mistakes and ambiguities, some of them of such a serious nature that the music could not be performed effectively or faithfully without detailed editorial intervention. In the case of all of the works in this album, it was necessary to do a good deal of work with the sources, trying to determine what Pitfield might have meant by an obviously wrong harmony, or incomplete dynamic and articulation information. (He had a tendency, for example, to mark a dynamic in only one of the relevant parts, and leave everyone else to guess.) It is a strange contradiction for such a meticulous artist and calligrapher, but he appears to have been simply uninterested in the detail. In my editorial endeavours, therefore, I'm grateful to the original editors of the published scores, Roger Turner, David Good and Peter Lawson, for their patient work and good-natured fielding of many detailed e-mails.

One result of this work is that the newly revised editions of Pitfield's orchestral music are now far more reliable than before, and I hope they will provide a sound basis for future performers.

PM

The orchestra fades out and leaves the soloist alone. The brief solo cadenza [19] is a fully integrated part of the work, not merely an opportunity, as Glenn Gould once put it, 'to hang the soloist decorously from the chandelier'.¹ As if traumatised, the soloist refers to the rhythms of the 'war' music and provokes the timpani into brutally invading the cadenza.

The final movement is entitled 'Release' [20], and begins, at first calmly and gently, to work towards a resolution. It appears to come from a place that the music has not so far visited, and there is an easy-going guilelessness about the idyll that cannot last. The orchestra once again flexes its muscles in a brief flaring-up, before withdrawing into an uneasy calm. The closing section begins [21] with a recapitulation of the opening, but now the soloist has to work much harder to tame the restless orchestra. There is

¹ 'Some Beethoven and Bach Concertos', *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Tim Page, Knopf, New York/Faber, London, 1984, p. 69.

also a recapitulation of the *gigue* from the opening section, with the same *alla marcia* infiltration, which this time will not be placated, and a crushing apotheosis is relentlessly reached, with a solemn and tragic return to the ‘Requiem’ music. The funereal tread ceases only in the very last bar, marked *estinto*, with the soloist left exposed and alone at the top of her register as the strings fade away.

The *Epitaph* [22] was composed in 1981, and takes its place among a long tradition of major miniatures for string orchestra in the English repertoire by such composers as Elgar and Vaughan Williams, and is certainly worthy of being placed in that company. Lasting barely over six minutes, and clearly betraying its origins as a vocal work, it carries an enormous weight of expression, and touches upon the profoundest depths of sorrow.

A NOTE FROM THE VIOLINIST

by Emma McGrath

It has been an extraordinary pleasure to discover the *Concerto Lirico* and *Fantasia* for violin and orchestra by Thomas Pitfield. My first experience of his music was as the soprano soloist in his choral work *The Hills*,¹ and his sound world has resonated with me ever since. He writes sensitively for the violin, with intelligent orchestration and a wonderful sense of chamber music in the orchestral textures. Altogether, what can be heard in these two works is a complete and nuanced musical language, in which the violin is not the central protagonist but rather an important part of a cohesive whole. Elements of song and dance are prevalent, shot through with a beguiling mix of heartfelt emotion, nostalgia, fetching harmonic detours and characterful surprises. They are both worthy additions to the repertoire.

¹ Subtitled ‘Choral Variations on the 121st Psalm’, *The Hills* (1960) is scored for mixed voices with optional boys’ voices and organ (or full orchestra with optional organ). It was written in celebrate the 700th anniversary of the granting of a borough charter to Macclesfield (a town of some 55,000 south of Manchester) and premiered there on 12 October 1961 (*Endless Fascination*, pp. 206–7 and 500).

Heralded as a ‘first-magnitude star’ by *The Seattle Times*, **Emma McGrath** made her London debut aged ten in the Purcell Room and at fourteen she performed Bruch’s First Violin Concerto in the Queen Elizabeth Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, broadcast live on Classic FM. She has since performed as a soloist with numerous orchestras such as the Seattle Symphony, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony, the West Australia Symphony Orchestra and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and has toured Australia, Belgium, Brunei, the Czech Republic, France, Israel, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Russia, the UK and the USA as a soloist.



She is currently the concert-master of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. She often features as a soloist with the Orchestra, and enjoys directing programmes from the violin. Highlights include performing two sold-out performances of Max Richter’s *Four Seasons (Recomposed)*, with Max Richter, as part of Hobart’s ‘Dark Mofu’ festival, and giving the world-premiere performance of Joe Chindamo’s Violin Concerto, written especially for her and the TSO.

She was previously the Associate Concertmaster of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and the Assistant Concertmaster of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. She has also been a Guest Concertmaster with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Hallé, the West Australia Symphony Orchestra, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the Opera Australia Orchestra, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, the Castile and Leon Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra Wellington.

As a member of the Panormo Quartet she won the Royal College of Music Chamber Music prize and played at the Wigmore Hall. As a member of the Starling Quartet she played at the Steinway Hall in New York City and toured China. As a member of the Kettering Piano Quartet and the Tasmanian String Quartet she has played all over Tasmania. She has been a featured chamber musician in the Bangalow Festival, Strings in the Mountains Festival, Bowral Autumn Music Festival, Musica Viva, Tasmanian Chamber Music Festival, and Prussia Cove. She is a

regular member of the award-winning Omega Ensemble. She is a Hyperion recording artist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and has also recorded a disc, for Divine Art, of works by Robin Walker: *Turning Towards You* (taking its name from a concerto for violin, recorder and strings, written with her and John Turner in mind), which received a five-star review in *The Times*.

As a teenager, she played in the folk-band Tarras, and wrote and recorded the album *Rising*, which was released by Topic, Magnetic and Rounder Records, reached No. 1 in the UK Folk Charts and was voted Mojo's Folk Album of the Month. She toured Germany and the USA with Tarras and performed at all the major UK music festivals.

Emma McGrath has been a faculty member of Seattle University and currently teaches at the University of Tasmania. She has given master-classes all over the world and is passionate about guiding the next generation of young musicians and enthusiastic amateurs. She enjoys being a Mentor at the National Music Festival in Maryland, and a tutor at the Residential Summer String Camp in northern Tasmania.

She has also enjoyed career 'side trips' as a Baroque violinist, a professionally trained soprano and a published composer. As a conductor, she maintains an ongoing relationship with the Hobart Chamber Orchestra, presenting many works by female and/or Australian composers.

Away from music, she loves to explore mountains and other wild places.

Paul Mann is a regular guest-conductor with many orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and the Far East. His work as chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark achieved considerable critical success, particularly in the symphonies of Beethoven, Elgar, Mahler, Schumann and Shostakovich; with it he made numerous recordings of a wide range of repertoire, for such labels as Bridge, Dacapo and EMI.

He first came to international attention as the winner of the first prize in the 1998 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, as a result of which he was also appointed assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He made his LSO debut shortly



afterwards, and subsequently collaborated regularly with the Orchestra, both in the concert-hall and in the recording studio. Special projects with the LSO included the Duke Ellington Centenary Concert at the Barbican Hall with Wynton Marsalis, and a famous collaboration with the legendary rock group Deep Purple in two widely acclaimed performances of Jon Lord's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* at the Royal Albert Hall, the live DVD and CD of which remain international bestsellers. Among his subsequent recordings was the first-ever studio account of Lord's Concerto, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with Jon Lord himself and a star-studded cast of soloists, and the live recording of *Celebrating Jon Lord*, a special concert which took place at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 with an all-star cast paying tribute to the late composer.

This is his 32nd recording for Toccata Classics. The first featured the orchestral music of Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the second, third and fifth (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299) presented the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (1882–1968). His three-volume survey of the complete orchestral music of Henry Cotter Nixon appeared on TOCC 0372, 0373 and 0374, an album of orchestral works by Josef Schelb was released on TOCC 0426; and the Symphony and two other orchestral works by Mischa Spoliansky (best known as a cabaret composer in Weimar Germany) came out on TOCC 0626. He has recorded three of Richard Flury's four operas: *Eine florentinische Tragödie*, with the concert *scena Sapphos Tod*, appeared on TOCC 0427, *Die helle Nacht* on TOCC 0580 and *Der schlimm-heilige Vitalis* on TOCC 0632; the ballet *Der magische Spiegel* and *Kleine Ballettmusik* were featured on TOCC 0552, Flury's Third Violin Concerto and a number of orchestral works, some in Mann's own orchestrations, were released on TOCC 0601. He then embarked on a series of recordings, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, of Flury's five numbered symphonies and other works, beginning with Nos. 1 and 4 and the First and Fourth Symphonies followed on TOCC 0643 and No. 2, coupled with the *Poème nocturne* (TOCC 0727).

Paul Mann is curating, as well as conducting, a series of new works for string orchestra, *Music for My Love*, all written in memory of Yodit Tekle, the partner of Martin Anderson, founder of Toccata Classics. The first volume (TOCC 0333) featured music by Brahms (arranged by Ragnar Söderlind), Maddalena Casulana (arr. Colin Matthews), Brett Dean, Steve Elcock, Andrew Ford, Robin Holloway, Mihkel Kerem, Jon Lord (arr. Paul Mann), John Pickard, Poul Ruders and Ragnar Söderlind himself. The second volume presented works by Nicolas Bacri, Ronald Corp, Wim Hautekiet, Sean Hickey, John Kinsella, David Matthews, Phillip Ramey, Gregory Rose, Gerard Schurmann, José Serebrier, Robin Walker and Richard Whilds

(TOCC 0370), and the third volume (TOCC 0504) brought music by Michael Csányi-Wills, David Braid, Martin Georgiev, Adam Gorb, Raymond Head, Ian Hobson, David Hackbridge Johnson, Robert Matthew-Walker, Lloyd Moore, Rodney Newton and Dana Paul Perna.

He has also established himself as a champion of contemporary British symphonists, recording the Ninth (TOCC 0393), Tenth and Thirteenth (TOCC 0452) and Fifteenth (TOCC 0456) Symphonies of David Hackbridge Johnson and the Third by Steve Elcock (TOCC 0400), each accompanied by smaller works, as well as the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4 and tone-poem *Distant Nebulae* by Rodney Newton (TOCC 0459). His more recent Toccata Classics releases of living British composers feature orchestral music by Rob Keeley, including his Second Symphony (TOCC 0462), by Arnold Griller – his Violin and Trumpet Concertos and *Dances under an Autumn Sky* (TOCC 0590) – and three earlier volumes of music by Derek B. Scott, the first (TOCC 0589) presenting Scott's *Airs and Dances* (a bagpipe concerto) and other works, the second (TOCC 0646) the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 and the tone-poem *The Silver Sword* and the third (TOCC 0700) eight further orchestral works. Latterly, an album (TOCC 0450) of Robin Holloway's orchestrations – of the Brahms Piano Quintet, Op. 34, as a Symphony in F minor, the Op. 23 *Variations on a Theme of Schumann* and Schumann's *Canonical Studies*, Op. 56 – has been particularly well received.

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 Hohapfel, who then 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 the Second World War the LSO recommenced its activities in 1947, under the wings of the Liepāja Music School, and was conducted for the next 40 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 Trubs (who worked with the LSO from 1986 to 1996) and Jekabs Ozolins (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 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, Guntis Kuzma, who is also an outstanding clarinetist, took up his post with the 2022–23 season.

This is the 23rd of a series of recordings for Toccata 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 Maris Kupčs. John Gibbons then conducted the LSO in the first four of a series of William Wordsworth recordings, in programmes including the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies (TOCC 0480), Violin and Piano Concertos (TOCC 0526), the Cello Concerto and Fifth Symphony (TOCC 0600), and the Seventh Symphony and a number of shorter works (TOCC 0618). Maris Kupčs returned to the Orchestra to conduct an album featuring Fridrich Bruk's Symphonies Nos. 19 and 21 (TOCC 0453). Paul Mann's further work with the LSO has produced nine more albums: tone-poems and the Symphony No. 15 – itself inspired by the Liepāja coast – by the English composer David Hackbridge Johnson (TOCC 0456), the Violin and Trumpet Concertos, *Dances under the Northern Sky* and the *Concerto Grosso* by Arnold Griller (TOCC 0590), four programmes of music by Derek B. Scott (TOCC 0589, 0646, 0700 and 0750), another of works by the late-Romantic Swiss composer Richard Flury (TOCC 0601) and an album with the Symphony and other orchestral works of Mischa Spoliansky (TOCC 0626).

First Violins

Jānis Baltābols
Baiba Lasmane
Madara Drulle
Zane Baltābola
Lija Aleksandra Hanzovska
Līva Tomiņa
Katrīna Fabriciusa
Agnese Eisaka
Kristina Gilla
Olga Bučinska
Everita Ulberte
Linda Lapa
Dita Celitāne

Second Violins

Anna Zerdecka
Karolina Aurelia Walarowska
Agrita Hrustalova
Pārsla Šterna
Dace Bukša
Ingus Grīnbergs
Undine Cerna
Arta Lipora
Terēze Dārta Balode

Violas

Raimonds Golubkovs
Annija Elizabete Meija

Ilva Bāliņa
Sofja Trofimova
Baiba Bergmane-Butāne
Elza Anete Bauerniece
Ance Lipste

Cellos

Klāvs Jankevics
Leons Veldre
Anete Dovmane
Dina Puķīte
Baiba Jūrmale
Urzula Jurjāne
Krišjānis Gaiķis

Double Basses

Guntis Kolerts
Raitis Eleris
Jānis Šteinbergs
Kaspars Kronpušs
Kristaps Freidenfelds

Flutes

Daiga Koroļonoka
Agnija Ābrama
Reinis Lapa

Oboes

Āris Burkins
Neža Podbršček

Clarinets

Kārlis Catlaks
Jānis Igaunis

Saxophone
Aigars Raumanis

Bassoons
Artis Zēns
Pauls Gendrikovs

Horns

Ingus Novicāns
Edgars Ruģelis
Mārcis Auziņš
Aivars Vadonis
Ilmārs Bērziņš

Trumpets

Jurijs Tereščuks
Viktors Hrustaļovs

Trombones

Robins Jānis Lellis
Eižens Baļķens
Ignas Filonovas
Dāvis Leišavnieks

Percussion

Māris Zilmanis
Ivars Dejus

Harp

Jeļizaveta Lāce



Recorded on 14–17 January 2025 in the Great Amber Concert Hall, Liepāja, Latvia
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Assistant: Jānis Straume

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THOMAS PITFIELD Orchestral Music

Sinfonietta (1946)	20:44
[1] I Introduction and Dance-Variants: <i>Lento e flessibile – Allegro</i>	4:54
[2] II Polka: <i>Moderato articolato</i>	2:54
[3] III Pavan: <i>Poco lento, con molta dignità –</i>	2:07
[4] IV Jig: <i>Allegro giocoso</i>	2:27
[5] V Finale: <i>Allegro risoluto</i>	8:22
Fantasia on an Old Staffordshire Tune for violin and orchestra (1950)	12:29
[6] I <i>Andante contemplativo –</i>	2:14
[7] II <i>Allegro marcato –</i>	3:21
[8] III Cadenza –	1:53
[9] IV <i>Andante contemplativo – Più calmato e sereno</i>	5:01
[10] Lyric Waltz for string orchestra (1988)	3:02
<i>Moderato, molto grazioso e legato</i>	
Bucolics: Folk Song Studies (undated)	13:10
[11] I Comin' through the Rye; Faithful Johnny: <i>Allegretto grazioso</i>	2:48
[12] II Where are you going to, my Pretty Maid?: <i>Allegro marcato –</i>	1:33
[13] III So Far from my Country: <i>Larghetto –</i>	2:25
[14] IV Gathering Peascods: <i>Allegro gaiamente e molto ritmico –</i>	1:53
[15] V The Little Room: <i>Poco solenne</i>	3:00
[16] VI Carrion Crow: <i>Allegretto poco giocoso</i>	1:31
Concerto Lirico for violin and orchestra (1958)*	19:00
[17] I <i>Allegro appressivo – Molto allegro grazioso – Allegro giocoso –</i>	6:34
[18] II Requiem – in Memoriam Albert Hardie (August 2, 1958): <i>Larghetto con dignità –</i>	2:58
[19] III Cadenza –	1:27
[20] IV Release: <i>Allegro con brio – Poco meno mosso –</i>	3:52
[21] V <i>Tempo primo – Giocoso – Larghetto tragico</i>	4:08
[22] Epitaph for string orchestra (1981)	6:34
<i>Lento contemplativo e triste – Poco meno lento – Lento</i>	

TT 75:03

Emma McGrath, violin [6]–[9] [17]–[21]

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra

Jānis Baltābols, leader

Aigars Raumanis, alto saxophone [18]

Paul Mann, conductor

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