

ALWYN

Violin Concerto

Miss Julie Suite • Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion

Lorraine McAslan, Violin

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

David Lloyd-Jones



William
ALWYN
(1905-1985)

Violin Concerto	36:57
① Allegro ma non troppo	18:27
② Allegretto e semplice	9:30
③ Allegro moderato alla marcia – Allegro e pesante – Allegro molto	9:00
 Miss Julie Suite (arranged by Philip Lane)	17:28
④ Allegro – Valse tempo – Moderato (Tempo di Polka)	3:48
⑤ Andante sostenuto (poco adagio) – Più mosso (poco allegretto) – Moderato – Tempo di valse – Andante sostenuto	5:46
⑥ Lento – Allegro non troppo – Andante largamente – Lento, ma non troppo – Poco allegro – Andante sostenuto – Tempo di valse lento – Adagio – Allegro ma non troppo – Lento – Allegro – Adagio – Molto moderato (tempo di marcia funebre)	7:55
 Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion	3:54
⑦ Moderato – Più mosso (ma non troppo) – Moderato (alla marcia)	

William Alwyn (1905-1985)

Violin Concerto • Miss Julie Suite • Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion

William Alwyn was born in Northampton on the 7th November 1905, and died in Southwold, Suffolk on 11th September 1985 just two months short of what would have been his eightieth birthday. His musical studies were carried out at The Royal Academy of Music in London, which he entered at the young age of fifteen in 1920 studying flute, piano, and composition. In 1926 aged just 21 he was appointed Professor of Composition at the RAM, a position that he was to retain for almost thirty years. During his long and prolific career he produced some 300 works that include music in the majority of genres; opera, ballet, orchestral, chamber, instrumental and song. He also composed the music for approximately 200 films, seventy of which are feature films with the remainder being documentaries. Alwyn began his career in the documentary movement in 1936 and along with fellow British composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) became something of a pioneer in this medium. In 1941 he wrote his first feature length score for *Penn of Pennsylvania*. Other notable film scores include *Desert Victory*, *The Way Ahead*, *The True Glory*, *Odd Man Out*, *The History of Mr. Polly*, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Fallen Idol*, *The Winslow Boy*, *The Rocking Horse Winner*, *The Crimson Pirate*, *The Million Pound Note*, *The Card*, *A Night to Remember*, and *Carve Her Name With Pride*. This dedication to the art of writing film music was recognised in 1951 when Alwyn was made a Fellow of The British Film Academy, the only composer until very recently to receive this honour. In addition to his work in the cinema, Alwyn also provided much incidental music for both radio and television. He was also active in many administrative posts that include serving as Chairman for the Composers' Guild of Great Britain (which he was instrumental in forming) for three terms, in 1949, 1950 and 1954, a Director of the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, a Vice-President of the Society for the Promotion of New Music (S.P.N.M.), and Director of the Performing Rights Society. Also, for many years

he was one of the panel reading new scores for the BBC. During the 1950s his music was championed by the conductor Sir John Barbirolli (1899-1970), who gave many first performances of Alwyn's music, amongst which are three of the *Symphonies* – *No. 1* (dedicated to Barbirolli), *No. 2* and *No. 4*.

Alwyn spent the last 25 years of his life in Blythburgh, Suffolk, where, in those tranquil surroundings, he found the necessary inspiration to compose two operas – *Juan or the Libertine* in four acts to his own libretto, and *Miss Julie* in two acts after the play by August Strindberg. In addition to chamber and vocal music, Alwyn composed his last major orchestral works there; the *Concerto Grosso No. 3*, commissioned as a tribute to Sir Henry Wood to mark the twentieth anniversary of his death in 1964 and first performed at the Proms that year by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer; the *Sinfonietta* for String Orchestra in 1970 and the *Symphony No. 5 'Hydriotaphia'* during 1972-73. In 1978 Alwyn was awarded a CBE in recognition of his services to music. Such was his desire always to be creative that when not writing music he spent his time painting and writing, which includes much poetry and perhaps most fascinating of all, a diary he kept between September 1955 and August 1956 whilst completing his *Third Symphony* entitled *Ariel to Miranda*, that documents his daily routine, composing for the cinema and concert hall; there is also a short autobiography, *Winged Chariot*.

If the *Five Symphonies* that Alwyn produced between 1948 and 1973 form the major backbone to his orchestral works one should add that his not inconsiderable contribution to the concerto form deserves equal attention. The *Violin Concerto* composed between November 1937 and May 1939 is the second and the longest of his six concertos with solo instrument. The others are for Piano (No. 1 – 1930-31, No. 2 – 1960), Oboe (1943-44), Harp (1953-54), and Flute

(1980). There are also three *Concerti Grossi* composed respectively in 1943, 1948 and 1964.

The *Violin Concerto*, cast in three movements, is essentially romantic and rhapsodic in nature, the accent being on free flowing melodic ideas along with some bravura passage work. The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, begins with the orchestra announcing three majestic chords played *forte* followed by decorative figures in the woodwind and harp. It is in these figures that the main germ idea for the movement is based, and with which the violin soloist enters forcefully 29 bars later, accompanied by sustained string chords in the cellos and basses. This idea goes through a number of permutations before arriving at a gentle quiet rising and falling melody first announced in the violas that ultimately is played by the soloist high above the stage. The strings briefly take this melody up before the soloist enters with a rising figure culminating in a short accompanied cadenza-like passage (although a fully fledged cadenza does not appear at all in the *Concerto*) that leads to the development section. The movement comes to a tranquil close with a variant of the rising and falling melody followed by the violin soaring evermore into the stratosphere, accompanied by hushed *pianissimo* string chords. The second movement, *Allegretto e molto semplice*, opens with a quiet flowing melody played *pianissimo* by the muted strings of the orchestra. The soloist then steals in with a quiet extended variant of the theme. The atmosphere of quiet serenity continues until the tempo broadens leading to a *fortissimo* passage in the orchestra followed by a drop in dynamics in which the soloist has a quasi cadenza passage accompanied by a softly sustained chord in the strings. The mood of quiet reverie continues throughout the remainder of the movement save for one brief impassioned climax. In the last few moments of the movement a haunting Irish tinged theme is introduced *pianissimo* by a solo viola over sustained notes in the cellos and basses and solo violin. The movement dies away with fragments of a melody from the soloist ending with two barely perceptible pizzicato notes in the cellos and basses. The Finale, marked *Allegro moderato*

alla marcia, begins with a two bar introduction from the orchestra after which the soloist enters with a warm broad theme which is then taken up by the strings. After much bravura passage work and development of this theme and other motifs, the main melody appears again in the solo violin. This eventually leads to a *fortissimo* climax in the orchestra after which we plunge directly into the vivacious Coda. Much bravura passage work from the soloist culminates in a drop in dynamics; a pizzicato figure in the cellos and basses, followed by a *pianissimo* timpani roll rising to a crescendo leading to a *fortissimo* fanfare in the brass and final flourish from the soloist, brings the work to a sudden conclusion. Sadly, Alwyn was never able to hear the work in his lifetime as originally written. The conductor Henry Wood was keen to perform it during the 1943 Proms season, but this was rejected by the BBC. Alwyn had to make do with a violin and piano reduction performance at a private concert on 3rd March 1940 when the composer accompanied the Canadian-born violinist Frederick Grinke (1911-1987). The work then fell into oblivion and remained forgotten for the next fifty years until it was resurrected for a commercial recording in 1993. The concerto still awaits a professional public concert performance.

The orchestral suite drawn from Alwyn's last completed opera *Miss Julie*, composed between 1973 and 1976, resulted from a commission by Mary Alwyn (the composer's second wife) to the composer and arranger Philip Lane in 2000 to adapt suitable sections from the opera into an orchestral suite. Based on the play by the Swedish author and playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912) the story tells of the spoilt rich daughter of a Count who falls under the spell of the manservant Jean. The latter plays with Miss Julie's affections and seduces her, then rejects her and finally tempts her into suicide as the only way of escape from her shame. Alwyn provides a suitably powerful dramatic score that underlines the full emotion of the play. The first movement of the suite, *Allegro – Valse tempo*, is taken from Act I, Scene 1 of the opera. The entire action takes place in the kitchen of the Count's country house

in Sweden in 1895. It is Midsummer Night and a dance for the servants and workers on the estate is in progress at the nearby barn. A sinister orchestral flourish announces the opening scene of Act I, then, as the curtain rises, the strains of a waltz can be heard drifting through the open doorway. Kristen the cook is awaiting the return of Jean who, when he arrives, tells Kristen of how Miss Julie was leading the dance in the arms of the gamekeeper (Ulrik), and then on seeing Jean dropped her partner and asked Jean to dance. The latter re-enacts the scene with Kristen, whirling her around the kitchen. The movement concludes with a short polka that occurs towards the end of Act I, Scene 1, in which Miss Julie is tempting Jean to dance with her rather than wait for Kristen with whom he had originally promised to dance. The second movement, *Andante sostenuto – poco adagio*, comprises music from Act I, Scene 2. It is past midnight and the kitchen is in darkness. The music begins moodily with snatches of the waltz tune gradually resolving into an orchestral version of Miss Julie's aria at the end of the previous scene, when she succeeds in enticing Jean out into the park. The music is descriptive of their growing involvement. The third movement, *Lento*, is derived from the second and final act of the opera. The movement opens with the passionate music from the beginning of the second act, the lovers having spent the night in each other's arms. They plan to run away together with the Count's money, which Jean has asked Miss Julie to steal. Having stolen the money, Miss Julie and Jean are ultimately unable to go through with their initial plan. Jean realises that his status is as a servant and that he will always be beholden to his employer the Count. Miss Julie pleads with Jean

for guidance in what to do to save her honour. Jean draws her attention to the razor on the kitchen table and tells her that this is the only way out for her. The bell in the kitchen rings recalling Jean to his daily tasks. As the music rises to a passionate climax Miss Julie asks Jean for one final kiss, but he brutally brushes her aside. A powerful *Marcia funebre* accompanies Miss Julie's final moments – as if in a trance she picks up the razor and walks out through the garden door and into the park and disappears from sight leaving an empty stage.

The *Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion* for brass and percussion was completed in London during April 1958. The work was commissioned by the Nottingham Youth Orchestra and first performed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Stanley Adams at Birmingham Town Hall on 13th November 1964. Dedicated to the famous British percussionist James Blades (1901-1999) from whom Alwyn sought advice when writing the work, it was originally planned that the latter and his two brothers Tommy and Chris would be the three percussionists required for the performance, but unfortunately James Blades became ill and the performance was cancelled. As the latter was to remark some years later "... this fine work proved no 'joyful occasion' for me!" Given the dedication to James Blades, the work includes prominent parts for the percussion in particular the vibraphone, marimba and xylophone, and stands as a fitting tribute to this gifted musician.

Andrew Knowles

(with reference to William Alwyn's notes for *Miss Julie*)

Lorraine McAslan



Photo: Melanie Strover

Lorraine McAslan is one of Britain's foremost violinists. Born in Glasgow and initially trained in London as a pupil of David Martin at the Royal Academy, she moved to New York at the age of seventeen, on the recommendation of Isaac Stern, to study with Dorothy DeLay at The Juilliard School. Since her return to Britain she has shared the concert platform with Britain's major orchestras and conductors and appeared at Festivals throughout the United Kingdom. She made her European début with the Bern Symphony Orchestra under Eliahu Inbal on live radio and has broadcast and appeared on television frequently in Britain. Her 21 recordings to date cover violin and piano repertoire from Beethoven to the present day. She is a strong advocate of British composers; her first recording was of the Elgar and Walton sonatas for ASV followed by a highly acclaimed Britten *Violin Concerto* with the English Chamber Orchestra, re-released by Naxos in 2007 (8.557198). Recent recordings for Dutton Epoch, hosting an array of composers from the 1930s, include concertos by York Bowen, Coleridge-Taylor, Arnell, Haydn Wood, and

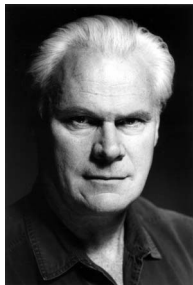
Pitfield, with the BBC Concert, Royal Scottish, and London Philharmonic Orchestras. She teaches at the Royal Academy of Music, of which she was elected an Honorary Associate in 2007.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is Britain's oldest surviving professional symphony orchestra, dating from 1840. Vasily Petrenko was appointed Principal Conductor of the orchestra in September 2006 and in September 2009 became Chief Conductor until 2015. The orchestra gives over sixty concerts each season in Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and in recent seasons world première performances have included major works by Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Michael Nyman and Jennifer Higdon, alongside works by Liverpool-born composers John McCabe, Emily Howard, Mark Simpson and Kenneth Hesketh. The orchestra also tours widely throughout the United Kingdom and has given concerts in the United States, the Far East and throughout Europe. In 2009 the orchestra won the Ensemble of the Year award in the 20th Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, the most prestigious accolade for live classical music-making in the United Kingdom. Recent additions to the orchestra's extensive discography include Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* [Naxos 8.570568] (2009 Classic FM/Gramophone Orchestral Recording of the Year), Sir John Tavener's *Requiem*, Volumes 1–4 of the Shostakovich symphony cycle and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* and *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3*.

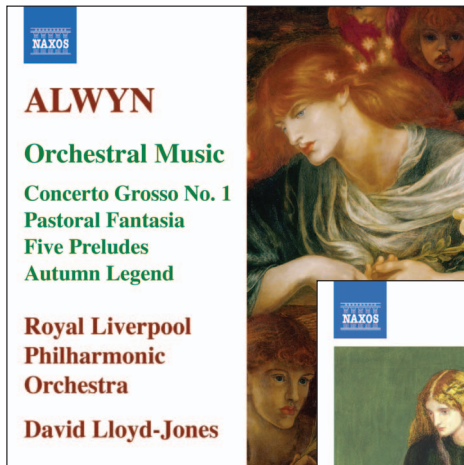
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David Lloyd-Jones

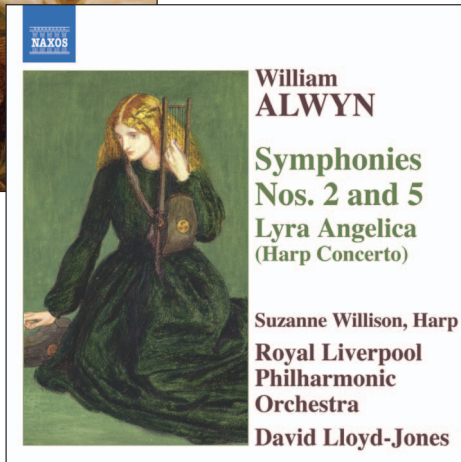


David Lloyd-Jones began his career in 1959 on the music staff of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, followed by conducting engagements for orchestral and choral concerts, opera, broadcasts and television studio opera productions. He has appeared at the Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and the Wexford, Cheltenham, Edinburgh and Leeds Festivals, and with the major British orchestras. In 1972 he was appointed Assistant Music Director at English National Opera, and there conducted an extensive repertory. In 1978 he founded a new opera company, Opera North, with its orchestra, the English Northern Philharmonia, of which he became Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. During twelve seasons with the company he conducted fifty different new productions, with numerous orchestral concerts, and festival appearances in France and Germany. He has made many successful recordings, and has an extensive career in the concert-hall and opera-house that takes him to leading music centres throughout the world. His highly acclaimed cycle of Bax's symphonies and tone poems for Naxos (*Gramophone Award*) was completed in the autumn of 2003. In 2007 he was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society.

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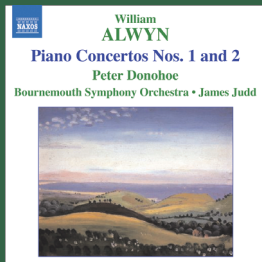


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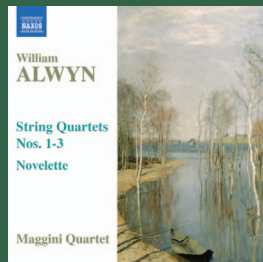


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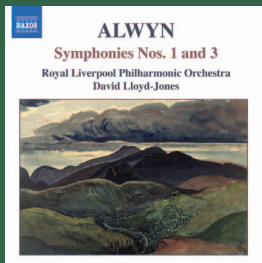
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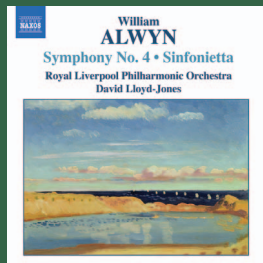
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Naxos's many highly-praised recordings of William Alwyn's music have done much to revive excitement among today's listeners for this British composer who is best known for his 200 or so film scores. His bravura *Violin Concerto*, the second and most substantial of his six concertos, is romantic and rhapsodic in nature. The *Miss Julie Suite* takes episodes from his last completed opera based on Strindberg's tragic play, while the *Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion* pays tribute to the late percussionist James Blades. Juilliard School-trained violinist Lorraine McAslan has been praised by *The Strad* as 'one of the most distinguished British violinists of her generation'.



William
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(1905-1985)

Violin Concerto

Violin Concerto* **36:57**

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|---|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegro ma non troppo | 18:27 |
| 2 | II. Allegretto e semplice | 9:30 |
| 3 | III. Allegro moderato alla marcia | 9:00 |

4-6 **Miss Julie Suite** **17:28**
(arranged by Philip Lane)

7 **Fanfare for a Joyful Occasion** **3:54**

Lorraine McAslan, Violin*

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A full track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet

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