

British Piano Concertos Addison Cannon Chagrin Simon Callaghan BBC NOW William Boughton



Stary Warden

BRITISH PIANO CONCERTOS

Simon Callaghan, piano

BBC National Orchestra of Wales Leader Lesley Hatfield conducted by William Boughton

First Recordings

	Phi	lip Cannon (1929-2016)	
	Cor	13:42	
1	Ι	Allegro molto vivace	5:42
2	II	Andante tranquillo	4:15
3		Presto leggiero	3:45
	Joh	n Addison (1920-1998)	
	Cor	ncertino for piano and orchestra (1958)	14:14
4	Ι	Allegro moderato	4:30
5		Andante grazioso	4:50
6		Vivace	4:54
	Fra	ancis Chagrin (1905-1973)	
	Cor	24:02	
	A 19	971 composer's revision to the orchestral score is unpublished	
7	Ι	Risoluto	7:51
8	II	Lento. Molto tranquillo	8:11
9		Allegro vivace	8:00

SRCD 444 2

John Addison

	Conversation Piece (1958)	14:37
10	Allegro moderato	2:10
11	- Andante commodo	4:05
12	- Allegro moderato	2:13
13	- Adagio	3:26
14	- Allegro	2:43

Total playing time 66:41

Produced in association with Radio 3 and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales



Recorded at Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff, UK 9-11 October 2023 Engineer : Andrew Smillie Assistant Engineer : Mike Cox Producer : Adrian Farmer Edited by Simon Callaghan Cover image: 'The South Downs' inter-war travel poster by Frank Newbould

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JOHN ADDISON was born in Chobham, Surrey on 16 March 1920. At the age of sixteen he entered the Royal College of Music, studying composition with Gordon Jacob, piano with Herbert Fryer, oboe with Leon Goossens and clarinet with Frederick Thurston. His studies were interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served in the army. Posted to join the 23rd Hussars,¹ he first went into action in June 1944, one week after D-day, crossed the Channel and fought through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He was wounded at Caen, Northern France. At the end of the war, he returned to London, joining the staff of the Royal College of Music as Professor in 1950. Addison showed a special aptitude for writing for wind instruments, evident in his woodwind sextet of 1949, which was performed at the Frankfurt Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, and in the directly appealing Divertimento for brass quartet (1951).² Among his orchestral pieces are the Variations for Piano and Orchestra (1948, revised 1949),³ a fine Trumpet Concerto (1949), a Sinfonietta (1956), written for the National Youth Orchestra, the Wellington Suite, for two horns, piano, percussion and strings (1959)⁴ and ballet music for *Carte Blanche*, commissioned by Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet and premiered at the 1953 Edinburgh Festival. He also wrote much incidental music, notably for Royal Court Theatre productions, such as John Osborne's The Entertainer (1957), for which he provided pastiche music-hall numbers.⁵ Addison is perhaps best known for his music for films, including Seven Days to Noon (1950), Private's Progress (1956), Reach for the Sky (1956) and A Taste of Honey (1961). His score for Tom Jones (1963) won an Oscar, Sleuth (1972) an Oscar nomination, and A Bridge Too Far (1977) a British Academy Award. From 1975 he was based in Los Angeles, writing mostly for television, including the signature tune for the popular series Murder, She Wrote (1984-1996), for which he won an Emmy. His Bassoon Concertino (1998) was one of his last works to receive a first performance before his death on 7 December 1998 in Bennington, Vermont.

¹ A cavalry regiment raised by the British Army during World War II and in existence from 1940 to 1946.

² Lyrita SRCD.307.

³ Lyrita SRCD.416.

⁴ Lyrita SRCD.407.

⁵ 'Why should I care?', a swansong for washed-up vaudevillian Archie Rice, was sung by Laurence Olivier.

The **Concertino for Piano and Orchestra** (1958) was premiered at 'A Festival of School Music', organised by the National Union of Teachers and Schools, in conjunction with the Schools' Music Association, held on 31 May 1959. Philip Jenkins was the soloist,⁶ with the Schools' Festival Orchestra of 115 players conducted by Malcolm Arnold.⁷ Written in Brancaster on the Norfolk coast, the Concertino was commissioned by the Schools' Music Association for performance at the Festival Concert.

After a raucous orchestral flourish, the opening *Allegro moderato* gets underway with an insoluciant piano tune pointed up by instrumental interjections. The pace slackens as cadential violin phrases over throbbing clarinet and horn chords pave the way for the airborne second main idea, a scalic, arched piano theme, graced with modest ornamentation. This melody is repeated in full orchestral opulence before a compact development section in which the secondary material is transformed into a grand waltz. After this episode, an effortfully ascending piano sequence heralds the arrival of the recapitulation. As soon as both themes have been restated, the movement demurely takes its leave.

The central *Andante grazioso* is cast in the form of a set of variations on a blithe melody first heard on violins and taken up by the piano in a highly decorated manner. At one juncture, brass alarums threaten to disrupt the decorous narrative, but this peril is short-lived and the movement continues nonchalantly towards a gentle close.

In the finale, following an initial call to attention, three subjects are presented in succession. The first is a self-possessed idea on upper woodwind, supported by first violins, the second a whimsically wayward strain on piano, adorned with grace notes and the third a measured, carousel-like dance overlaid with jangling high piano tremolos. The rest of this *Vivace* movement explores the expressive potential of its trio of themes. A passage featuring a jazzy, syncopated orchestral accompaniment to the first idea is recalled fleetingly in the closing moments.

⁶ Then a pupil of Harold Craxton at the Royal Academy of Music, Philip Jenkins was the winner of the *Daily Mirror* contest for pianists held in July 1958.

⁷ Sir Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006) was a prolific composer, his output including nine symphonies, numerous concertos, chamber pieces, music for brass band and over one hundred film scores. His Fourth Symphony is featured on Lyrita SRCD.200 and his sets of orchestral dances on Lyrita SRCD.201, both recordings conducted by the composer.

Though John Addison's Concertino is, for the most part, couched in a light-hearted language, it is the product of a serious, and unfailingly inventive, approach to keyboard and orchestral writing. Speaking of the work to Lesie Ayre of the *London Evening News*, the composer remarked that, 'it is a real concerto in the full sense of the word. I was told that this boy [Philip Jenkins] can do the repertoire concertos and so I have not played down in any way. I would not be ashamed to show the work to any first-class pianist'.⁸

FRANCIS CHAGRIN was born in Bucharest in 1905. After qualifying as an engineer at Zūrich in 1928, he returned to Bucharest and decided to devote himself to music. Despite family disapproval, he went to Paris, where he studied between 1933 and 1934 at the École Nomale de Musique under Nadia Boulanger and Paul Dukas while supporting himself by playing the piano in nightclubs and writing light music. Later he studied with Mátyás Seiber in London, where he finally settled in 1936. During the Second World War, he acted as music adviser and composer for the BBC French service, for which service he was later decorated by the French government and made an Officier d'Académie.

In 1943 Chagrin was primarily responsible for the founding and running of the Committee for the Promotion of New Music, which, for many years provided invaluable opportunities for young or unknown composers living in Britain to hear their works publicly performed. For nearly 30 years, Chagrin dedicated considerable time and energy to the committee. After 27 years the committee developed into the Society for the Promotion of New Music. After Chagrin's death in 1973, a Fund for Young Composers was set up in his name.

Among his many scores for the cinema are An Inspector Calls (1954), adapted from J. B. Priestley's stage play, the prisoner of war film The Colditz Story (1955), Hammer's psychological thriller The Snorkel (1958) and the Walt Disney Production, Greyfriars Bobby (1961). He also wrote for television, including the theme and main titles for the ITC series, The Four Just Men (1959-60), featuring Jack Hawkins and Honor

⁸ Leslie East, 'London Music: A Concerto for Young Philip', *London Evening News*, 22 May 1959, https://www.johnaddisoncomposer.com/orchestral-works/concertino-for-piano-and-orchestra

Blackman, and the incidental music for the BBC's Doctor Who story, *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* (1964), starring William Hartnell.

His concert music features two completed symphonies. Other orchestral works include the comedy overture, Helter Skelter (1951),⁹ Lamento appassionato, for strings (1951), the Roumanian Fantasy, for harmonica and orchestra (1956) and Prelude and Fugue (1957). Among his chamber pieces are a wind octet (1948), the Concert Rumba, for two pianos (1948), a Prelude and Fugue for two violins (1950) a Divertimento, for wind quintet (1952) and a Divertimento for brass quintet (1969). Chagrin also formed his own chamber ensemble, with which he presented and broadcast many contemporary works.

He maintained an intensely practical and unpretentious attitude towards his own craft, observing that, 'My music is not for first performances – it is just to be played'.¹⁰ An obituary in *The Times* noted that 'he probably sacrificed the promotion of his own scores in his propaganda for those of others',¹¹ a sentiment echoed by Benjamin Frankel in his later tribute for the same newspaper: 'he often neglected his own considerable creative gifts in order to serve, in way that he found fitting, his fellow composers. One will look long, and perhaps vainly, for someone to replace him'.¹²

Chagrin's **Piano Concerto** (1943, rev. 1969, a further revision in 1971 was never published) was first performed by soloist Franz Osborn, with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer, at an SPNM Experimental Rehearsal held at the Royal College of Music on 4 February 1944. The first broadcast performance of the work took place for Hilversum Radio in Paris in April 1951, with the pianist Alice Heksch and the Royal Hilversum Orchestra conducted by Paul van Kempen.

Marked 'Risoluto', the opening movement begins with the solo piano giving out dogged triplet figures over a persistently trudging, repeated rhythm in the keyboard's lower reaches. The orchestra's arrival signals a relaxation in tempo and the appearance of fluent piano lines. Alternations between these martial and flowing ideas are followed

⁹ Lyrita SRCD.318.

¹⁰ Hugo Cole, 'Rearguard for the avant-garde: Hugo Cole writes about Francis Chagrin ...', *The Guardian*, 3 April 1970, p.10.

¹¹ 'Obituary: Mr. Francis Chagrin: composer and conductor', *The Times*, 11 November 1972, p.18.

¹² Benjamin Frankel, 'Mr. Francis Chagrin', *The Times*, 13 November 1972, p.16.

by a slight easing of tempo for the lightly scored, idyllically lyrical second subject, introduced by the soloist and picked up by oboe. The rest of the movement pitches these two main subjects against each other, generating considerable momentum. A vision of peace is glimpsed in an ethereal episode for high flute vaulted over trickling piano figurations, but the tenacious main theme returns with its purposeful, regular tread. The movement's two principal ideas are featured in the trenchant concluding pages.

The *Lento*, *molto tranquillo* central movement is based on two main themes. Serene and spacious, the first appears at the outset on bassoon, over hushed violins, and is then taken up by muted trumpet. The second, which is more fluid and flexible, is ushered in on violins and presently assumed by the soloist. A powerful central climax is followed by an intensely expressive declaration of the second theme on impassioned strings. In the final bars, both themes are heard together before the quiet, sustained closing chord.

The *Allegro vivace* finale is dominated by its resolute main theme, which has an obsessive, Bolero-like rhythm. Even in the piano's more rhapsodic passages at the music's midpoint, the all-pervading tune can be discerned in extended form, memorably on solo viola, at one point. A scrunchy, dissonant last chord rounds off a richly eclectic, wide-ranging piece which captures various sides of the composer's creative personality.

Conversation Piece by John Addison was written in 1958 to a commission from the BBC Concert Orchestra for that year's British Light Music Festival. It was first performed by the pianist Semprini, with the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by the composer at the Royal Festival Hall, London on 14 June 1958. The event, which also included a performance of Arthur Bliss's *Fanfare for a Dignified Occasion*, was broadcast live on the BBC's Light Programme.

This fantasia-like, single-movement work consists of several thematically related, contrasting sections. It begins with an angular, mock-academic statement, perhaps cocking a cheerful snook at the prevailing dodecaphonic orthodoxy of the time. Succeeding these portentously rhetorical utterances, the darting, carefree main theme is mercifully far from beetle-browed. The first extended, contrasting section is a

languorous piano waltz that alternates with an elfin march, scored for orchestra alone. A striking passage occurs in the work's second half when the music eases into a sustained *Adagio* in which a long-breathed, Fauré-esque theme is granted space to unfold naturally. Flanked by much wry levity, this eloquent, heartfelt sequence strikes an affecting note of contemplative sincerity.¹³ After several key themes have been heard again, in varied and truncated form, the mercurial musical narrative is concluded with a brisk closing gesture.

John Addison felt that, by the late-1950s, too great a divide had opened up between serious and light music: 'Concertgoers think contemporary music is so alarmingly serious that when confronted with a mildly witty turn of phrase, they assume something has gone wrong. I remember the astonished sigh of relief when, in the course of introducing one of my chamber works, I told the audience I would not mind if they smiled'.¹⁴ In *Conversation Piece*, Addison exploits to the full his talent to amuse and divert.

'A composer's duty is to communicate ... musicians today are so busy chasing up techniques and comparing systems that we forget that music is a social art and a spiritual art: it is described by Bach's simple dictum: "Music exists for the glory of God and the delight of men"¹⁵ **PHILIP CANNON** remained true to this artistic credo throughout a creative life spanning seven decades.

He was born in Paris on 21 December 1929. His mother was Burgundian and his father a Cornish sailor. He returned to England with his parents when he was six. Most of his childhood was spent in Cornwall where he developed a love of the sea and the beautiful Cornish coast. At Falmouth Grammar School he began learning the violin and piano. His earliest compositions, mainly piano pieces, date from his twelfth year. In 1944 he won the senior prize for violin at the Cornwall Music Festival and a year later wrote a string quartet which so impressed Imogen Holst that she invited him to study with her at Dartington Hall in Devon. She instilled in her young pupil what he

¹³ The segment is reminiscent in mood and character of the enchanting 'Romanza' from Addison's *Carte blanche* ballet suite.

¹⁴ "The Younger Generation", *The Musical Times*, Vol.101, No.1405 (March 1960), p.146.

¹⁵ 'A Composer Discusses His First Opera', *The Times*, 30 June 1984, p.13.

later described as 'a tough and steely self-awareness of my powers and limitations which proved a constant revelation'.¹⁶

At the age of eighteen he gained a composition scholarship to the Royal College of Music and studied there with Gordon Jacob from 1948 to 1951. Cannon's other teachers included Ralph Vaughan Williams (at the RCM) and Paul Hindemith, with whom he had a few independent lessons. In 1951 he won the Octavia Travelling Scholarship, which enabled him to tour Europe with his wife, the librettist and writer Jacqueline Laidlaw. During this extensive journey they listened to music and discussed musical issues with performers and critics, as well as composers such as Hans Werner Henze.

From 1957 to 1959 Cannon was Lecturer in Music at Sydney University and in 1960 he was appointed a professor of composition at the RCM, a post he held until his retirement in 1995. Composer, keyboard player and songwriter Rick Wakeman paid this warm tribute to his former tutor in the college's magazine: 'My absolute favourite teacher was Philip Cannon. He was an incredibly eccentric teacher, and you never knew what he was going to say next, but he taught me everything I know about orchestration'.¹⁷ Personal tragedy struck in the early 1980s when Cannon's wife Jacqueline developed Alzheimer's disease. Her death in 1984 affected Cannon deeply and impaired his creativity for some considerable time. He recovered sufficiently from this traumatic experience to resume composition in the early 1990s and enjoyed an active retirement in Buckinghamshire with his second wife, the artist Jane, Baroness Buijs van Schouwenburg. He died at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury on 24 December 2016.

Philip Cannon's catalogue embraces a broad range of genres from operas and symphonies to songs and keyboard works. His first significant pieces were written while he was still a student at the RCM. The *Symphonic Study*: *Spring* (1949) established his reputation as a composer. It received several performances and broadcasts in the UK and in Australia and Malcolm Sargent conducted it at a Prom with the BBC Symphony

¹⁶ Philip Cannon, 'Life as a Student Nearly Fifty Years Ago ...', *Friends of Dartington Newsletter* 1993.

¹⁷ 'Rick Wakeman', *Upbeat*, Summer 2001, p.10.

Orchestra on 20 August 1954. This early score already shows a mastery of form, a gift for counterpoint and a natural feeling for orchestral colour.

Drawn to the voice, in his *Cinq Chansons de Femme* (1952) Cannon set five old French ballads for soprano and harp or piano, recreating in contemporary vignettes the archaic, serious or light-hearted spirit of the texts.¹⁸ Other successful examples of his vocal writing include: the unaccompanied part-songs *Fleeting Fancies* (1953); *Three Rivers* (1954), for tenor and piano (the rivers being the Granta, Chabet and Thames), and *Son of God* (1956), three motets for unaccompanied choir on the theme of the nativity, crucifixion and accession, premiered in Southwark Cathedral. At a subsequent performance of this work in Sydney Cathedral, the Dean said to him, 'if anything can cross frontiers, your music can'.¹⁹

A turning point came when his passionately dissonant String Quartet of 1964 won both the Grand Prix and the Critics' Prize at the Eighth International Composers' Competition in Paris in 1965.²⁰ It was written at a time when the composer was becoming increasingly disillusioned with contemporary trends in composition. The score bears the superscription 'a personal exorcism of the many devils that beset us today'.

A series of high-profile commissions ensued, including two for the Three Choirs Festival. *The Temple* (1974), for unaccompanied choir, is an intensely beautiful treatment of George Herbert's mystic poetry. *Lord of Light* (1980) is a large-scale one-movement setting of the requiem mass for soloists, boys' choir, chorus, organ and large orchestra.²¹ An unexpected *cri de coeur* in the prayer for rest, 'Dona Eis Requiem', is a highlight of this visionary piece which ends in a fantasia on the joyful tune 'Christe Redemptor Omnium', one of the chimes at Gloucester Cathedral, where the piece was premiered. His most prestigious commission, the *Te Deum* (1975), dedicated to the Queen, marked the 500th anniversary of St George's Chapel, Windsor.

¹⁸ Lyrita REAM.1132.

¹⁹ Quoted by Eugene Edelman in *Philip Cannon* (1974), Kronos Press, p.1.

²⁰ Lyrita REAM.1132.

²¹ Lyrita REAM.1132.

Later choral works include the *Missa Chorea* (Dance Mass) of 1984 for eight soloists, double semi-chorus and double chorus, which was inspired by an old French abbey and audaciously juxtaposes granitic blocks of sound with lively and joyous dance elements, and *A Raleigh Triptych* (1991), consisting of impassioned treatments for unaccompanied choir of the elegies 'What is our life', 'Even such is time' and 'Give me my scallop shell of quiet'. Raleigh's fearless acceptance of death and final search for redemption struck a chord with Cannon, having experienced the death of his first wife, and his musical response is correspondingly candid and undaunted. One of his last completed works was an *a cappella* setting of George Herbert's poem 'Faith', written in 2012 for St Martin's Chamber Choir based in Denver, Colorado.

Among well-crafted keyboard pieces are the dance-inspired *Sonata per Ballo* for two pianos (1960), three volumes of graded piano pieces, *Jazz and Blues* (1970) and the technically challenging *Septain* (1995), written in memory of the pianist John Ogdon.

Chief among his works for string orchestra is Oraison Funèbre de l'Âme Humaine ('Funeral Orison of the Human Soul'). Described by the composer as 'a cry of anguish for peace and humanity',²² this passionate score for 24 solo strings was the first piece by a British composer to be commissioned by the ORTF. At its Paris premiere conducted by Cannon himself it was enthusiastically received by the press, a leading French critic memorably describing it in *Le Figaro* as 'avant-garde romantique'.

His first opera, *Morvoren* (1963), was commissioned by the South Western Arts Association and premiered at the Royal College of Music on 15 July 1964. The composer drew upon his childhood memories of Cornwall in the scoring and Cornishinflected recitatives of this dramatic two-act opera based on the romantic local legend of the Mermaid of Zennor. In contrast, his next stage work was a one-act opera bouffe, *The Man from Venus* (1967), which the Arts Council's 'Opera for All' group performed around the UK. In this social satire on English conventions, an alien from outer space interrupts the worldly wedding plans of a bossy suburban mother who disregards her daughter's true affections. His third music drama, *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1973) was written for BBC television.

²² 'Child of Cornwall's Cry of Anguish', *Western Morning News*, 12 November 1972.

Philip Cannon's **Concertino for piano and strings** (1951) dates from his formative years. It was written for the Petersfield Festival, where it was premiered on 27 January 1951 by soloist Joseph Cooper,²³ with the Petersfield Orchestra conducted by Kathleen Merritt.²⁴ This lively, neo-classical piece has achieved over a thousand performances internationally. BBC radio broadcasts of the work took place on 24 July 1959, with pianist Raymond O'Connell and the BBC Scottish Orchestra conducted by Maurice Miles; 11 October 1972, with pianist Colin Horsley and the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson and 5 June 1980, with pianist Martin Jones, with the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer.

The opening *Allegro molto vivace* establishes the work's neo-classical style. There are two main ideas, the first, crisply rhythmic and firmly accented, is heard at the start and the second, introduced on the strings, is smooth and songlike. Near the end of the movement there is a bright piano cadenza, rippling with pellucid, filigree passagework.

In a lilting, berceuse-like rhythm, the gentle melody of the central *Andante tranquillo* evokes Poulenc's wistful elegance and harmonic piquancy. The tune is stated immediately on unaccompanied piano and followed up by the strings alone, so that some time elapses before there is any interplay between these two musical protagonists. Delicate keyboard writing and *pizzicato* string effects contribute to the rarefied music's distanced, bygone feel.

With only a short pause for breath, the *Presto leggiero* finale bustles in. The busy main theme is punctuated by brittle discords and there is a brief, jazzy episode that calls to mind the discordant clashes in the second half of 'Mattachins' from Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*. By contrast, the secondary material is fluent and graceful, with finely spun keyboard tracery over light string accompaniment. The tempo gradually quickens towards the end of the work, culminating in an exhilarating *Prestissimo* coda.

²³ Pianist and broadcaster Joseph Cooper is probably best known as the presenter and chair of the BBC's popular, long-running television panel game show, Face the Music. In 1946 he collaborated with Vaughan Williams on the arrangement for two pianos and orchestra of the composer's Piano Concerto.

²⁴ Eva Kathleen Merritt (1901-1985) founded the Petersfield Orchestra in 1927, conducting it from then until her retirement in 1973. In April 1960 she organised and conducted a concert of 'Contemporary British Women Composers', which featured the music of Ina Boyle, Ruth Gipps, Dorothy Howell, Antoinette Kirkwood, Elizabeth Maconchy and Grace Williams.

Of the work's premiere performance, The Times' critic wrote that Joseph Cooper played the piece with 'persuasive advocacy', going on to say of the Concertino that, 'it proved to be an attractive work in the neo-classical style', whose 'flow of ideas was natural'.²⁵ This judgement is in step with the composer's own declared musical priorities: 'it is what the music says that counts in sincere compositions, and this should be said as simply, lucidly and directly as possible, and should flow inevitably'.26

Paul Conway, 2024

'The Younger Generation', The Musical Times, Vol.101, No.1405 (March 1960), p.147.

of Wales

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcnow



https://music.yale.edu/people/william-boughton

Photo by Harold Shapiro

²⁵ 'The Petersfield Orchestra: A New Concertino', *The Times*, 31 January 1951, p.8.





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