

BRITTEN

Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings

GOOSSENS

By the Tarn

IRELAND

Concertino Pastorale

WALTON

Sonata for Strings

CHANDOS



Laurence Kilsby tenor
Christopher Parkes horn

SINFONIA OF LONDON
JOHN WILSON



Painting (oil on canvas) by Kenneth Green (1905 – 1986) / Granger – Historical Picture Archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Benjamin Britten, right, with Peter Pears, 1943

Music for Strings

John Ireland (1879 – 1962)

Concertino pastorale (1939)

18:43

for String Orchestra

For Boyd Neel, Canterbury, 1939

- | | | |
|----------|--|------|
| 1 | I Eclogue. Sostenuto – Allegretto moderato | 8:35 |
| 2 | II Threnody. Lento espressivo | 5:59 |
| 3 | III Toccata. Allegro molto ma non troppo presto –
Pochissimo meno mosso – Tempo I | 4:03 |

Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)

Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31 (1943)* **24:57** To E. S.-W.

4	Prologue (Horn alone). Andante	1:24
5	Pastoral (Cotton). Lento	3:41
6	Nocturne (Tennyson). Maestoso – Cadenza (senza misura) – Più mosso – Tempo I – Cadenza (come sopra) – Tempo I – Cadenza (come sopra) – Tempo I	3:42
7	Elegy (Blake). Andante appassionato – Recitativo (lento) – Tempo I	4:32
8	Dirge (Anonymous, fifteenth century). Alla marcia grave	3:38
9	Hymn (Ben Jonson). Presto e leggiero	1:56
10	Sonnet (Keats) (Horn silent). Adagio	4:13
11	Epilogue (Horn alone, off stage). Andante	1:38

Sir Eugene Goossens (1893 – 1962)

12	By the Tarn, Op. 15 No. 1 (1919) 4:44 in G minor • in g-Moll • en sol mineur from <i>Two Sketches</i> for String Quartet (1916) Arranged by the Composer for String Orchestra Andante tranquillo
----	--

Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983)

Sonata for String Orchestra (1971)

26:12

Transcription by the Composer and Malcolm Arnold (1921 – 2006)
of the Composer's String Quartet in A minor (1945 – 47)

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------|
| 13 | I Allegro – Con moto – Più mosso – Più agitato poco a poco –
Affrettando – A tempo poco più mosso – Morendo –
[A tempo I] – Agitato – A tempo I – A tempo poco meno mosso | 7:30 |
| 14 | II Presto | 3:56 |
| 15 | III Lento – Più mosso, ma tranquillo –
A tempo poco più mosso – Animato –
(A tempo I) – A tempo II (poco più mosso) | 10:10 |
| 16 | IV Allegro molto – Poco più animato – Poco a poco più animato | 4:26 |
| | | TT 74:46 |

Laurence Kilsby tenor*

Christopher Parkes horn*

Sinfonia of London

Charlie Lovell-Jones leader

John Wilson



John Wilson

Britten / Goossens / Ireland / Walton:

Music for Strings

Introduction

All four composers on this recording rubbed shoulders with one another during their lives. Among the connections, John Ireland, the oldest, taught the youngest, Benjamin Britten, at the Royal College of Music. Eugene Goossens, in his role as conductor, gave the première of Ireland's *Mai-Dun* in 1921, made the first recording, in 1941, of Walton's Violin Concerto in its original version, with Jascha Heifetz and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, of which he was music director, and, at Britten's behest, in 1954 conducted the first long playing recording of the *Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings*, with the artists for whom it was conceived, Peter Pears and Dennis Brain. Finally, the friendship between Britten and William Walton is reflected in the latter's *Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten*, which received its British première at the Aldeburgh Festival, in 1970, following the first performance there of his second opera, *The Bear*, three years earlier.

Ireland: *Concertino pastorale*

Several landscapes and places held

significance for John Ireland (1879 – 1962), among them the Channel Islands (in particular, Guernsey), Dorset, and Sussex. Deal, on the Kent coast, was yet a further favourite haunt where, between 1936 and 1939, he rented a flat in a Georgian house, 'Comarques', on the High Street, dividing his time between this and his London home.

It was in Deal that he composed his *Concertino pastorale*, in 1939, at the request of the conductor Boyd Neel, for the orchestra, bearing his name, which he had founded in 1932, comprising eighteen of the finest string players of the day. Ireland found composing the work a tough assignment, writing to his close friend, the Rev. Kenneth Thompson, in April 1939 that he was 'having a hellish time trying to concoct a suite for string orchestra, with no ideas at all'.¹

Dedicated to Neel, the *Concertino pastorale* was premièred on 14 June 1939, as part of a concert at the Canterbury Festival, in the

¹ Craggs, Stewart. *John Ireland: A Catalogue, Discography and Bibliography*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993. For Ireland's comments to the Rev. Kenneth Thompson, April 1939, see p. 100.

cloisters of the Cathedral. Not long after, on 18 August, it received its London première at the Promenade Concerts, conducted by Sir Henry Wood. It would prove Ireland's only work conceived solely for strings.

In 1951, replying to a letter from the conductor and composer Harold Rawlinson about the background to the *Concertino pastorale*, Ireland stated unequivocally, 'Whatever I had in mind is expressed in the music and cannot be put into words'; despite this, however, Ireland did offer further information about the work's character, significantly commenting, 'At that particular time, the menace of Hitler hung rather heavily on any thinking person'.² Perhaps Ireland chose the rather 'bucolic' title to mask the work's darker side, or, equally, to suggest a nostalgia for a past rural English idyll, by then long since gone.

The sense of unease is readily apparent in the sombre introductory section of the first movement, titled 'Eclogue' and cast in sonata form. Against a syncopated, repeated note on violins, it opens, Ireland wrote, 'with a distorted and "nightmarish" treatment of the spring-like theme which is the real basis

of the movement'.³ The tempo quickening, and shorn of its chromatic elements and angular rhetoric, the main theme is indeed transformed by the addition of expressive Elgarian sighs. Equally, the other two principal melodies have 'spring-like' qualities: the first, introduced by the first violins, is characterised by decorative embellishments, the other, heady and forthright, begins with an upward sweep of intervals of the fifth and fourth on violins and violas. The development, focusing attention on the first and third themes, is driven by thematic growth. Ireland varies textures in the recapitulation, generating a climax on the basis of the third theme, and progressing towards a softly poised, imaginative ending – counterpointed by a hint of the main theme in *pizzicato* violas.

For Ireland, the 'Threnody' that follows 'perhaps expresses in some way the transitoriness and poignancy of the beautiful'.⁴ Its elegiac mood is established by the tender main theme, introduced by the first violins supported by an interweaving texture of the second violins and violas. Equally riven with wistfulness, the short middle section builds over a throbbing viola pedal to a climax, before the return of the lament.

² Foreman, Lewis, Ed. *The John Ireland Companion*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2011. Letter from Ireland to H. Rawlinson, 9 June 1951, p. 421

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

The 'Toccata' finale fizzles with an energy that acts as a foil to the preceding movements: Ireland felt that it 'provides some sense of liberation and musically is a change in texture'.⁵ Its short, dynamic primary theme, played by the second violins, is heavily accented, but blossoms, in a different guise, during the central section as a lyrical melody for the first violins. With a devil-may-care rush of violin and viola semiquavers, and headlong descending scalic figuration for cellos and basses, the work concludes in a spirit of élan and ebullience.

Goossens: By the Tarn, Op. 15 No. 1

By the time Eugene Goossens (1893–1962) completed his studies at the Royal College of Music, in 1914, he had established himself as a violinist, composer, and conductor of outstanding promise. Deemed medically unfit for military service in World War One, he was able to pursue his portfolio career and in 1916 was invited to be the second violinist and a founder member of the Philharmonic Quartet. For his new colleagues he quickly wrote *Two Sketches*, comprising 'By the Tarn' and 'Jack o' Lantern', which was first performed in April 1916. The former piece was also arranged for clarinet *ad libitum* and string orchestra

(recorded on Chandos CHAN 10981), whereas on this recording it is performed solely by strings.

During 1915 Goossens met Philip Heseltine (soon to adopt the pseudonym Peter Warlock) and a close friendship ensued. This led the latter to send Goossens's Phantasy Quartet to his mentor and friend Frederick Delius who responded:

Just a few words to tell you how much I like the Goossens quartet; it is the best thing I have seen coming from an English pen and full of emotion.⁶

In April the following year, Heseltine went to a concert of his friend's chamber works and wrote enthusiastically to Delius about it:

To hear a representative selection of Goossens' work in one concert was indeed an artistic revelation. Most heartily do I endorse your verdict that his is the finest music that England has yet produced... and his two most exquisite sketches for String Quartet which are the most perfect and wholly satisfying pieces I have ever heard for that combination. Not the least amazing thing about Goossens is the careless rapidity with which he can produce perfectly finished works. These

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Rosen, Carole. *The Goossens: A Musical Century*. André Deutsch, London, 1993, p. 46

two pieces, for example, were thrown off in a week....⁷

In fact, as Goossens revealed in his autobiography,

'By the Tarn' was entirely rewritten the night before the concert itself – I being dissatisfied with it.⁸

It is little wonder that Delius approved of 'By the Tarn' for the impressionistic harmonies and string textures of this colourful, watery-inspired miniature tone poem possess a distinct Delian quality.

Britten: Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31

As a result of the combination of his pacifist stance, the deteriorating political situation in Europe, and the view among many of the British musical establishment that he was too clever by half, Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976) and his soon to be partner, the tenor Peter Pears, moved to the USA in 1939 with the possible intention of settling there permanently. However, two years later, in the summer, Britten read an article by E.M. Forster about George Crabbe, the eighteenth-century poet of Suffolk and

Aldeburgh – its opening line: 'To think of Crabbe is to think of England.' The homesickness which this engendered brought Britten back in April 1942; hence it is unsurprising that the major work following his return should be a song cycle setting English poets: the *Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings*, completed in 1943.

Britten had met the twenty-one-year-old horn player Dennis Brain in 1942 when Brain was a member of the RAF Orchestra, which recorded Britten's music for *An American in England*, a series of war-time propagandist radio programmes jointly made by the BBC and CBS. Instantly recognising what he would later describe as the horn player's 'prodigious gifts',⁹ Britten plied Brain with questions about the instrument and its possibilities; the upshot was that Brain requested a concerto from him. Instead, he became the joint soloist, with Pears, of what the composer referred to as his 'horn songs'.¹⁰

At that time, the decision to set an anthology of texts rather than the work of a single author was unusual for British composers, although Arthur Bliss had

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 46 – 47.

⁸ Goossens, Eugene. *Overture and Beginners: A Musical Autobiography*. Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 1951, p. 96

⁹ Britten, Benjamin. *Tempo*, No. 46, 1957 – 58, pp. 5 – 6

¹⁰ Kildea, Paul. *Benjamin Britten: A Life in the Twentieth Century*. Allen Lane, London, 2013, p. 224

adopted this approach in his choral works *Pastoral* (1928) and *Morning Heroes* (1930). Britten found a source for some of the texts in his volume of *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch, which had been presented to him as a school prize. In the choice of poems, Britten was assisted by Edward Sackville-West, who, in stark comparison to others, had written warmly, in the *New Statesman*, about the composer's *Les Illuminations* after its 1940 première.

The *Serenade* was first performed at the Wigmore Hall, London, on 15 October 1943, by Pears, Brain, and a string orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr. Britten was then just shy of his thirtieth birthday; by and large, on this occasion the reviews were positive. The following year Britten recorded the *Serenade* with Pears and Brain and the Boyd Neel Orchestra. Britten dedicated the *Serenade* to Sackville-West who aptly summarised its character:

The subject is Night and its prestigia [conjuring tricks]: the lengthening shadow, the distant bugle at sunset, the Baroque panoply of the starry sky, the heavy angels of sleep; but also the cloak of evil – the worm in the heart of the rose, the sense of sin in the heart of man. The whole sequence forms an Elegy or Nocturnal (as

Donne would have called it), resuming the thoughts and images suitable to evening.¹¹

The first movement of the *Serenade* is a 'Prologue', played just by the horn, which utilises, Britten's instructions insisted, solely the natural harmonics of the instrument. In 'Pastoral', Britten set sections of *The Evening Quatrains* by Charles Cotton, capturing the poet's vision of flickering sunbeams and lengthening shadows. He achieves this by means of a lulling rhythm of muted strings and the tenor's gently falling and rising triadic melody, its downward path echoed by the horn. The setting is strophic, Britten generating instrumental variety with each stanza, for instance, the *pizzicato* accompaniment for the third. Word painting occurs, too, exemplified by the horn in low register evoking the shadow of the 'mighty Polypheme'.

'Nocturne' sets Tennyson's 'The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls', from *The Princess*. It is a response to the sights and sounds which the poet witnessed whilst visiting Killarney. Britten employs the crisp, so-called 'Scotch snap' rhythm to match the poet's romantic evocation of sunset splendour, 'snowy summits', and 'the wild cataract'.

¹¹ Sackville-West, Edward. 'Music: Some Aspects of the Contemporary Problem'. *Horizon*, June – August 1944, p. 114

In a cadenza, *senza misura* (without bar lines), above string trills, the calls of tenor and horn conjure the far-off bugle fanfare which Tennyson heard echoing, then dying away across the 'purple glens'. What adds so effectively to the setting is the way in which Britten varies the string colour: all *con forza* vigour in the first stanza, *pianissimo* in the second, the lower strings omitted, and a fulsome *esultate* in the third.

From the outset of 'Elegy', a setting of William Blake's 'The Sick Rose', baleful syncopated strings and ominous *pizzicato* bass convey a sense of creeping malevolence, which is confirmed by the horn's crabby melody visiting all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. It frames the tenor's recitative describing the canker destroying the rose's beauty, before the horn's malignant threnody returns. At the end, the horn's stopped and unstopped notes, A flat and G, leave eerie unease.

Without any pause, those same oscillating notes become the opening of 'Dirge', its text the anonymous 'Lyke-Wake Dirge'. The score indicates that this dates from the fifteenth century, but later scholars believe it to be at least a century older. To suit this macabre dance of death, the tenor swoops up nine times to a repeated *ostinato* high in register, Britten making it deliberately strained, as if emphasising the soul's fearful travels and

travails from death to purgatory, its horrors lessened only by charitable acts done in life. Under it, beginning with the cellos and double-basses, a fugue whips up fear, until it climaxes with the horn's terrifying doomsday entry. The fugue dissipates under the tenor's final lament for the departed soul.

After the angst of the previous two settings, contrast is called for, hence, in 'Hymn', Britten composed a fleet-of-foot scherzo for Ben Jonson's 'Hymn to Diana', goddess of nocturnal brightness, who makes 'day of night'. It is the Serenade's sole fast movement, the strings playing *pizzicato* throughout as the horn takes on its hunting associations and the tenor revels in cascading, exuberant roudades.

The final song, 'Sonnet', sets *To Sleep*, by John Keats, in which the poet views sleep as the 'soft embalmer', the panacea ousting the anxiety and 'woes' of life. Scored for strings alone, in part to allow the horn player to move off stage for the 'Epilogue', the music emanates from the descending chords on divided violas in the opening bars. Keats's poetic images gave the composer plenty of opportunities for word painting, for example, the phrase 'burrowing like a mole' and the cello's repetition in harmonics of 'Or wait the "Amen"'. The setting climaxes at the phrase 'Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards' as the

A black and white portrait of a young man with dark hair, wearing a dark corduroy suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark tie. He is seated, leaning forward with his chin resting on his clasped hands, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

Laurence Kilsby

music, in Pears's memorable phrase, 'seems to wander casually to the edge of silence'.¹²

Offstage, as if from afar, the horn's 'Epilogue' confirms that darkness prevails.

Walton: Sonata for String Orchestra

In spring 1971, Neville Marriner, founder and Music Director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, approached Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983) to compose a new work for the strings of his orchestra. Walton declined, so Marriner parried this refusal by suggesting instead that his String Quartet in A minor, of 1945 – 47, be adapted for strings. Walton was persuaded; however, rather than undertaking the scoring himself, he expressed a preference that his friend Malcolm Arnold be asked to perform the task. He also agreed to make some cuts and alterations to the quartet's first movement.

Marriner was pleased by this outcome and Arnold delighted to assist, although he had other commitments for several months. As the new version was needed for a tour to Australia before Arnold could start work, Walton came to the conclusion, rather grudgingly, that he would need to start

the scoring himself. Nevertheless, Walton was also finding that cutting the first movement was problematic, as he revealed to Arnold:

I've found it impossible to do without it sounding as if it had been castrated, had its stomach out, with hysterectomy thrown in.¹³

When Arnold finally arrived at Walton's home, in Ischia, he found that Walton

...had already completed the first two movements and was half-way through the slow movement. This did not surprise me, and the reason for my offer was to give him encouragement to do it himself. However, I stayed with him until I had completed the last movement under his supervision, and more or less had a race, meeting for luncheon and dinner and reporting progress. I am sorry to say that he beat me by two days, but after all mine was a quick movement with so many semiquavers.¹⁴

The title, Sonata for Strings, was finalised in December 1971 and the work first performed on 2 March 1972 at the Perth Festival, Australia, by the Academy of

¹² Pears, Peter. *Benjamin Britten. A commentary on his Work from a group of specialists*. Ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller. Rockliff, 1952. The Vocal Music, p. 68

¹³ Hayes, Malcolm, Ed. *The Selected Letters of William Walton*. Faber Music, London, 2002, p. 395

¹⁴ Craggs, Stewart. *William Walton: A Catalogue*. Letter from Arnold to Craggs, 3 December 1975, p. 105

St Martin in the Fields, directed by Marriner. Its UK première followed on 27 May, given by the same performers at the Bath Festival.

Mirroring the Quartet, the first movement opens with the focus on the four muted solo players. The viola takes the lead, announcing the lyrical main theme, but intertwined with the second violin's decorative counter theme. After these ideas are repeated by the *tutti* strings (the first violins now with the primary melody), the music quickens, becoming rhythmically volatile and impatient, and establishes the main contrasting thematic material, initially again on the solo strings. Walton initiates the development of these elements by means of a vigorous fugue, which coalesces into a notable sonority when the solo first violin rides over a nine-part string texture of trills and ringing *pizzicato* chords. During the recapitulation the main themes are further varied and the coda dwells on the viola's initial melody.

Adopting a tripartite structure, the second movement is an exhilarating, airy scherzo that lives up to the work's original connotation of playfulness. During it, Walton employs all manner of string effects, including *spiccato*, *sul ponticello*, and *col legno*. As the music gallops away, rhythmic snippets are tossed between solo players and *tutti* and there is a glorious moment

when the divided first violins play trills, their colleagues chattering below. The scherzo is repeated, but now muted, and the third section varies what has gone before, concluding as if out of breath.

The following *Lento* is without question the profound heart of the work; in it the violas take a prominent role, as heard at the opening when, offset by soft chords, they introduce the plaintive primary theme. Equally important is a second theme, this one played by a solo viola, which is combined with *tutti* second violins, together accompanied by *pizzicato* chords. Overall, the movement is elegiac, rising to an impassioned climax. In a manner typical of Walton, the melodic lines grow organically, hence, when the main themes return in the movement's later stages, they are subtly changed. In the final bars of the coda, the violas play a snatch of the first theme in its original guise.

Capping the work is a finale cast as a rondo which is intended to bring the work to a high-spirited conclusion. This it achieves through an effervescent display of virtuosic musical pyrotechnics. An explosive rhythmic energy marks the opening thematic idea, which is carried forward with bustling semi-quaver momentum and a pulsating rhythm. There is much interplay between passages for solo and for *tutti* players, and in the middle

of the movement an outpouring of lyricism, just for the quartet, provides variety. During the coda, the music hurtles onward to an exhilarating conclusion.

© 2026 Andrew Burn

Laurence Kilsby studied as an ABRSM (The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) Vocal Scholar at the Royal College of Music, in London, and at the Curtis Institute of Music, in Philadelphia. He was a member of the studio of the Opéra national de Paris during the 2022 / 23 season. An inaugural Lies Askonas Fellow, he was the winner of the 2018 Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary for Young Singers, the 2022 Wigmore Hall / Bollinger International Song Competition, and the 2022 Cesti-Wettbewerb at the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik. His opera engagements have seen him perform at Opéra national de Paris, Théâtre national de l'Opéra-Comique, Opéra national du Rhin, the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opéra de Dijon, Oper Köln, the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik, Salzburger Festspiele, and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. On the concert platform he has worked with major orchestras such as Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest, BBC Symphony

Orchestra, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, and the ensemble Pygmalion with conductors including Klaus Mäkelä, Raphaël Pichon, John Wilson, Ivor Bolton, and Dinis Sousa. Laurence Kilsby released his début album, entitled *Awakenings*, with the pianist Ella O'Neill, in 2024 in a coproduction with Avi-Musik, Deutsche Grammophon, and SWR Kultur.

Currently solo horn of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and also principal horn of Sinfonia of London, **Christopher Parkes** was previously solo horn of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and third horn of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He performs regularly as principal horn with orchestras such as the Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Münchner Philharmoniker, and Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He has appeared as a soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Aurora Orchestra, among others, under conductors such as Daniel Harding, John Wilson, Klaus Mäkelä, and Gianandrea Noseda. He has participated in

chamber music projects and recordings with artists including Anne Sofie von Otter, Gwilym Simcock, and Pierre-Laurent Aimard. In 2022 he released a recording of Britten's *Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings* with Andrew Staples, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Daniel Harding, following it in 2023 with *Diagonal Music*, a recording of trios for horn, violin, and piano by Britta Byström and Johannes Brahms. Christopher Parkes studied at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, where he has been a Professor since 2011.

Sinfonia of London brings together outstanding musicians for special projects, live and recorded, under its Artistic Director and conductor, John Wilson. Described in the press as 'one of the finest orchestras on the planet' (*The Guardian*), the orchestra made its acclaimed live début in 2021 at the BBC Proms and has gone on to appear there every year since. In November 2025 it made its much-praised international début at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and was named as an Artistic Partner of the Glasshouse, Gateshead. It gives regular concert tours across the UK, cementing its reputation for excellence with 'typically exhilarating performances' (*The Arts Desk*) and five-star

reviews. Its much celebrated recording profile on Chandos Records covers a wide range of repertoire, including works by Korngold, Respighi, Ravel, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Britten, Walton, Bliss, and Rodgers & Hammerstein. The magazine *BBC Music* declared of the orchestra's recording of works by Respighi that 'Wilson and his hand-picked band of musicians continue to strike gold with almost anything they turn their hands to', while *The Mail on Sunday* found the album of English Music for Strings 'dazzling... some of the finest string playing ever put on disc by a British orchestra'. Their most recent recording is the second in the orchestra's series devoted to orchestral works by Sir William Walton, the first, centred round the Violin Concerto, having earned universal acclaim. Alongside outstanding reviews ('leaves music critics ready to die for joy', in the words of *iNews*), the orchestra has received five *BBC Music Magazine Awards* in five years and, in 2022, a *Gramophone Award*. In 2023, *The Sunday Times* stated that 'Sinfonia of London sets the gold standard – an orchestra of generals that takes the unfashionable, the obscure, the overlooked, and makes it unmissable'.
www.sinfoniaoflondon.com

Born in Gateshead and since 2011 a Fellow of the Royal College of Music where he

studied composition and conducting, **John Wilson** is now in demand at the highest level across the globe and has over the past thirty years conducted many of the world's finest orchestras. In 2018 he relaunched Sinfonia of London, which *The Arts Desk* described as 'the most exciting thing currently happening on the British orchestral scene'. His much-anticipated BBC Proms début with this orchestra, in 2021, was praised by *The Guardian* as 'truly outstanding' and admired by *The Times* for its 'revelatory music-making'. They are now highly sought-after across the UK, regularly returning to the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, and London's Barbican Centre among other festivals. Their large and varied discography having received near universal critical acclaim, in the autumn of 2025 they released their twenty-ninth

album since 2019. Their CDs have earned several awards, including numerous *BBC Music Magazine Awards*: for recordings of Korngold's Symphony in F sharp (2020), Respighi's Roman Trilogy (2021), Dutilleux's *Le Loup* (2022), Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (2023), and works by Vaughan Williams, Howells, Delius, and Elgar (2024), a disc which won the Orchestral Award and was chosen Recording of the Year. *The Observer* described the Respighi recording as 'Massive, audacious and vividly played' and *The Times* declared it one of the three 'truly outstanding accounts of this trilogy' of all time, alongside those by Toscanini (1949) and Muti (1984). In 2026, John Wilson received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor Award. He holds the Henry Wood Chair of Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music.

A black and white portrait of Christopher Parkes, a man with short dark hair, smiling and wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt. He is holding a large, ornate silver trophy in his left hand. The background is dark and textured.

Christopher Parkes

Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings

4 Prologue

5 Pastoral

The day's grown old; the fainting sun
Has but a little way to run,
And yet his steeds, with all his skill,
Scarce lug the chariot down the hill.

The shadows now so long do grow,
That brambles like tall cedars show;
Molehills seem mountains, and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant.

A very little, little flock
Shades thrice the ground that it would
[stock;
Whilst the small stripling following them
Appears a mighty Polypheme.

And now on benches all are sat,
In the cool air to sit and chat,
Till Phoebus, dipping in the West,
Shall lead the world the way to rest.

from *The Evening Quatrains*
Charles Cotton (1630 – 1687)

6 Nocturne

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:

The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory:
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes
[flying,
Bugle, blow; answer, echoes, answer,
[dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Bugle, blow; answer, echoes, answer,
[dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes
[flying;
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying,
[dying.
'The splendour falls on castle walls',

from *The Princess* (1847)
Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809 – 1892)

7 Elegy

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm

That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark, secret love
Does thy life destroy.

'The Sick Rose',
from *Songs of Experience* (1794)
William Blake (1757 – 1827)

8 Dirge

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleete and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
Every nighte and alle,
To Whinnymuir thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gav'st hos'n and shoon,
Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If hos'n and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Whinnymuir when thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Brig o' Dread thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gav'st meat or drink,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire sall never make thee shrink;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

'Lyke-Wake Dirge'
Anonymous, North Yorkshire
(fourteenth century)

9 Hymn

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,

Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made,
Heav'n to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wishèd sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short so-ever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair',
from *Cynthia's Revels*, or
The Fountain of Self-Love (1600)
Ben Jonson (1572 – 1637)

10 Sonnet

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting with careful fingers and
[benign,
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from
[the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:

O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing
[eyes,
Or wait the 'Amen' ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.

Then save me, or the passèd day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes –
Save me from curious Conscience, that
[still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like
[a mole;

Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards,
And seal the hushèd Casket of my Soul.

'To Sleep' (1819?),
from *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes,*
and Other Poems (1820)
John Keats (1795 – 1821)

11 Epilogue

Also available



Vaughan Williams • Howells • Delius • Elgar
English Music for Strings
CHSA 5291



Britten • Bliss • Bridge • Berkeley
English Music for Strings
CHSA 5264

John Wilson and Sinfonia of London, at
Symphony Hall, Brimingham,
on 26 November 2022

Chris Christodoulou



You can purchase Chandos CDs and DVDs or download high-resolution sound files online at our website: www.chandos.net

For requests to license tracks from this CD or any other Chandos products please find application forms on the Chandos website or contact the Royalties Director, Chandos Records Ltd, direct at the address below or via e-mail at mhewett@naxosmusic.co.uk

Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, UK.
E-mail: enquiries@chandos.net Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201



www.facebook.com/chandosrecords



www.x.com/ChandosRecords

Chandos 24-bit / 96 kHz recording

The Chandos policy of being at the forefront of technology is now further advanced by the use of 24-bit / 96 kHz recording. In order to reproduce the original waveform as closely as possible we use 24-bit, as it has a dynamic range that is up to 48 dB greater and up to 256 times the resolution of standard 16-bit recordings. Recording at the 44.1 kHz sample rate, the highest frequencies generated will be around 22 kHz. That is 2 kHz higher than can be heard by the typical human with excellent hearing. However, we use the 96 kHz sample rate, which will translate into the potentially highest frequency of 48 kHz. The theory is that, even though we do not hear it, audio energy exists, and it has an effect on the lower frequencies which we do hear, the higher sample rate thereby reproducing a better sound.

A Hybrid SA-CD is made up of two separate layers, one carries the normal CD information and the other carries the SA-CD information. This hybrid SA-CD can be played on most standard CD players, but will only play normal stereo. It can also be played on an SA-CD player reproducing the stereo or multi-channel DSD layer as appropriate.

Microphones

Thuresson: CM 402 (main sound)

Schoeps: MK22 / MK4 / MK6

DPA: 4006 & 4011

Neumann: U89

CM 402 microphones are hand built by the designer, Jörgen Thuresson, in Sweden.

Recording producer Brian Pidgeon

Sound engineer Ralph Couzens

Assistant engineer Alexander James

Editor Alexander James

A & R administrator Karen Marchlik

Recording venue Church of St Augustine, Kilburn, London; 20 – 23 October 2025 (Ireland, Britten, Walton, movements I, II, IV), 23 November 2025 (Goossens), and 11 March 2026 (Walton, movement III)

Front cover *Knowlton, Dorset* (c. 1938) (pencil, ink, and mixed media collage) by John Piper, C.H. (1903 – 1992) © 2026 The Piper Estate / DACS / Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images

Back cover Photograph of John Wilson © Astrid Ackermann

Design and typesetting Cass Cassidy

Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen

Publishers J. & W. Chester Ltd, London (Goossens), Oxford University Press, Oxford (Walton), Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd, London (other works)

UPC 0095115539224

© 2026 Chandos Records Ltd

© 2026 Chandos Records Ltd

Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, England
Country of origin UK

MUSIC FOR STRINGS

JOHN IRELAND (1879 – 1962)

- 1 - 3 Concertino pastorale (1939) 18:43
for String Orchestra

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913 – 1976)

- 4 - 11 Serenade for Tenor Solo, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31 (1943)* 24:57

SIR EUGENE GOOSSENS (1893 – 1962)

- 12 By the Tarn, Op. 15 No. 1 (1919) 4:44
in G minor • in g-Moll • en sol mineur
from *Two Sketches* for String Quartet (1916)
Arranged by the Composer for String Orchestra

SIR WILLIAM WALTON (1902 – 1983)

- 13 - 16 Sonata for String Orchestra (1971) 26:12
Transcription by the Composer and Malcolm Arnold (1921 – 2006)
of the Composer's String Quartet in A minor (1945 – 47)

TT 74:46

Laurence Kilsby tenor*

Christopher Parkes horn*

SINFONIA OF LONDON

Charlie Lovell-Jones leader

JOHN WILSON

© 2026 Chandos Records Ltd
© 2026 Chandos Records Ltd
Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos
House,
1 Commerce Park, Colchester,
Essex CO2 8HX, UK.
enquiries@chandos.net

Contact:
Naxos Deutschland Musik & Video
Vertriebs-GmbH, Gruber Str. 46b,
DE-85586 Poing, Germany.
info@naxos.de