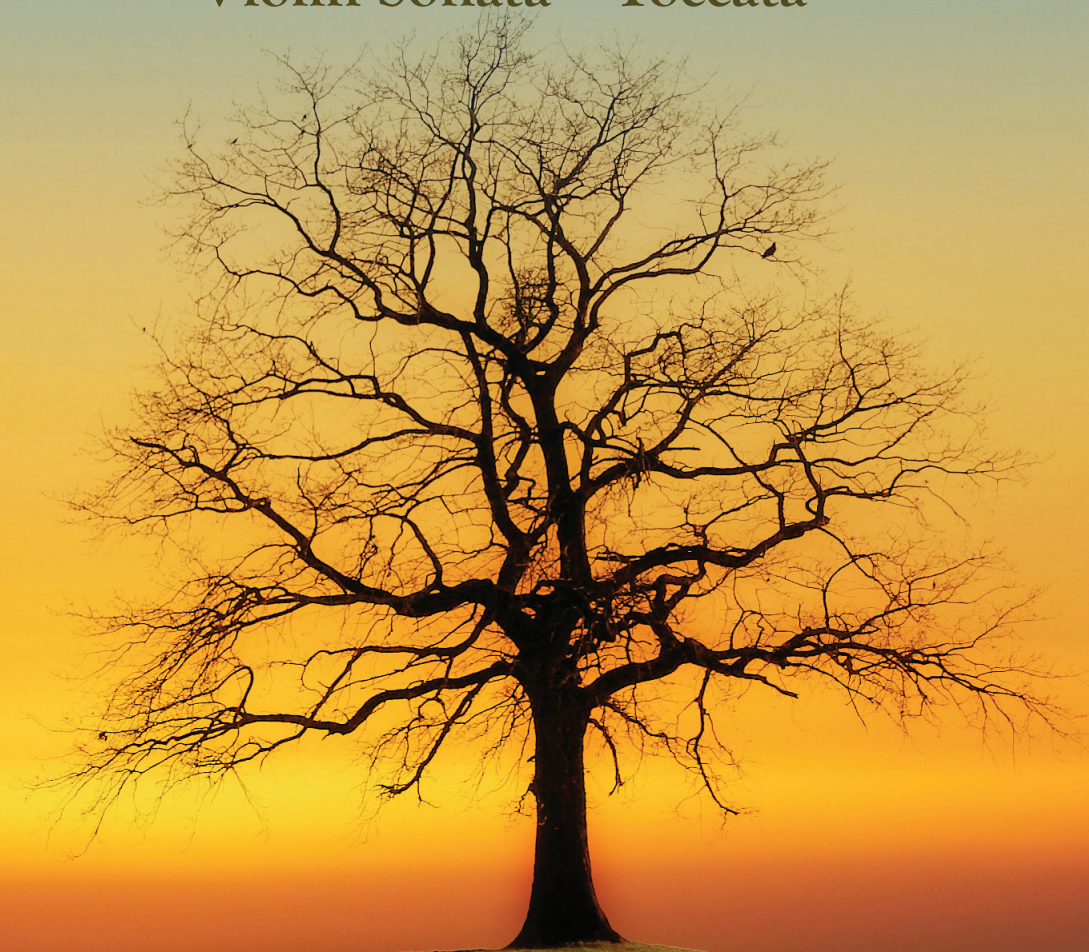




WALTON

Piano Quartet

Violin Sonata • Toccata



Matthew Jones, Violin • Sarah-Jane Bradley, Viola

Tim Lowe, Cello • Annabel Thwaite, Piano

William
WALTON
(1902–1983)

Chamber Works with Violin and Piano

Piano Quartet (1918–19, rev. 1974–75)		28:53
①	I. Allegramente	6:31
②	II. Allegro scherzando	4:53
③	III. Andante tranquillo	8:43
④	IV. Allegro molto	8:36
⑤ Toccata for Violin and Piano (1922–23)		14:31
2 Pieces for Violin and Piano (ed. Hugh Macdonald) (c. 1944–50)		5:58
⑥	No. 1. Canzonetta: Moderato	3:40
⑦	No. 2. Scherzetto: Molto vivace	2:14
Violin Sonata (1947–49)		25:22
⑧	I. Allegro tranquillo	12:34
	II. Variazioni	
⑨	Tema: Andante	1:07
⑩	Variation 1: A tempo poco più mosso	1:26
⑪	Variation 2: A tempo quasi improvvisando	2:28
⑫	Variation 3: Alla marcia molto vivace	1:01
⑬	Variation 4: Allegro molto	0:37
⑭	Variation 5: Allegretto con moto	2:09
⑮	Variation 6: Scherzando	0:32
⑯	Variation 7: Andante tranquillo	2:26
⑰	Coda: Molto vivace – Presto	0:59

William Walton (1902–1983)

Chamber Works with Violin and Piano

The four works on this album, namely all of the composer's chamber works involving both violin and piano, represent a microcosm of Sir William Walton's compositional output between 1918 and 1950. From the youthful exuberance of the early *Piano Quartet* through to the unconventional but masterful *Violin Sonata*, they offer a fascinating glimpse of his stylistic journey, including his brief exploration of techniques very far away from the world of the Walton familiar to listeners of the majority of his music.

Born in 1902 in Oldham, Lancashire, to parents who taught singing, he received his first violin lessons aged seven or eight, with very little success, according to both him and his family. He later credited the violin as being useful to study for ear training, but said 'I could never organise my fingers and it sounded so awful'. His piano playing was also described mostly unfavourably, making it extraordinary that his *Piano Quartet* could be so evolved.

We know from letters and library records that Debussy, Ravel and Schoenberg's music was encountered in score form by Walton at Oxford's Christ Church choir school around the time of commencing work on the *Piano Quartet* in 1918 (aged just 16), but the specific stimulus for the work was his meeting Herbert Howells, ten years his senior, who had been receiving great critical acclaim for his *Piano Quartet*. Much like his later decision to write an opera following Britten's acclaim for his, Walton was often spurred on by competition.

Completed in 1919, the work underwent a number of revisions, complicated by the original score getting lost in the post between Italy and England for more than a year, and although it was likely performed in 1919 in an informal setting, the official premiere (in Liverpool) did not happen until 1924, and the London premiere in 1929, the same year as the premiere of the *Viola Concerto* that solidified Walton's reputation as a leading composer.

Walton described the piece as his 'first composition to show any kind of talent; it was written when I was a drooling baby but it is a very attractive piece'. Many

features hint at the characteristics of the mature Walton style, despite the dizzying array of influences suggested by commentators: Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Bridge, Brahms, Fauré, Ravel – but this is most definitely Walton! The London premiere received mixed reviews, perhaps partly because of the expectation of the 'Walton style' being based on the more mature works that had appeared in the interim, including *Façade* and the overture *Portsmouth Point*. Amongst the many notable characteristics of the *Quartet* are the rhythmic drive and Elgarian melodies of the second movement, the lack of direct repetition of themes, the composer's first fugue, and the melancholic lyricism of the third movement, which includes an unusually direct 'borrowing' of some measures from Ravel's song *Le Martin-Pêcheur*. The fourth movement, revised by the composer a number of times, is structurally unusual and provoked many further suggestions of influences – primarily Stravinsky in the piano writing and rhythmic qualities from Bartók's *Allegro Barbaro* – that Walton had been exploring.

Toccata for Violin and Piano, first performed in May 1925, is often referred to in the same category as Walton's early string quartet that he asked to be removed from publication shortly after its first performance. Walton recalled that the style of these pieces 'was too impersonal, and didn't come naturally'. Neither piece was performed again in his lifetime – the *Toccata* had to wait 67 years until 1992! Walton, in this 'experimental' period, had been studying scores by Satie, Schoenberg, Sorabji, Strauss, Stravinsky and Busoni as well as Mozart string quartets.

While a fascinating departure from the style we associate with Walton, the *Toccata* also displays elements in his compositional technique that are developed further in later works. The heart of the work has an extraordinary beauty and lyricism; other sections contain incredibly detailed markings of articulations and dynamics that border on the impossible. The cadenza sections hint at some passages in the later *Violin Sonata* and other mature works, and the impractical but striking

virtuosity previews the *Violin Concerto* written for Jascha Heifetz decades later.

While the *Two Pieces for Violin and Piano* were published and premiered in 1951, two years after the *Violin Sonata*, both had been written in some form before the *Sonata* was conceived. These connect with Walton's other extraordinary output – film music.

The material from the *Canzonetta*, the first of the *Two Pieces*, is based on a troubadour melody from the 13th century. It appears in the Laurence Olivier film *Henry V*, for which Walton wrote the score, performed on flute and harp, but appears only for 16 seconds. The themes in the *Scherzetto* hint at the same kind of style, and feature a typically Walton-esque marking – '*leggiero e piccante*' ('light and spicy'). The works were dedicated to Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier, great friends of the composer and his wife Susanna and frequent visitors to their home on the island of Ischia after they had left England.

The *Scherzetto* was proposed at the last minute as an additional middle movement of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, but was never officially added to the work – meaning it must have been already completed in 1949. The conception of the *Sonata* was a typically fortuitous one for Walton – a chance meeting, probably on a train, with Yehudi Menuhin's wife Diana in Lucerne in 1947, shortly after Walton had completed his second *String Quartet*. Walton was in need of money to help with the costs of medical treatment for his great friend Viscountess Alice Wimborne in Switzerland, and Menuhin offered 2000 Swiss francs as a commission for a work for him.

After a brief stint on the *Sonata*, work on the film score for Olivier's *Hamlet* and Wimborne's death delayed progress. He resumed in June 1948, finished in August 1949, and the *Sonata* was performed first in Zurich and then in London – unusually, at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane – by Menuhin and pianist Louis Kentner. The dedication of the work is to the performers' wives, who

were sisters. Many of Menuhin's editorial suggestions confuse technical and musical instructions and resulted in many decades of misunderstanding of Walton's intentions, particularly in the use of commas intended as a technical indication of a 'clean bow attack', misinterpreted as musical hiatuses; happily these have been corrected and clarified in the recent William Walton Edition.

The first movement's ingenious structure and lyrical themes lead to an original and striking coda in which the bell-like piano chords are interwoven with thematic snippets in the violin. This movement also demonstrates Walton's masterful metamorphosis of thematic material in both metre and harmony.

The second (and last) movement is a *Theme and Variations* – the composer's first. The *Cello Concerto*, *Second Symphony* and '*Hindemith*' *Variations* followed suit. Walton is said to have been very happy with this movement, remarking that a theme and variations can serve the function of several movements in one. An unusual feature is the use of a twelve-tone row – perhaps a throwback to his 'experimental phase'. Walton hit back at critics after the lukewarm reception to the London premiere, where he was accused of being old fashioned: 'perhaps I should have made more orthodox use of my tone-row ... that would have learnt 'em ...' Amongst the variations are clear influences: the first variation from Hindemith's *Viola Sonata, Op. 11, No. 4*; the third variation from Schumann's *Märchenbilder*, and the seventh variation from the composer's own *Touch Her Soft Lips and Part* from his score to the film *Henry V*.

In a characteristic remark, Walton said 'it is just as difficult to overcome success as it is to overcome failure'; happily he was driven to continue to create masterpieces, albeit mostly for larger forces than the works on this album, right up to his death in 1983.

Matthew Jones

Matthew Jones



Photo: Tas Kyrianiou

Praised by *Fanfare* magazine, Matthew Jones enjoys a diverse performing and teaching career, equally at home as a soloist or chamber musician playing both violin and viola, performing classical or contemporary repertoire or improvising. He gave a critically acclaimed Carnegie Hall recital debut in 2008, and until recently was a member of Ensemble MidtVest. Jones was a member of the Badke Quartet when they won the 2007 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition. Jones has recorded 26 solo and chamber albums, is head of chamber music and professor of viola at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, and directs the Intermediate course at Pro Corda International Chamber Music Academy. In recent years he has premiered concertos by Tolibkhon Shakhidi, Derek Ball and Gordon Crosse. Born in Swansea, Jones is also a composer, mathematics graduate and teacher of the Alexander Technique and Kundalini yoga. He presents workshops around the world on empowering musicians, enhancing performance and transforming practice techniques.

www.matthewjonesmusic.guru

Sarah-Jane Bradley



Photo: Robert Plwko

Since her debut at Wigmore Hall in 1997, violist Sarah-Jane Bradley has established a distinguished international reputation as a soloist and chamber musician. Bradley is a pioneer of new works and has premiered and recorded a number of new concertos for solo viola, including those by David Matthews, Paul Patterson and Matthew Taylor, and has worked as a soloist with the Philharmonia, Hallé Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia and Royal Northern Sinfonia. Her acclaimed solo recordings include seven albums of British viola concertos for Dutton Epoch, and two recital discs for Naxos. Bradley was a founder member of the Leopold String Trio, Sorrel Quartet and London Soloists Ensemble, and is a founder member of the Rossetti Ensemble and Karolos. She teaches viola at the Royal College of Music and The Purcell School, and chamber music at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

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Tim Lowe



Photo: Matthew Johnson

Highly praised by *Musical Opinion* for his recent Wigmore Hall recital, cellist Tim Lowe spends much of his time playing solo and chamber recitals throughout the UK and Europe and has played many recitals in major London venues including St John's Smith Square, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Cadogan Hall and the Purcell Room. He has played most of the major cello concertos in recent seasons and is the cellist of the Rossetti Ensemble. Lowe has recorded chamber music albums for various labels, including recently for Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos and Champs Hill Records. As an orchestral player, Lowe is guest principal cello with many major UK orchestras including the English Chamber Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Lowe is a cello professor at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and is the artistic director of York Chamber Music Festival.

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Annabel Thwaite



Photo: Tas Kyrianiou

Recognised as one of the most versatile and charismatic pianists of today, Annabel Thwaite has won all the major accompanying prizes, and performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the world in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. She appears regularly in recital with Sir Bryn Terfel in venues including Bordeaux and Zurich Opera Houses, and has collaborated with Roberto Alagna, Rebecca Evans and the BBC Singers, and recorded solo piano music for the Michael Clark Company at the Barbican. Thwaite's extensive solo and chamber discography includes *The Scottish Tenor* for Universal Classics, which was nominated for a Classical Brit Award, and she has recorded the music for the movie *Awake*, the BBC Jane Austen series *Emma*, *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister* and the Spanish film *De tu ventana a la mía*. Thwaite is director of Core courses at the Pro Corda International Chamber Music Academy and adjudicates at numerous festivals and competitions.

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These four works represent all of Sir William Walton's chamber music involving both violin and piano, as well as being a microcosm of his compositional output between 1918 and 1950. They offer a fascinating glimpse of Walton's stylistic journey, from the youthful exuberance of the early *Piano Quartet* and the *Toccata* to the unconventional but masterful *Violin Sonata*, and the *Two Pieces* with their connection to his music for films. Matthew Jones and Annabel Thwaite's recording of works by Benjamin Britten (Naxos 8.573136) was summed up as 'superb' by *BBC Music Magazine*.

William
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(1902–1983)



1–4	Piano Quartet (1918–19, rev. 1974–75)	28:53
5	Toccata for Violin and Piano (1922–23)	14:31
6–7	2 Pieces for Violin and Piano (ed. Hugh Macdonald) (c. 1944–50)	5:58
8–17	Violin Sonata (1947–49)	25:22

Matthew Jones, Violin • Sarah-Jane Bradley, Viola 1–4

Tim Lowe, Cello 1–4 • Annabel Thwaite, Piano

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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