

EM RECORDS THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND

SIR ARTHUR BLISS
SIR HENRY WALFORD
DAVIES
YORK BOWEN

Violin Sonatas

Rupert Luck (violin)
Matthew Rickard (piano)



Sir Arthur Bliss (1891 – 1975)

SONATA FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN (*World Première recording*)

- 1 Moderato e semplice – Più mosso – Tempo I – Più lento e molto tranquillo 11:00

Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869 – 1941)

SONATA IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO (1893; revised 1895) (*World Première recording*)

- 2 i. Poco agitato (quasi Allegro) – Allegro semplice – Meno allegro 5:29
3 ii. SCHERZO: Allegro giocoso 4:17
4 iii. THE MONK AND THE WARRIOR: Largo – Poco più mosso – [Tempo I] 6:27
5 iv. Allegro – Tranquillo – Tempo I – Tranquillo – Allegro (tempo del movimento primo) – Presto – Prestissimo possible 5:43

York Bowen (1884 – 1961)

SONATA IN E MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 112

- 6 Maestoso – Allegro commodo 8:10
7 Lento ad libitum e languido – Tempo poco lento – Poco più andante – Poco più mosso 6:23
8 Allegro con fuoco 5:37

Rupert Luck (violin)
Matthew Rickard (piano)

SIR ARTHUR BLISS



Arthur Bliss was born in London in 1891, the eldest son of a keen amateur pianist and a businessman from Springfield, Massachusetts. His transatlantic heritage would later be reflected by his firmly international cultural outlook, fostered, no doubt, by the encouragement he received from his father to pursue a musical career. A conventionally middle-class education took him from Rugby to Pembroke College, Cambridge, and thence to the Royal College of Music, where his studies with Stanford were interrupted by the outbreak of war in 1914.

Bliss served with distinction throughout the war, during which he was wounded at the Somme and gassed at Cambrai. After his demobilisation in 1919, he felt a keen urge to make up for lost time. A technically-promising composition student before the war, Bliss now found himself one of a few survivors from a virtually-lost generation. Later, during a two-year sabbatical in America, Bliss met and married Trudy Hoffmann, after which a return to England heralded the completion of a journey to the very centre of musical life in Britain. During the remaining interwar years, he composed some of his most significant works in several genres.

The first performance of Bliss's *Piano Concerto* at Carnegie Hall in 1939 coincided with Britain's entry into the Second World War, causing the composer and his family to be stranded in America. Eventually, after a period spent teaching at Berkeley, he returned to England to take up a position with the BBC, for which he was later Director of Music. Bliss was knighted in 1950 and appointed Master of the Queen's Music in 1953. He continued to compose prolifically – he produced more film and operatic scores, and remained a central figure in British music until his death, after a short illness, in March 1975.

Sam Ellis

SIR HENRY WALFORD DAVIES



Henry Walford Davies was born on 6 September 1869 in Oswestry, Shropshire. In 1890, after studying with Sir George Elvey and Sir Walter Parratt at St George's Chapel, Windsor, and a succession of appointments in various organ lofts in London, he went up to the Royal College of Music, where he studied under Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. In 1893 he joined the College staff as teacher of counterpoint. In 1898 he became organist of Temple Church, a post he held for some 25 years. He was conductor of the Bach Choir from 1902 until 1907 and of the London Church Choir Association from 1901 until 1913. Other major appointments included the Organising Director of Music in RAF at the rank of Major, and Professor of Music at the University College of Wales. In 1922 he was knighted and in the following year he was appointed Professor of Music at Gresham College in London.

However, his greatest honour was being made Master of the King's Music in 1934, following the death of Sir Edward Elgar. It was an appointment that he took seriously: he organised King George's Jubilee concert in 1935 and was heavily involved in the arrangements for the Coronation of George VI. He retained the post until his death on 11 March 1941.

Walford Davies became the first 'celebrity composer' to broadcast regularly on the BBC Home Service; his lectures and talks were later edited, elaborated and published in book form in 1935 as 'The Pursuit of Music'. He provided radio programmes for children between 1939 until shortly before his death as well as a series called *Everyman's Music*. In this capacity Walford Davies became a household name, in spite of the fact that his compositions remained relatively unknown.

John France

YORK BOWEN



Born in London in 1884, Edwin York Bowen's early musical promise soon manifested a precocious talent. He won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) at the age of 14, where he studied the piano, organ, viola and horn, and proved himself a composer of great ability and originality.

After graduating, he launched a successful career as pianist and composer, often performing his own music – including, at the age of 19, his first Piano Concerto at the Proms under Henry Wood, and later, his first and third Piano Concertos under Richter. His compositions received rave reviews (“...reveals for so young a composer a quite exceptional degree of artistic perception”; “Bowen has something to say and knows how to say it”; “shows... so dextrous a command of orchestral effect that scarcely any praise can be too high”) – as did his playing: one critic wrote, “When I say that Mr Bowen is the finest pianist I have heard since Rubinstein, I give him the highest praise I have to give”, and went on to comment that, if Bowen grew his hair long, wore foreign apparel and called himself Boweniski, he would be famed throughout the world!

He was acclaimed abroad as well – his brilliant performance in Berlin with Lionel Tertis (the famed violist for whom Bowen wrote many works) led German newspapers to state that such playing was “unfortunately only too rare in this place”. When 23, he was made a Fellow of the RAM, being elevated to Professor two years later. He served in France during the First World War, after which his life revolved around teaching, adjudicating, lecturing, editing, broadcasting, touring, composing and performing. He made the first-ever recording of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto, and won numerous prizes for his own compositions, which included a Violin Concerto, four Symphonies (the first of which was premièred at the 2010 English Music Festival), Horn and Viola Concertos, four Piano Concertos, and many piano pieces, such as the 24 Preludes for Piano, described as “the finest pieces for solo piano ever written by an Englishman”. It is said that he could play every instrument in the orchestra and thus had superb knowledge of each instrument's

capabilities – it is certainly true that his music shows not just a gorgeous romanticism, but also technical brilliance and assurance.

Bowen continued composing and playing at major London venues until his final years (writing his Fourth Symphony in his seventies and performing his Fourth Piano Concerto in a Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall aged 75). Unfortunately, his style was by then too romantic for contemporary trends and his music fell out of fashion – Sorabji sagely noted that Bowen was one of the very few contemporary composers to have “both the spiritual and moral guts to stand aloof from fashionable conventions”.

Em Marshall

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We gratefully acknowledge the support of **THE BLISS TRUST** (www.blisstrust.org)

THE VIOLIN SONATAS

The manuscript of the **Violin Sonata** of **Arthur Bliss** is held by Cambridge University Library and, although it was not withdrawn by the composer, it was never published. However, the manuscript itself does show signs that the Sonata was played, probably in private performances, and seemingly more than once (the edges of the paper show considerable wear, including the 'dog-earing' of the lower right-hand corner of each page – a process beloved by all musicians in order to facilitate page-turns). Three extensive passages of this manuscript have been crossed through, evidently with the intention that they should be substituted by revisions; and, excitingly, these revisions have recently come to light. It has therefore been possible for me to piece together both original and amendments in order to create a restored version which, I believe, represents Bliss's final intentions; and I am extremely grateful to The Bliss Trust both for granting me permission to carry out this process of restoration and for their blessing for this World Première recording.

The work is cast in a single movement (the given title is Bliss's own) and is a tautly-constructed argument in which six closely-integrated themes are presented within a highly dramatic, almost theatrical context. Furthermore, the concentrated nature of the writing heightens the dramatic impact: the process of continuous development which informs the entire work splinters melodic, harmonic and rhythmic figures and uses them, sometimes in isolation as secondary elements, but more often as the building-blocks for subsequent themes. In this, the Sonata pre-empted the 'Theme and Cadenza' for Violin and Orchestra of 1947, in which the opening four-bar phrase undergoes constant transformation, the process of which is both initiated and, later, commented upon by the solo instrument.

Red-blooded, long-lined, finely-arched themes; an opulent, though never intrusive, texture; a strikingly imaginative harmonic landscape; and a poetically-intense treatment of material – all these combine to make the Sonata a truly memorable work and a wonderful discovery.

My acquaintance with the **Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano** by **Henry Walford Davies** began in June 2009, when I was invited by Dr Peter Horton, Head Research Librarian at the Royal College of Music, to edit this composer's three hitherto-unpublished Violin Sonatas, the manuscripts of which are held in the RCM Archive. I felt, of course, delighted and privileged to receive such an invitation; especially so when, looking through the manuscripts, it became clear that editing the works for performance would raise intricate challenges, as well as presenting the exciting opportunity of enabling these works to be heard in recital for the first time. Only two of Walford Davies's five Violin Sonatas – the third and fourth – have been previously published, by Novello during the early years of the twentieth century: and these, in E minor and D minor, were designated as Sonata no. 1 and Sonata no. 2 respectively. Accordingly, and with the kind permission of Dr Anthony Wilson, I began the process of translating the other three Sonatas from the handwritten manuscript.

Although this Sonata's key is formally designated by the composer as "A major", the first movement actually opens in F-sharp minor; and the juxtaposition of these two keys establishes a dramatic tension which imbues the entire work. Indeed, this juxtaposition is of paramount importance in imparting a unified harmonic structure to the composition: with F-sharp major and A major having been established as two of the principal keys, the use of D-flat major as the tonic key of the third movement, if viewed enharmonically as C-sharp major, completes a symmetrical tonal structure with the Sonata's tonic at its centre.

Furthermore, the briefly-stated opening motif, with its distinguishing sequence of semitones, plays an important unifying role across the four-movement structure, most notably in the Finale, the first two bars of which are, note for note, identical to the opening two bars of the first movement. The figure is also central to the *Scherzo*; and descending semitones appear, like a wail of anguish at a confessional, in the (strikingly titled) third movement. Against this motif, and mirroring the strife inherent to the tonal tension, is set a gentler character, epitomised by stepwise or triadic diatonic melodic movement. Each movement uses this as a foil: the work's turbulent opening is quickly swept aside by the tranquillity of the *Allegro semplice*; the second

movement's Trio section is unstrained, with an undercurrent of vitality; the violin imbues the the *Largo's* opening with religious serenity and assurance; whilst the *Tranquillo* sections of the Finale draw back the curtains on a recollection of the first movement.

Formal considerations aside, however, this is a work in which characters and emotional landscapes are delineated with theatrical clarity. From the innocent, limpid clarity of the first movement's *Allegro semplice*, which develops into ardent dialogue; through the darkly agitated *Scherzo*, redolent of intrigue and shadowy watchfulness; the fiery outbursts and devotional tranquillity of the third movement; and the turbulent passion and virtuosic bravura of the Finale – this Sonata is vivid proof of the fact that English composers wrote music that is as full-blooded and emotionally charged as any. This is not a work of comfortable, indolent pastoralism, but one which boldly confronts and expresses deeply-seated and sincerely-felt emotions and which, therefore, pulses with the vital life-force of humanity.

It was as the result of a conversation with Em Marshall, Founder-Director of the English Music Festival, that I first made the acquaintance of the **Violin Sonata** by **York Bowen**. Em and I were discussing possible programmes for my recital at the 2010 EMF when she suggested a work by Bowen – a composer for whom her enthusiasm and admiration were palpable. Examining the score of the Sonata in the Rare Books and Music Reading Room of the British Library, I was immediately struck by the treatment of both instruments – though virtuosic, the writing is well-crafted and wholly idiomatic – and, even more strongly, by the emotional power and beauty of the music.

The Sonata's autumnal colour is established at its very outset: although the opening is arrestingly dramatic, the theatrically flamboyant gestures of both instruments are tempered by a chromatically-descending contour that informs the entire work. However, the mood is not tragic: the fall of the piano's treble line is alloyed by the corresponding rise of the bassline. The violin's first charged entry, too, outlines a chromatic descent, while the vital rhythm and the following

vigorous upwards leap imbue the phrase with energy. Something of this same character may be heard in the Finale, which has an irresistible verve and momentum: the spirited semiquavers are juxtaposed with a swaggering rhythm that leaps in exuberant confidence; but, throughout, the chromatic descent keeps the music firmly earthbound – it is Dionysiac, not Terpsichorean.

By contrast, the opening movement's second subject group and the central *Lento* display a kindlier aspect. The striding, wide-ranging theme of the first movement's *Allegro commodo* gives way to a lovingly lyrical line that still carries a wistful retrospection: the mellifluous richness of the piano's harmony underpins a violin melody in which aching dissonances yearn for resolution. In the second movement, which opens with sylvan murmurings in the piano complementing a cypress-hued song in the violin, the latter instrument is muted almost throughout, its full-throated expressiveness being reserved for a red-bloodedly passionate episode just before the movement's close.

For me, then, York Bowen's Violin Sonata is imbued not with the sunlit silver of florescent romanticism, but with the russet gold of autumnal nostalgia. It is an incandescently vibrant celebration of rich experience combined with poignant remembrances of youthful hope and invincibility; and, in this respect, the Sonata is a salutation to human endeavour and achievement.

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Extended notes on these works, with playable extracts from the recording, are available at www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk/emrecords.html.

Acclaimed by audiences and critics alike for the verve, commitment and intelligence of his interpretations, **RUPERT LUCK** read Music at Cambridge University before being awarded a postgraduate scholarship to continue his violin studies with the eminent teacher Simon Fischer, thereafter winning a Distinction for his degree of Master of Music. He appears as soloist and recitalist at major venues and festivals throughout Britain as well as in France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, Switzerland and the USA; and his performances also include radio recordings for the BBC and for the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation.

As well as his busy schedule as a soloist and chamber musician, Rupert is active as a writer and speaker on the performing aspects of music, and he has presented lecture-recitals, seminars and masterclasses at the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge and Oxford, at University College London, and for the Centre for the History of Music in Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth. He has authored papers and articles for the British Music Society, The Arthur Bliss Society, and the English Music Festival, and is the editor of the hitherto unpublished Violin Sonatas by Henry Walford Davies and the Violin Sonata by Arthur Bliss.



MATTHEW RICKARD studied with Clive Williamson at the University of Surrey and with Michael Dussek as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, where he specialised in piano accompaniment, gaining a distinction for his final recital.

Matthew is currently active as a freelance chamber musician and accompanist. He has performed live on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune' and has appeared at many venues throughout the UK and abroad. As an orchestral pianist and accompanist, Matthew has worked with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Moscow City Ballet, Thursday Christmas Spectacular, Guildford Opera Company, Hart Voices, Lloyds Choir, Rugby Philharmonic Choir, Royal Free Music Society and the Rushmoor Choir. Matthew is passionate about education and devotes much time to his private teaching practice.

Both Rupert Luck and Matthew Rickard are regular performers at the English Music Festival.



THE ENGLISH MUSIC FESTIVAL (EMF) celebrates the brilliance, beauty and diversity of music by British composers throughout the ages, with a strong focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the Golden Renaissance of English music. The annual Festival is complemented by a programme of events – including educational activities, concerts, lectures, and musical soirées – which takes place throughout the year both in the UK and abroad. The EMF operates a flourishing Friends' Scheme, benefits of which include discounted tickets and invitations to exclusive social gatherings and recitals.

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Violin Sonatas

Rupert Luck (violin)
Matthew Rickard (piano)

Sir Arthur Bliss (1891 – 1975)

SONATA FOR PIANO AND VIOLIN (*World Première recording*)

1 Moderato e semplice – Più mosso – Tempo I – Più lento e molto tranquillo 11:00

Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869 – 1941)

SONATA IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO (1893; revised 1895) (*World première recording*)

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York Bowen (1884 – 1961)

SONATA IN E MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 112

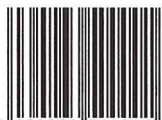
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