

RAWSTHORNE

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

Improvisations on a theme by Constant Lambert

Peter Donohoe, Piano

Ulster Orchestra • Takuo Yuasa



Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971)

Piano Concertos

Alan Rawsthorne was born in Haslingden, Lancashire, in May 1905. After abortive sorties into dentistry and architecture he entered the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1925 and graduated in 1929. He gained his first notable success at the London Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1938 with a performance of his *Theme and Variations for Two Violins*. A further success was registered at the Warsaw Festival of the same organization in 1939 with his *Symphonic Studies*, a first and highly accomplished orchestral score, which was to win an established place in the orchestral repertoire.

Following the war, in which he served in the Army, Rawsthorne devoted himself to composition and between then and his death in 1971, though not prolific, he produced a number of substantial works in most of the established forms, many to commissions, including a very distinguished contribution to the genre of music for films. Between 1937 and 1964 he wrote scores for 26 films, including *The Cruel Sea*, *The Captive Heart*, *Where No Vultures Fly*, *Saraband for Dead Lovers*, *West of Zanzibar* and *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*.

Taking together the concertos and solo piano works, Rawsthorne made a major contribution to the sparse twentieth century literature of English keyboard music. His is music written from an intimate acquaintance with the instrument - he studied with Frank Merrick at the Royal Manchester College and subsequently with Egon Petri in Poland and Germany. Writing for piano, in all its forms, prevailed throughout his composing life.

Rawsthorne's highly distinctive voice is to be heard in the earliest of his published compositions. His attributes are clarity of expression and form, craftsmanship and concision. His personality shows through in a degree of understatement, refusal to compromise or follow fashion and, where fitting, dry wit. He published some seventy works, including a

distinguished body of chamber music, three symphonies, eight concertos, fifteen orchestral works, a ballet score and a handful of choral works and songs.

Rawsthorne's *Piano Concerto No.1* was first performed in an Adolph Hallis Concert in 1939 in a version scored with strings and percussion. In its fuller orchestral form it was first performed in the 1942 Promenade Concerts in London with Louis Kentner as soloist and with Rawsthorne on the rostrum. This early, though highly assured, work exhibits many of the characteristics of the composer, among them tonal fluidity, economy and clarity of means, and wit. The toccata-like writing of the *Capriccio* and the ensuing *Chaconne* follow the neo-classical and neo-baroque lines such titles suggest. The élan of the opening bars is rarely absent throughout the remainder of the movement, in which contrasting interludes seem impatient for a return to the chase. The rapid *Coda* prefigures the *Tarantella* of the final movement. The *Chaconne* is built on an eight-chord sequence which at each restatement appears a semitone higher. This progression serves well the composer's fluid tonal language, here producing a singing melancholic lyricism, which develops as variation flows into variation, until briefly interrupted by the orchestral tutti at its centre. It then returns to the previous pattern and winds down to the *cri de cœur* of the final chord. The *Tarantella* finale is cast in a favourite tarantellacum-jig mould, which was to appear elsewhere in Rawsthorne's writing. This is full of wit and lightness of touch, though at its climax making a contemporaneous political gesture by having the trombones declaim the *Bandiera rossa*, associated with the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, thereby letting us know where the composer's sympathies lay. The understated conclusion to the movement is as unexpected as it is telling.

"My Second Piano Concerto", the composer wrote, "was commissioned by the Arts Council of

Great Britain, for performance during our Festival of [Britain in] 1951. It is, perhaps in consequence, designed to exploit the resources of both the piano and the pianist to a considerable extent.

"The concerto opens with a melody played on the flute, with a piano accompaniment. Other instruments join in, clarinets and oboes, and the piano then gives another, decorated, statement of this melody. The cellos and basses develop phrases of the tune, still with piano decorations. This development continues through rhetorical passages for the solo instrument, until a new, rather more delicate theme is reached which serves as the basis for a middle section. The recapitulation is short; now the opening melody is played by the clarinet.

"It is difficult to pass immediately from a rather amiable first movement to a lyrical slow one. There are very few tragic slow movements by Beethoven, for example; where they occur, it is because his native lyric gifts have been amply displayed at the outset. So, in this concerto, a rather violent scherzo is interpolated. This is in rondo form. A is an energetic theme announced by the piano, and developed by the orchestra, which accompanies the soloist with utterances of the opening figure. B is a quiet, rather menacing subject, with dark orchestral colours; this section still retains mutters of the semiquavers of A. After the ritornello, C is introduced by the soloist; this section is of a more genial character. The next reprise, which is very short, leads into D, a section based initially on dynamic contrasts. All the subjects are next heard in relation to each other. After this, the reprise of A finishes the movement, which dissolves, at the very end, into a chord consisting of the notes of the phrase which introduces the slow movement.

"The third movement has about it that nostalgic character so much disliked by the immobile intelligentsia of today, who confuse this quality with the emotional mess of the last century. The piece starts with a cantilena for the clarinet, after which the piano enters, playing arabesques or meditations consequent upon this passage. There is a middle section, 'leggiero', in which the piano is predominant, and a short reprise, where the pianist plays reminiscences of his first entry.

"The last movement opens with a short, cacophonous outburst by the orchestra, setting forth the first phrase of the main tune. This tune, saved, one hopes, from complete banality by its metrical construction (two-four/three-eight), provides the basis for an episodic type of composition, and for the fugato coda with which the work concludes." (Alan Rawsthorne 1958)

Rawsthorne was one of a group of composers who assisted with the orchestration of Lambert's last ballet *Tiresias*, first performed in the year of his death, 1951. His *Improvisations on a Theme by Constant Lambert* was written in 1960 to a commission by the Northern Sinfonia. The theme of seven notes, all different from each other, and consonant with original thematic material devised by Rawsthorne for variation treatment elsewhere, is taken from the opening bars of the ballet. The composer uses well-tried and favoured devices (some employing his version of serialism) as he transforms the theme throughout its seven sections, producing varieties of mood and impetus. The dedication is "to Isabel", his wife, who was Lambert's widow, and who had provided the décor for *Tiresias*.

John M. Belcher

The notes by Alan Rawsthorne are © (assigned 1992) the Rawsthorne Trust. This recording was made with financial assistance from and in association with The Rawsthorne Trust and The Manchester Musical Heritage Trust.

<http://www.musicweb.uk.net/rawsth/index/htm>

British Piano Concerto Foundation

Britain shares with the United States an extraordinary willingness to welcome and embrace the traditions of foreign cultures. Our countries comprise the world's two greatest 'melting pots', and, as a result, the artistic appreciation of our people has been possibly the most catholic and least nepotistic in the world. This tradition is one that we may be extremely proud of. In the case of music, it is certainly one of the reasons for my own initial inspiration to become a musician and to embrace as many different styles and periods as reasonably possible in one lifetime.

However, perhaps as a result of this very enviable virtue, we do have a tendency to underrate the artistic traditions of our own wonderful culture. As far as music is concerned there are of course many exceptions; one thinks immediately of the operas of Benjamin Britten, the symphonic and choral works of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, as well as the leading rôle Britain has played in new music since the 1960s. Of these achievements we are rightly proud. However, the British piano concerto and solo piano music, of which there is a vast array, has been largely ignored, particularly over the last 30 years.

The role and aim of the British Piano Concerto Foundation is to try to expand and explore this hugely rich and varied repertoire. It is not to exploit a musical 'curiosity corner'. It is not to merely fill a gap in the 'market place' by promoting public performances and recordings of less important music. It is to make the international musical community more aware of the true greatness of much of this repertoire.

The commitment of Naxos to this artistic cause is a source of huge inspiration to those of us involved in the BPCF, and a reason to be optimistic about the future of recorded music at a time when there is so much pessimism.

I am sure that those administrators, listeners and performers who shape the world of music will agree that some of this music is amongst the most original and fascinating, not only of the 20th Century, but also of previous ones.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I am associated with this project, and I look forward to continuing for whatever time I have left to explore the wonderful music of my own country.

Peter Donohoe



Peter Donohoe

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953 and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham, and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. Since his unprecedented success at the 1982 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, he has developed a distinguished career in Europe, the United States of America, the Far East and Australasia. He has appeared with orchestras throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, including the major London Orchestras, the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony and Czech Philharmonic. He has performed regularly at the BBC Promenade Concerts in London since 1979, at the Edinburgh Festival on six consecutive occasions and at many other major festivals in Europe. His career in the United States has won similar success in collaboration with leading orchestras, including the Chicago, Boston, LA Philharmonic, Detroit and Cleveland Orchestras. Peter Donohoe has made a number of recordings, winning critical praise and awards that have included the Grand Prix International du Disque Liszt and the Gramophone Concerto Award. His best-seller recording of Elgar's *Piano Quintet* (8.553737) is one of his significant earlier collaborations with Naxos.



Ulster Orchestra

Based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the Ulster Orchestra was formed in 1966 and has established itself as one of the major symphony orchestras in the United Kingdom. In addition to the main concert season, which runs from October to May each year in the Ulster Hall and the Waterfront Hall, the orchestra's varied home-based activities include participation in the Belfast Festival at Queen's and the Belfast Proms, accompaniment to opera and ballet productions as well as educational work and concerts throughout Ireland. In August 2001, the Swiss conductor, Thierry Fischer, began his tenure as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. He followed the acclaimed violinist and conductor, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, who became Conductor Laureate. The Ulster Orchestra's distinguished past conductors include the late Bryden Thomson, Vernon Handley and Yan Pascal Tortelier. The Principal Guest Conductor is Takuo Yuasa. Since their first recording of the music of Hamilton Harty in 1979, the Ulster Orchestra has made over sixty recordings on a number of major commercial labels, and for Naxos the orchestra has recorded the music of Schoenberg, Webern, Arvo Pärt and Philip Glass as well as a series of Japanese discs with Takuo Yuasa. The orchestra has a broad-ranging relationship with the BBC and records twelve weeks of output each year for broadcast on Radio 3 and Radio Ulster, including several televised performances. Through the European Broadcasting Union and other broadcasting agreements, these recordings of the Ulster Orchestra can be heard across the world. Appearances in Europe, Asia and America have added to the growing international reputation of the orchestra, with a tour to Spain in 1998, and in 1999 tours to Germany, the Netherlands and Hong Kong.

Takuo Yuasa

The Japanese conductor Takuo Yuasa has become increasingly well known throughout the world. He has held positions as Principal Conductor of the Gumma Symphony Orchestra in Japan and Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra and is Principal Guest Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra in Belfast. Born in Osaka, where he studied piano, cello, flute and clarinet as a child, he continued his education at the University of Cincinnati, going on to a study of conducting under Hans Swarowsky and Igor Markevich at the Vienna Musikhochschule and with Franco Ferrara in Siena. Since winning a Special Award at the Fitelberg International Competition in Katowice, Takuo Yuasa has regularly conducted the major orchestras there, while continuing his association with the principal orchestras in Japan. Recent engagements have brought appearances from Hong Kong to Trondheim, concerts with the London Philharmonic and Hallé Orchestras, with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and many others throughout Europe.



Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971)

Klavierkonzerte

Alan Rawsthorne wurde am 5. Mai 1905 in Haslington in der Grafschaft Lancashire geboren. Nach einem abgebrochenen Zahnmedizin- und Architekturstudium begann er 1925 seine musikalische Ausbildung am Royal Manchester College of Music, wo er 1929 sein Examen ablegte. Einen ersten Erfolg erzielte Rawsthorne 1938 beim Londoner Festival der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Zeitgenössische Musik mit seiner Komposition *Theme and Variations for Two Violins*. Bei einer Veranstaltung derselben Gesellschaft anlässlich des 1939 in Warschau veranstalteten Festivals wurden seine *Symphonic Studies* erfolgreich aufgeführt – seine erste, bereits meisterhaft vollendete Orchesterkomposition, die ein fester Bestandteil des Konzertrepertoires wurde.

Nach dem 2. Weltkrieg, in dem er als Soldat diente, widmete sich Rawsthorne ganz seiner kompositorischen Arbeit, und bis 1971, seinem Todesjahr, entstand eine Reihe gehaltvoller Werke in den meisten gängigen Gattungen, darunter viele Auftragskompositionen, u.a. auch hervorragende Filmmusiken. Zwischen 1937 und 1964 schrieb er nicht weniger als 26 Soundtracks für die

Leinwand, u.a. für *The Cruel Sea*, *The Captive Heart*, *Where No Vultures Fly*, *Saraband for Dead Lovers*, *West of Zanzibar* und *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*..

Mit seinen Konzerten und Solowerken lieferte Rawsthorne einen wichtigen Beitrag zum spärlichen englischen Klavierrepertoire des 20. Jahrhunderts. Seine Musik ist das Resultat einer intimen Vertrautheit mit dem Instrument – er studierte bei Frank Merrick am Royal Manchester College und danach bei Egon Petri in Polen und Deutschland. Seine Arbeiten für Klavier beherrschten in all ihren Ausprägungen sein gesamtes kompositorisches Schaffen.

Rawsthornes höchst persönliche musikalische Sprache äußert sich bereits in seinen ersten veröffentlichten Kompositionen. Sie ist gekennzeichnet durch formale und ausdrucksmäßige Klarheit, Kompromisslosigkeit, die Weigerung, modische Tendenzen zu übernehmen und nicht zuletzt durch ihren gelegentlichen trockenen Witz. Er veröffentlichte an die siebzig Werke, darunter zahlreiche Kammermusikkompositionen, drei Sinfonien, acht

Konzerte, fünfzehn Orchesterstücke, ein Ballett sowie eine Handvoll Chorwerke und Lieder.

Rawsthornes *Klavierkonzert Nr. 1* wurde 1939 bei einem Adolph Hallis-Konzert in der Fassung mit Streichern und Schlagzeug uraufgeführt. In der Fassung für großes Orchester gelangte es 1942 bei einem Londoner Promenadenkonzert mit Louis Kentner als Solist und unter der Leitung des Komponisten zur Uraufführung. Dieses frühe, gleichwohl reife Werk zeichnet sich durch viele für Rawsthorne charakteristische Merkmale aus, u.a. durch fließenden Klang, Sparsamkeit und Klarheit der Mittel sowie durch musikalischen Humor. Das toccatenähnliche *Capriccio* und die sich anschließende *Chaconne* folgen, wie die Titel bereits andeuten, neoklassizistischen bzw. neobarocken Vorbildern. Der Elan der Eröffnungstakte erlahmt an fast keiner Stelle des Satzes, in dem kontrastierende Zwischenspiele sich ungeduldig zu jagen scheinen. Die schnelle Coda nimmt bereits die *Tarantella* des Schlusssatzes vorweg. Die *Chaconne* ist auf einer aus acht Akkorden bestehenden Sequenz aufgebaut, die bei jeder Wiederkehr einen Halbton höher erklingt. Diese Fortschreitung erzeugt den für Rawsthorne typischen Klangfluss und mündet hier in einen gesanglich-melancholischen Lyrysmus, der sich in dem Maße entwickelt, wie eine Variation in die andere übergeht, bevor ein Orchester-Tutti in der Satzmitte für eine kurze Unterbrechung sorgt. Danach kehrt das vorherige Muster zurück und endet in dem "cri de cœur" des Schlussakkords. Die abschließende *Tarantella* ist in der beliebten Form einer *Tarantella-plus-Gigue* gestaltet, wie wir sie in Rawsthornes Kompositionen häufiger antreffen. Der Satz zeichnet sich durch Humor und Leichtigkeit aus, obwohl sich der Komponist auf dem Höhepunkt eine Anspielung an die politischen Ereignisse der Zeit erlaubt, indem er die Posaunen die mit der republikanischen Seite des Spanischen Bürgerkriegs assoziierte *Bandiera rossa* deklamieren lässt und damit seine eigenen Sympathien kundtut. Das Understatement des Satzschlusses ist ebenso unerwartet wie wirkungsvoll.

"Mein Zweites Klavierkonzert", schreibt der

Komponist, "entstand als Auftragswerk für den Arts Council of Great Britain, und zwar für eine Aufführung bei unserem Festival [of Britain] im Jahre 1951. Es ist, vielleicht als Konsequenz, so angelegt, um die Möglichkeiten sowohl des Klaviers als auch des Pianisten in hohem Maße auszuschöpfen.

"Das Konzert beginnt mit einer von der Flöte gespielten Melodie, begleitet vom Klavier. Andere Instrumente treten hinzu, Klarinetten und Oboen, während das Klavier diese Melodie nun in verzierter Form vorträgt. Die Celli und Kontrabässe entwickeln Phrasen der Melodie, noch immer mit Verzerrungen des Klaviers. Diese Durchführung fährt mit rhetorischen Passagen für das Soloinstrument fort, bis ein neues, wesentlich zarteres Thema erreicht wird, das als Basis des Mittelabschnitts dient. Die Reprise ist kurz; jetzt erklingt die Eröffnungsmelodie in der Klarinette.

"Es ist schwierig, von einem ziemlich liebenswürdigen ersten Satz sofort zu einem lyrischen zweiten überzugehen. So hat Beethoven z.B. nur wenige tragische langsame Sätze geschrieben; wo es sie dennoch gibt, liegt der Grund darin, dass seine natürlichen lyrischen Gaben bereits am Werkbeginn in Fülle vorhanden sind. Deshalb habe ich in diesem Konzert die beiden Sätze durch ein eher heftiges Scherzo voneinander getrennt. Es steht in Rondoform. A ist ein energisches, vom Klavier angekündigtes Thema, das vom Orchester weiterentwickelt wird, welches den Solisten mit Ausführungen der Eröffnungsfigur begleitet. B ist ein ruhiges, eher bedrohliches Thema mit dunklen Orchesterfarben: in diesem Abschnitt begegnen noch immer die murmelnden Sechzehntel des A-Teils. Nach dem Ritornell wird C vom Solisten vorgestellt; dieser Abschnitt besitzt einen eher jovialen Charakter. Die folgende, sehr kurze Reprise führt zu D, einem zunächst auf dynamischen Kontrasten basierenden Abschnitt. Als nächstes erklingen alle Themen in Relation zueinander. Danach beendet die Reprise von A den Satz, der sich am Ende in einen Akkord auflöst, der aus den Noten der Phrase besteht, die den langsamen Satz einleitet.

“Der dritte Satz hat etwas von dem nostalgischen Charakter, der von den starren Intellektuellen unserer Zeit so sehr verabscheut wird, die diese Qualität mit dem emotionalen Schwulst des letzten Jahrhunderts verwechseln. Das Stück beginnt mit einer Kantilene für die Klarinette; danach setzt das Klavier mit Arabesken oder Meditationen ein, die sich auf diese Passage beziehen. Im mittleren Abschnitt, “leggiero”, steht das Klavier im Vordergrund, und in der kurzen Reprise spielt der Pianist Reminiszenzen an seinen ersten Einsatz.

“Der letzte Satz beginnt mit einer kurzen, kakophonischen Eruption des Orchesters, aus der die erste Phrase der Hauptmelodie entsteht. Diese Melodie, die, so ist zu hoffen, durch ihre metrische Konstruktion (Zweiviertel/Dreiachtel) vor vollständiger Banalität bewahrt wird, bildet die Grundlage für einen episodischen Kompositionstyp und für die Fugato-Coda, mit der das Werk endet” (Alan Rawsthorne, 1958).

Rawsthorne gehörte zu einer Gruppe von

Komponisten, die an der Instrumentierung von Lamberts letztem Ballett, *Tiresias*, mitarbeiteten, das in seinem Todesjahr 1951 uraufgeführt wurde. Seine *Improvisations on a Theme by Constant Lambert* schrieb Rawsthorne 1960 als Auftragswerk der Northern Sinfonia. Das aus sieben Noten bestehende Thema, die sich alle voneinander unterscheiden und die originale thematischen Material entsprechen, das Rawsthorne für einen anderweitig verwendeten Variationssatz vorgesehen hatte, entstammt den Eröffnungstakten des Balletts. Der Komponist setzt vielerprobte und bevorzugte Techniken ein (in denen er u.a. seine eigene Ausprägung des Serialismus vorführt). Das Thema wird in den sieben Abschnitten transformiert und erzeugt eine Vielfalt von Stimmungen. Das Stück trägt die Widmung “für Isabel”, Rawsthornes Frau, die Witwe Lamberts, von der die Bühnenbilder für *Tiresias* stammten.

John M. Belcher

Deutsche Fassung: Bernd Delfs

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<http://www.musicweb.uk.net/rawsth/index/htm>

Alan Rawsthorne was born in Haslingden, Lancashire, in May 1905. After abortive sorties into dentistry and architecture he entered the Royal Manchester College of Music. He gained his first notable success in 1938 with a performance of his *Theme and Variations for Two Violins*. After serving in the war, Rawsthorne devoted himself to composition until his death in 1971. Though not prolific, he produced a number of substantial works in most of the established forms including film music. Rawsthorne's *Piano Concerto No.1*, first performed in 1939, exhibits many of his characteristics: tonal fluidity, economy and clarity of means, and wit. His *Second Piano Concerto* was commissioned by the Arts Council of Great Britain, for performance during the Festival of Britain in 1951 and was designed to exploit the resources of both the piano and the pianist.



Alan
RAWSTHORNE
(1905-1971)



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|--|--------------|
| Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra* | 17:38 |
| 1 Capriccio: Allegro molto | 7:19 |
| 2 Chaconne: Andante con moto | 5:00 |
| 3 Tarantella: Vivace | 5:13 |
| 4 Improvisations on a theme by Constant Lambert | 12:15 |
| Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra* | 26:25 |
| 5 Allegro piacevole | 8:05 |
| 6 Allegro molto | 5:00 |
| 7 Intermezzo: Adagio semplice | 6:46 |
| 8 Allegro | 6:25 |

*** Peter Donohoe, Piano**
Ulster Orchestra • Takuo Yuasa

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 Post-Production: Emma Stocker, Andrew Walton • Music Notes: John M. Belcher

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