

# William HURLSTONE Complete Piano Music

<b>Five Miniatures</b> (c. 1895–1904)	7:25	<b>Hungarian Air with Variations</b> (1897)	10:48
1 I La Simplicité	1:33	19 Hungarian Air: Theme	0:22
2 II Valse Miniature	1:14	20 Var. 1	0:29
3 III Negro Song	1:40	21 Var. 2	0:40
4 IV Rustic Song	1:29	22 Var. 3	0:37
5 V Alla Mazurka	2:29	23 Var. 4	1:21
6 <b>Capriccio in B minor</b> (1897)	6:06	24 Var. 5	0:50
<b>Sketches</b> (c. 1891)	6:44	25 Var. 6	0:46
7 I March	0:54	26 Var. 7	0:29
8 II Allegretto	1:02	27 Var. 8	0:27
9 III [untitled]	1:11	28 Var. 9	1:44
10 IV Mazurka	1:13	29 Var. 10	1:20
11 V La Fête	1:26	30 Var. 11: Finale	1:43
12 VI Tambourin	0:58	<b>Five Easy Waltzes, Op. 1</b> (c. 1885)	3:42
<b>Two Albumleaves</b> (1891)	3:09	31 No. 1	0:57
13 I Aria	1:39	32 No. 2	0:46
14 II Demons' Dance	1:30	33 No. 3	0:41
15 <b>Caprice</b> (1892)	1:34	34 No. 4	0:33
16 <b>Paganini arr. Hurlstone:</b> Étude in E flat major (1901)	1:13	35 No. 5	0:35
17 <b>Wieniawski arr. Hurlstone:</b> Mazurka in G major, Op. 12, No. 2, 'Sielanka' (1906)	3:14	36 <b>Work for piano duet</b> (1894)	2:06
18 <b>Heller arr. Hurlstone:</b> Tarentelle for the left hand (1899)	3:39	<b>Piano Sonata in F minor</b> (1894)*	25:44
		37 I <i>Allegro</i>	8:57
		38 II <i>Andante ma non troppo</i>	8:49
		39 III <i>Andante – Allegro vivace</i>	7:58
		<b>Kenji Fujimura, piano</b> <b>Julia Lu, piano duet</b> 36	

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TT 75:24



## William HURLSTONE

### COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC

HUNGARIAN AIR WITH VARIATIONS  
PIANO SONATA IN F MINOR  
CAPRICCIO IN B MINOR  
TWO ALBUMLEAVES  
FIVE EASY WALTZES  
FIVE MINIATURES  
SKETCHES  
CAPRICE  
ARRANGEMENTS  
WORK FOR PIANO DUET

Kenji Fujimura

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

# THE PIANO MUSIC OF WILLIAM HURLSTONE

by Paul Conway

William Yeates Hurlstone, who died from bronchial asthma at the age of 30 on 30 May 1906, is one of several English composers, such as Ernest Farrar, George Butterworth and Walter Leigh, whose premature ends denied posterity the full fruits of their creative maturity. Yet each of these figures offers real achievement as well as promise. In Hurlstone's case, though many of his scores must in one sense be considered 'early works', they are in no way immature, being the product of a confident and fully armed musical personality. He was palpably affected by the music of Chopin, Schumann and Brahms, for example, but these influences are for the most part fully subsumed into a distinctive and un-derivative voice.

He was born on 7 January 1876 at Richmond Gardens, West Kensington. His father, an amateur musician, encouraged his son's creative talent, and his mother, a piano-teacher, gave him his first piano-lessons. To counteract an initial lack of engagement with the instrument, his parents asked an older boy to play to him. This ploy had the desired effect and the previously recalcitrant pupil made rapid advances in his playing, and music in general became virtually his sole preoccupation.

As a child Hurlstone attended many concerts and read textbooks to discover the rules of composition. By the age of seven he was not only performing challenging scores but writing his own tunes. In 1883 the family moved to the Salisbury area and Hurlstone became a chorister at his local church in Bemerton but had to give up because of his bronchial asthma, which had developed in early infancy. He became something of a child-prodigy as a pianist; the local vicar was so impressed that he invited Hubert Parry and George Grove from the Royal College of Music to Salisbury to hear him. Grove was amazed by the boy's ability to identify certain chords played on the piano, among other tests. Recognising Hurlstone's remarkable all-round musicianship, Parry told his parents that he was taken more by their son's 'grasp'<sup>1</sup> of the subject than by his abilities as an executant.

A decline in the family fortunes led to a move back nearer to London, to South Norwood, and from 1886 to 1894 Hurlstone had piano lessons with Arthur Wilmot in Croydon. At the age of eighteen, he won a scholarship to the Royal College, where he studied composition with Stanford and piano with Algernon Ashton and Edward Dannreuther, who had premiered Parry's Piano Concerto

<sup>1</sup> Katharine Hurlstone, *William Hurlstone, Musician: Memories and Records by his Friends*, Cary, London, 1947, p. 12.



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at the Crystal Palace in 1880. Fellow students included Frank Bridge, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Thomas Dunhill, Gustav Holst, John Ireland, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Haydn Wood.

Hurlstone was still a student when his father died, and after he left the RCM in 1898, he was forced to take on onerous work such as teaching, conducting and arranging in order to support his widowed mother. In 1903 he became accompanist to the Bach Choir and two years later he won the first Cobbett prize for a 'phantasy' quartet. Also in 1905 he was asked to join the staff of the Royal College of Music, but by this stage he was already too fragile to make regular journeys to South Kensington and moved from Croydon to Battersea Park. One day, about three months before his death, he was discovered in a state of collapse on the steps of the College entrance and not long afterwards he caught a chill. Up to the very end of his life he was working on a symphonic poem which he said would be his masterpiece and of which only a few completed bars were subsequently found. During his short life he had had the good fortune to know a group of rich amateurs, one of whom, Captain Alexander Beaumont, not only employed him as a pianist but also arranged to support his mother after his death and paid for the posthumous publication of some of his scores. His friend, fellow student and composer Thomas Dunhill, wrote: 'Hurlstone, at the time of his death, was regarded by those in whose company he studied as unquestionably the most significant musical figure of his generation.'<sup>2</sup>

During the few years granted him as a creative artist, Hurlstone produced a remarkable number of scores of quality. Though opera held no interest for him, he made individual contributions to music in most other genres. Orchestral scores include *Variations on an Original Theme* (1896), the suite *The Magic Mirror* (1900) and the *Fantasia-Variations on a Swedish Air* (1903). There are also songs and fine examples of chamber music, including a Piano Trio in G, a Piano Quartet in E minor, the *Four Characteristic Pieces* for clarinet and piano and a Bassoon Sonata. His only substantial choral work was a ballad for chorus and orchestra, *Alfred the Great*.

Written for the most part whilst Hurlstone was either a child or a student, his piano music consists mainly of what might be classed as juvenilia, though this term should be applied strictly on account of the composer's tender age rather than denoting any hint of immaturity or want of technical skill. Dominating the precocious little character pieces and deft arrangements stand two superbly realised scores: the Piano Sonata in F minor and the *Hungarian Air with Variations*. Both, in their very different ways, consolidate and build upon the emergent talent and fledgling facility of his preceding keyboard studies and vignettes.

The **Five Miniatures** (c. 1895–1904) are thought to have been composed over a number of years, and yet they constitute a satisfying and convincing set. All five pieces are characteristic of the composer in their

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 61–62.

directness of expression, melodic distinction and frequent modulatory shifts. The first, 'La Simplicité' [1], can be dated to 11 May 1895. The two lines of French verse which preface the score – 'Robe d'or, mais rien ne veut / Qu'une rose à ses cheveux' – are by Dante Gabriel Rossetti from *La Bella Mano* (1875). Hurlstone used an orchestration of the following refined 'Valse Miniature' [2] to open the 'Interlude' movement from his *Magic Mirror Suite*,<sup>3</sup> a rare example of his borrowing an idea and deploying it in an entirely different context. 'Negro Song' [3] is quietly wistful, its simple theme unfolding over a gently rocking left-hand accompaniment, and 'Rustic Song' [4] encompasses a much wider dynamic range from the muted opening to the declamatory chordal codetta. The closing piece, 'Alla Mazurka' [5], is especially impressive and shows Hurlstone's fine judgment in supplying a substantial introduction as well as a short coda to frame his memorable main material. This gift for writing imposing prefaces arguably reached its apogee in Hurlstone's orchestral *Variations on a Swedish Air*, which is launched by a preamble of almost symphonic heft.

'La Simplicité' first appeared in print in the quarterly *The Dome* on 29 September 1897 and the complete set was published by Joseph Williams in 1905. Each movement was also issued separately. Hurlstone performed all *Five Miniatures* on 11 November 1904 in Croydon. He programmed 'La Simplicité' in a Stanley Athenæum concert which he organised on 5 February 1906. A pianist by the name of Tom Sutton also played the complete set at the Hurlstone Memorial Concert at the Public Hall, Croydon, on 9 July 1906.

Hurlstone's *Capriccio in B minor* [6] is a student composition from 1897 and has been described as being 'clearly modelled on Brahms's *Rhapsody* in B minor, Op. 79, No. 1'.<sup>4</sup> Marked *Allegro con fuoco*, the principal theme is restless and quixotic, requiring an array of different pianistic techniques. The more measured secondary theme (in A major) is an example of a type of lyrical syncopated writing also to be found in the two trios of the scherzo from Hurlstone's Piano Concerto in D, completed in 1895. Hurlstone's inventive transition passages linking the two contrasting main ideas in the *Capriccio* are typically striking and highlight another key aspect of his consummate technique. Judiciously proportioned, the heaven-storming coda is extensive and virtuosic, rounding off a comparatively short work of remarkable expressive range and colour.

The *Capriccio* in B minor appears to have been a favourite concert item of Hurlstone's. He performed it on 30 November 1897 at the Royal College of Music and on several later occasions at Pembroke Hall, Croydon. It was also played by Tom Sutton at another Hurlstone Memorial Concert, this one at Stanley Hall, South Norwood, on 11 July 1906.

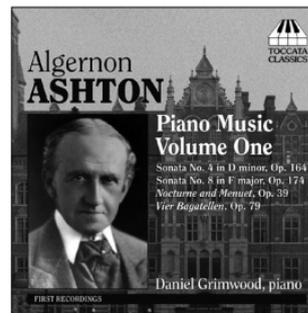
<sup>3</sup> Recorded on Lyrita SRCD 208.

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata 1870–1945*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, p. 40.

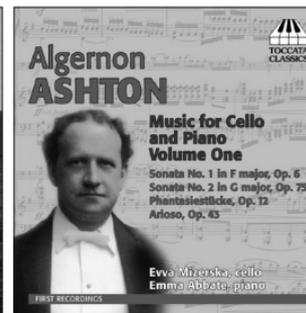
Dr Julia Lu graduated with first prize in piano performance BMus (Hons) from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and was also awarded her MMus (Musicology) from The University of Melbourne and a PhD (Musicology) from Royal Holloway, University of London. From 2002 to 2012, Julia taught at The University of Melbourne and at Monash University, and was the recipient of the Dean's Sessional Teaching Award at the latter. She is a leading authority on French music, and her publications include book chapters, reviews, CD booklet notes, and the monumental *Le Concours du prix de Rome de musique (1803–1968)*, co-edited with Alexandre Dratwicky (Symétrie, Lyon, 2011).



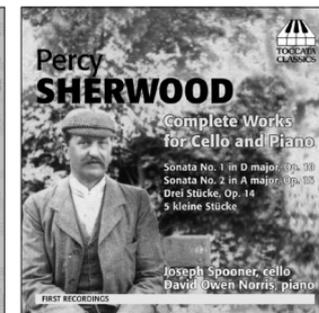
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Paul Conway is a freelance writer specialising in twentieth century and contemporary British music. He has reviewed regularly for *The Independent* and *Tempo*, provided programme notes for *The Proms* and the *Edinburgh, Spitalfields and Three Choirs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

Dr **Kenji Fujimura** has received numerous major prizes and awards as pianist and composer, including the Australian National Piano Award and the William Lincer Foundation International Composition Award. Concert, master-class and adjudication engagements have taken Kenji throughout Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia and he is regularly broadcast internationally.

An avid supporter of both contemporary and lesser-known music, Kenji's recent CD releases include 'The Messiaen Nexus', which contains the first recording of George Benjamin's Violin Sonata (with Elizabeth Sellars). This disc was awarded the 2014 *Limelight* Chamber Music Recording of the Year. As founding member of Trio Anima Mundi, Kenji released a double-disc set of piano trios by Hurlstone, d'Ollone, Wirén and Hyde (*Romantic Piano Trios*) which was selected as a 2013 Musicweb International Recording of the Year. His own compositions were most recently performed in the USA and Australia, and a piano trio will be premiered in 2015.

Kenji completed the four-year BMus (Hons) degree in two years at The University of Melbourne, and also received his MMus as a full scholarship holder. His performance recitals achieved the highest marks ever awarded in the history of the institution. During his Master's degree, he simultaneously undertook performance studies at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where he received numerous awards and prizes and was active as a pianist, fortepianist and chamber musician. Kenji was awarded a full PhD scholarship to examine the music of William Hurlstone.

Kenji is also a highly respected pedagogue; his teaching career at the tertiary level began while he himself was an undergraduate. He is currently Deputy Head of School, Coordinator of Classical Performance and Coordinator of Chamber Music, at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Monash University. In 2015 he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.



The condition of the manuscript and the handwriting suggest that the six *Sketches* [7]–[12] are early. They are written in the same style as Hurlstone's *Albumleaves*, which dates them to around 1891. A projected seventh piece was never started, and yet the extant six tiny character studies form a cohesive set thanks to their shared 'classical' restraint. For a composer with such a natural inclination to range into exotic keys, it must have gone against the grain to anchor the left hand on G for the entire span of the concluding 'Tambourin' [12].

The *Two Albumleaves* date from 1891, when Hurlstone was fifteen. This unpublished pair of short works is thought not to have been performed publicly. The first piece, 'Aria' [13], shares with the *Sketches* a Mozartian poise and elegance, as the left hand follows an Alberti bass pattern. 'Demons' Dance' [14], with its irresistible, stamping main idea, provides a strenuous contrast.

The manuscript of the *Caprice* of 1892 [15] includes the annotation, probably in Hurlstone's own hand, that he was sixteen at the time of composition. The composer's melodic flair graces this brief and directly appealing example of his art.

Among his prodigious talents, Hurlstone was a fine arranger of other composers' music. Though he may have personally regarded these assignments as hack work, his skill was such that he invariably retained the essence of the original whilst bringing something of this own musical character to the realisation. His *Etude in E flat major* (1901) [16], an arrangement of Paganini's *Caprice* No. 14 for violin, is entirely pianistic in its scope and disposition.

Dating from within five months of his death, Hurlstone's reduction for piano of Wieniawski's *Mazurka in G major, Op. 12, No. 2*, for violin and piano, known as 'La Champêtre' or 'Sielanka' (1906) [17], is a very late example of his craft in which he shows considerable discernment in choosing which aspects of the violin pyrotechnics to emulate and which to exclude altogether. Hurlstone performed it on 5 February 1906 as an encore to a programme which also featured his Piano Trio and 'La Simplicité' from the *Five Miniatures* for piano.

In his arrangement of Stephen Heller's *Tarentelle for the left hand* (1899) [18], Hurlstone's sureness of touch ensures that the limitations of writing for one hand only never translate into any diminution of achievement. The manuscript is dated July 1899, but this piece does not appear in any of Hurlstone's catalogues and was never issued in print. The first performance of the *Tarentelle* is thought to have been on 28 October 1901, when Hurlstone played a work of this title as an encore in a Century Concert at Pembroke Hall, Croydon, in which he had also included the *Capriccio* in B minor.

Hurlstone's *Hungarian Air with Variations* (1897), which consists of a theme [19] followed by eleven variants upon it, forms the basis of the slightly later orchestral work of the same

name.<sup>5</sup> Comparisons between the two versions reveal Hurlstone's skills as both pianist and orchestrator. For example, although one may miss in the piano version the rich, Brahmsian string-writing of variations 4 [23] and 10 [29], the wit of variation 3 [22] is much more pointed in its pianistic guise, aided by a sharper focus on its scrunchy dissonances. Interestingly, variation 6 [25] is entirely transformed by its orchestration, appearing muted and mysterious as opposed to the vigorously athletic piano original. There are other small discrepancies such as a missing repeat in the first section of variation 9 [28] in the orchestral score, which also features unique inner parts to augment variation 3 and the introduction to the Finale [30], for example. The extended closing section makes a dazzling denouement to both incarnations, and the variants themselves are all the more potent for being so crisp and tightly controlled.

Hurlstone composed his *Five Easy Waltzes* for pianoforte, Op. 1 [31]–[35], in 1885, aged nine, and his adoring father decided to have them published. Of these pieces, Henry George Newell wrote that:

As they proceed, one can feel that the young mind is gradually gaining grasp of the harmonic technique and piano idiom. There are some curiously 'growly' passages in the bass which suggest that the boy's handstretch was not as large as he would have liked it to be; but these become less as the work progresses.<sup>6</sup>

Even at this embryonic stage of his creative development, the young composer shows an innate grasp of form by launching the opening piece with an eight-bar preamble, which acts as an attention-gathering introductory flourish not only to the delicate and beautifully simple main idea but also to the set as a whole.

The *Work for piano duet* (1894) [36] is dated 14 October 1894. Atypically lacking a title, this piece was possibly planned as part of a multi-movement composition that was either never finished, or, if completed, was subsequently lost. The adventurousness of the harmonic progressions, especially in the central section, is a hallmark of Hurlstone's writing.

The unpublished *Piano Sonata in F minor* (1894) was a student composition, and dates from a few months after Hurlstone's arrival at the Royal College of Music in April 1894. Stanford regarded it as interesting enough to show to the piano professor Ernst Pauer, who liked the score but thought it remained for too long in one key (a frankly baffling response as the material is characteristically replete with modulations). Hurlstone was dismissed to the common room as the two professors discussed his efforts in private. Eventually Stanford put his head round the common-room door and whispered defiantly, 'Stick

to your key, my boy – stick to your key?'. In spite of Stanford's endorsement, there is no evidence to suggest that the Sonata was ever performed in Hurlstone's lifetime.

There is much to admire in this substantial piano work, such as the eighteen-year-old composer's idiomatic writing for the instrument, his command of large-scale structures and unfailing melodic fecundity. In addition, his mastery of tonality and harmonic resourcefulness, essential aspects of his writing from an early age, is in evidence throughout all three movements.

The baleful idea which initiates the opening sonata-form *Allegro* [37] is sufficiently arresting and protean to spawn a good deal of the thematic material of this movement. Hurlstone offers one of his most elaborate transitional passages to the beautiful, song-like secondary theme. The turbulent development section is mostly concerned with the gravely purposeful principal ideas but the delayed return of the second subject, now gloriously simplified rather than elaborated, is a serene counterweight to the surrounding angst.

A fragile, wispily chromatic idea haunts the framing portions of the *Andante ma non troppo* slow movement [38]. In contrast, its sweeping central section is restless and volatile and unearths deep and disquieting passions scarcely encountered elsewhere in Hurlstone's piano-writing.

Prefaced by an *Andante* introduction which recalls the opening theme of the work, the grimly resolute main section of the *Allegro vivace* finale [39] is set against a heroically exuberant second subject. There is a wide-ranging development section which gives full rein to the composer's tonal audacity and a bravura coda which provides a rewarding conclusion to the sonata as a whole. Reminiscences in this finale of important themes from the two previous movements, in addition to the use of the same motif to launch the first and third movements, show an awareness of cyclic procedures and mark a conscious attempt to bind together three strongly individual statements into a cohesive entity.

Hurlstone's grave in Croydon New Cemetery bears a translation of the epitaph made for Schubert: 'Music hath here entombed rich treasure but still fairer hopes'. Vaughan Williams called Hurlstone 'the English Schubert',<sup>8</sup> a reference perhaps to the two composers' early deaths as well as their shared gift for lyrical melody. As a further link, it could be argued that they both discovered themselves through their music for keyboard and that their subsequent artistic development and maturity can be charted precisely through their works in this medium.

<sup>5</sup> Recorded on Lyrita SRCO 208.

<sup>6</sup> H. G. Newell, *William Yeates Hurlstone: Musician and Man*, Chester, London, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *William Hurlstone*, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 54.