

TITANIC

10th-15th April, 1912

An Atmospheric Poem in Five Pictures
for Piano Solo

composed and played by

RONAN MAGILL, *piano*



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1	Picture One - Lamentation for the Sea Dead	6'56"	10	Waltz	2'56"
2	Picture Two - The Departure	2'15"	11	Applause and vibration	0'47"
3	Picture Three - The Voyage	1'11"	12	Two Young Girls in Third Class	1'36"
4	Ship's Vibration Walking about on deck	1'48"	13	The Cold Starry Night	3'55"
5	The Wireless Room	2'13"	14	Picture Four - The Iceberg	3'21"
6	The Engine Room	2'17"	15	Picture Five - Return to the Sea	5'48"
7	Back on deck	0'28"	16	"The Lass of Aughrim"	2'59"
8	Talking on deck	1'28"	17	Nocturne	3'22"
9	The First Class Reception Room D Deck	0'21"	18	Remembrance	5'19"
			19	Songe D'Automne	5'45"
			20	The Titanic Waltz	6'42"

[18] and [19] composed by Archibald Joyce (1908/1909) - Fulerum Music Publishers

Total playing time: 62' 13"

Producer: Joanna Leach

Recording Engineer: Mike Beville

Digital Editing: D & J Recording

Recording Session: 20th June 1997,

Venue: Pottton Hall, Dunwich, Suffolk (courtesy Trygg Tryggvason)

Front Cover: from a painting by Chris Mayger

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TITANIC, 10th-15th April, 1912

An Atmospheric Poem in Five Pictures for Piano Solo (1988)

Programme notes by the Composer

My own interest in the Titanic story started (like many others) when as a prep school boy I saw the film *A Night to Remember*. I remember being greatly affected by the story and haunted for a long time afterwards by the sight of that great liner slowly sinking on a freezing still April night. The main impetus for the present work however occurred many years later when, as a student in Paris, a friend of mine died in a sailing accident off the Breton coast. I wrote *Lamentation for the Sea Dead* in her memory and this became the first movement or 'Picture' of *Titanic*, the subject that had impressed me all those years before.

The Poem is only really programmatic in the Third Picture: *The Voyage* - here, I wanted to create the feeling of being on board a ship at sea, and all the sounds and atmosphere therein, using the piano in a colouristic way. The waltz heard in *The Voyage* is repeated as an expanded Concert piece entitled *The Titanic Waltz [20]*. These are dedicated to the memory of the Titanic's bandmaster Wallace Hartley and his group of musicians who played while the passengers were being evacuated in the lifeboats, and achieved lasting fame for remaining at their posts. None survived.

[1] Picture One - Lamentation for the Sea Dead: Originally inspired by the death of a friend in a horrific boating accident off the coast of Brittany some years ago - her body was never recovered - *Lamentation for the Sea Dead* is for all those who have gone down in ships or who have died at sea.

[2] Picture Two - The Departure. The scene: Southampton 10th April 1912, the Titanic is preparing to leave on her maiden voyage. Wild scales in the right hand accompany 'siren' notes in the bass. A climax is reached with a tremolo passage and gradually, over the constant boom of the siren (a low B flat) and the low octave B (signifying the ship), things calm down. The scales become slower, the siren fades gradually away and the low octave Bs rise

through the keyboard and achieve prominence. The voyage has begun.

[3] Picture Three - The Voyage: This picture depicts different sounds and atmospheres on board. The 'vibration' (the oscillating broken Bs) is the central ostinato in this, the longest of the five pictures. Using that as a base, we explore different parts of the ship. In order they are:

- [4] *Ship's Vibration*** leads into ***Walking about on deck*** - triadic figurations over the vibration.
- [5] *The Wireless Room*** - repeated notes in the treble working through to the bass.
- [6] *The Engine Room*** - a throbbing motif in the deep bass denoting the huge reciprocating engines, the largest ever built.
- [7] *Back on Deck***
- [8] *Talking on Deck*** - the vibration comes back as before with free capricious right hand motifs.
- [9] *The First Class Reception Room D Deck*** - Here we move to an atmosphere of revelry on the final night after dinner in which laughing and chatter can be heard. Everyone quietyens down for
- [10] *Waltz*** - this waltz is written in memory of Wallace Hartley and his band who courageously continued to play and went down with the ship.
- [11] *Applause*** follows and the vibration reappears.
- [12] *Two Young Girls in Third Class*** - a scherzo depicting youthful high spirits. They eventually fade away and with the vibration returning, we come to
- [13] *The Cold Starry Night*** - with the constant vibration in the bass, fleeting sounds in the extreme treble denote the stars (there were so many that night). The Wireless Operator finishes his messages, and a sleepy calm falls upon the ship . . . three ominous bass chords as the iceberg approaches . . . the calm shattered by the agitated dissonance of the three warning clangs of the Crows Nest bell . . .the ice draws nearer . . . grates the side far below and slowly passes away. Unaware of the fatal damage inflicted, a few questions are

asked by puzzled passengers and crew as to the nature of the disturbance . . . the vibration slows as the ship comes to a complete halt . . . the stars are watching. A quiet interrogating phrase builds up to a crescendo of nervous trills in the bass, which in turn leads into

[14] Picture Four - The Iceberg: 'Very Cold and Glistening, Angular and Implacable' are the directions for this, the climax of the whole work. It is a contemplation of this majestic creation of nature and of its awesome power. This picture is in three parts: (1) the first, very loud open spaced notes, covering the whole of the keyboard; (2) a ripping motif with jangling trills and chords; (3) this recapitulates (1), but this time very softly, leading directly to

[15] Picture Five - Return To the Sea: The sea motif heard in *Lamentation of the Sea Dead* (Picture One) returns, but more tortured this time, as if the water is foraging through the ship's compartments. The victims cry out - agonise - and are then transfigured in a final *Adieu* (constantly repeated D and B with its echoes and a bell in the distance). Finally the sea, indifferent as ever, ends the work.

. . .

[16] "The Lass of Aughrim". This is a beautiful old Irish melody which I have arranged and dedicated to the Irish victims of the Titanic, all emigrants starting a new life. Of the 113 who sailed only 63 survived.

[17] Nocturne: This short piece was written in 1978. It was not written with the Titanic in mind, but because of its mood was thought very suitable for inclusion in this disc.

The Englishman, **Archibald Joyce** started his career as a dance band pianist. Later after forming his own band, he became widely known as a composer of waltzes, most of them becoming very popular. They were played everywhere in the early 1900's. **[18] Remembrance** (1909) and **[19] Songe D'Automne** (1908) were included in *Titanic's* music lists and so were played by Wallace Hartley's band during the voyage. *Songe D'Automne* (also called *Autumn*) is particularly poignant however, as it is widely believed amongst experts to

have been the final piece played by the band on that sloping deck just before the final plunge. This was witnessed by the surviving 2nd wireless operator Harold Bride, who in a thrilling account published in the New York Times describes hearing the band play *Autumn* when he and others were trying to free collapsible B (a lifeboat) on top of the officers quarters before the sea washed them all away. All eight musicians perished and were remembered in a remarkable memorial concert in the Albert Hall conducted by Sir Edward Elgar on May 24th, 1912.

[20] The Titanic Waltz: An extended concert version of the Waltz (track [10] that forms part of Picture Two) which is dedicated to Wallace Hartley and his Band.

Ronan Magill ©1997

RONAN MAGILL was born of Irish parents in Sheffield in 1954. He was a founder member of the Yehudi Menuhin School. After studies with Fanny Waterman, he met Benjamin Britten who became his musical mentor while at school at Ampleforth and later as a student at the Royal College of Music. He studied with David Parkhouse and John Barstow for piano and Philip Cannon for composition, graduating with the Hopkinson Gold Medal for piano and the Cobbett prize for composition. After his acclaimed Wigmore Hall and South Bank debuts in 1974, he moved to Paris to study with Yvonne Lefebure at the Conservatoire, where he won the Premier Prix for piano and thereafter gave many concerts and frequently appeared on French radio and television. In 1994 Ronan won the 3rd British Contemporary Piano Competition leading to appearances throughout the country including the 1995 Huddersfield International Contemporary Music Festival. Recent engagements have included recitals at the South Bank and concertos with the Royal Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras. As a composer Ronan has performed many of his compositions at leading venues including the Salle Gaveau in Paris, where in 1988, he performed the premier of *TITANIC 10th-15th April 1912*.



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Composer and pianist RONAN MAGILL

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