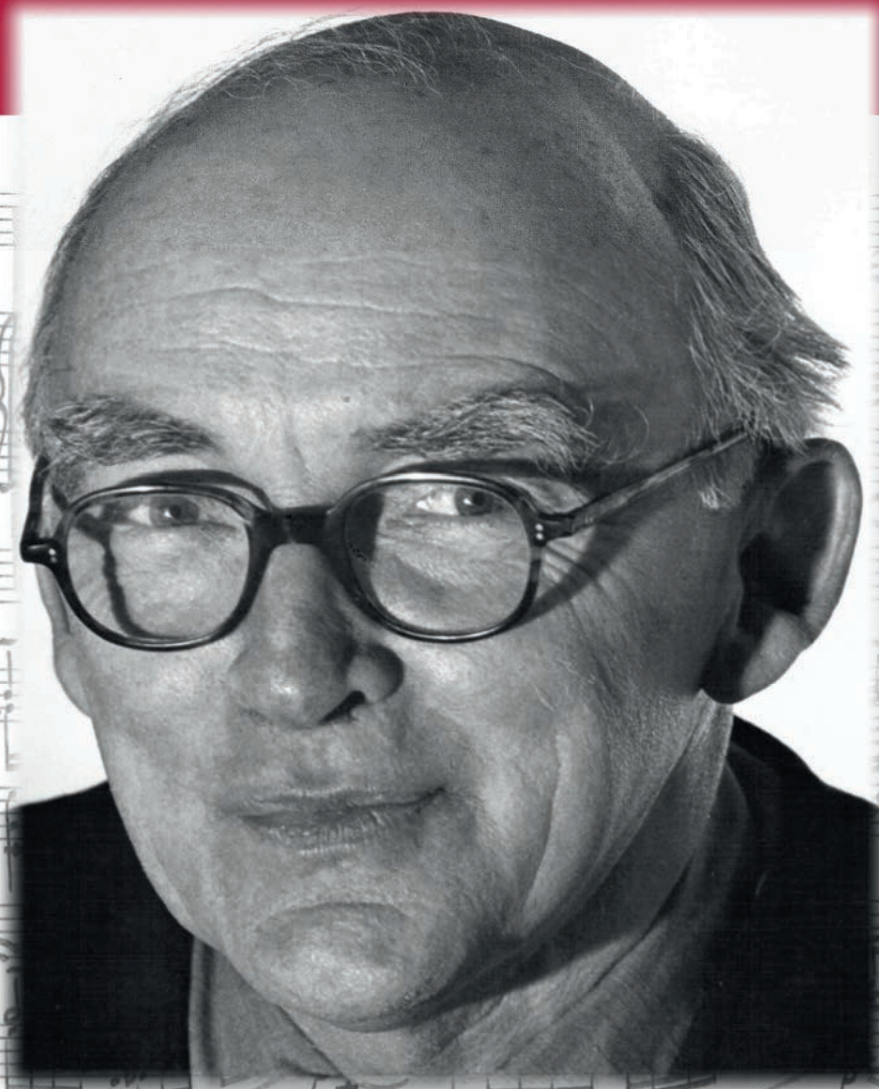


Lyrita

DISCOVER THE PIANO MUSIC OF ALAN RICHARDSON



ALAN RICHARDSON

Discover the Piano Music of Alan Richardson (1904-1978)

1	Bagatelle (1938)	3.49
2	Clorinda (1938) Grade 'Medium difficulty'	2.58
3	Minuet by Boccherini (1939) <i>Freely transcribed for piano</i>	4.23
4	On Heather Hill, for 2 Pianos (1946) <i>with Adrian Farmer</i>	4.37
5	Rondo (1947)	5.38
6	Rachmaninoff. 'Vocalise' (1951) <i>Transcribed for piano by Alan Richardson</i>	5.38
7	Marionette Op. 29 No. 2 (1955)	2.27
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9	Sonata Op. 26 (1958) II <i>Vivace</i>	2.54
10	The Running Brook (1958)	1.49
11	Three Pieces Op. 35 (1959) <i>for Shura Cherkassky</i>	11.09
	I Tableau [2.40]	
	II Silver Night [2.35]	
	III Fantasy-Study [5.35]	
12	Sonatina in F Op. 27 (1960)	7.43
	I <i>Allegro</i> [2.50]	
	II <i>Lento moderato</i> [2.25]	
	III <i>Vivace, ma non troppo allegro</i> [2.20]	

13	Ballerina (1960)	1.29
14	Piano Sonata No. 2 in D Op. 39 (1967?) II <i>Lento piacevole</i>	5.43
	Kaleidoscope, 10 tone-sketches Op. 52 (1967)	
15	I <i>Vivace</i> [1.25]	5.15
	II <i>Lento espressivo; poco mesto</i> [2.00]	
	IV <i>Molto vivo; leggero volante</i> [0.40]	
	V <i>Vivace</i> [1.00]	
16	VIII <i>Molto maestoso</i> [1.00]	3.35
	IX <i>Andante con moto: dolce e legatissimo</i> [1.15]	
	X <i>Allegro energico</i> [0.55]	
		Total playing time 72.18

Martin Jones, piano

‘Alan was a complete musician – a composer, performer, teacher, and a person of extraordinary natural musicality. Small wonder then that he was viewed with profound respect by all those within the musical profession who were privileged to come into contact with him ... As a pianist one was struck by his innate rhythmic verve, a facet which indeed radiated through all his compositions – but perhaps the quality above all else that will be remembered was that which can best be described as a *mezzo voce bel canto*, the realisation of a choice and refined ear, and the product of a deep thinker and inner tranquillity’.¹ It is that satisfying synergy of elegant lyricism and rhythmic energy which distinguishes the keyboard works of pianist and composer Alan Richardson.

¹ Guy Jonson, ‘Alan Richardson, 1904-78’, *The Royal Academy of Music Magazine*, No.219 (Spring 1979), p.8.

He was born in Edinburgh on 29 February 1904 to a musical family: his grandfather was Thomas Richardson, a noted organist and singing teacher, who also composed anthems and songs, including the ballad, 'Mary, kind, kind and gentle is she'. The young Alan studied the piano with Ernest B. Appley, a pupil of the celebrated pianist, teacher and composer Theodor Leschetizky.² Born in Poland and based in Vienna, Leschetizky had studied under Beethoven pupil Carl Czerny, who later taught Franz Liszt. Richardson's formative instrumental training was therefore enriched by an impressive pedagogical lineage. His father noted that 'Appley was not one of those who have a solitary two-guinea lesson from an eminent musician and come home and advertise themselves as a pupil of the great so-and-so. He studied with the famous Viennese [sic] piano teacher for a long period'.³ While Alan Richardson was receiving these valuable and influential piano lessons, he was also attending the Edinburgh School of Art and at the time it was by no means obvious which of the arts he was going to pursue. In the event, music was decided upon and henceforth he concentrated all his efforts in that direction.

His first engagement was as accompanist to the Canadian-born tenor E. C. Hedmont for a year. From 1926 to 1928 he was assistant pianist in the BBC studio in Edinburgh. In this capacity he was a member of the Edinburgh Trio and played daily with a string quartet featuring Waldo Channon, Kenneth Anderson, Joe Smith and Chester Henderson. He also made broadcasts as a solo pianist at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Birmingham, and Newcastle. For Richardson this was the beginning of a long and fruitful association with the BBC that led to over two thousand appearances on radio and television in which he displayed rare musical insights in a broad repertoire.

After wide-ranging practical experience as a pianist with the BBC in Edinburgh, he moved to London in November 1928. He became a pupil of Harold Craxton and from 1929 to 1930 he studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was a composition pupil of Theodore Holland. Guy Jonson offered these recollections of his fellow student: 'Alan in those days [1930] possessed a humorous and dry wit so that his utterances often made a delayed impact on the listener! One was impressed by his fine

² Leschetizky (1830-1915) also taught Artur Schnabel and Paderewski.

³ William Richardson, *W. R.'s Rummy Nuisances Vol.1*. Held in the Alan Richardson family archive.

sense of musicianship which was fundamental to all he did'.⁴ At one of the Academy concerts in the Queens Hall, Richardson played Mozart's Piano Concerto No.19 in F major, K459, with Sir Henry Wood conducting. Required by the RAM to take up a second instrument, he learned to play the bassoon as the college orchestra was short of players.

After leaving college, he worked as an accompanist to a number of well-known artists, including Elsie Suddaby and Steuart Wilson. One day he was heard in that capacity by the concert agent L. G. Sharpe, who signed him on for an eight-month tour of Australia and New Zealand as accompanist to the baritone Peter Dawson.⁵ During the 72 recitals Dawson gave throughout those two countries in 1931 the Australasian press were extremely positive in their reaction to the young accompanist. The *Wellington Evening Post* wrote on 6 July 1931 that Richardson's 'unostentatious playing was a musical treat in itself'. A review in the *Melbourne Talk Talk* published on 3 September 1931 commented that, 'Mr Alan Richardson's finely sensitive accompaniments are a large factor in the success of the vocal items'. The *Adelaide Advertiser* wrote on 21 September 1931 that Richardson's work as an accompanist 'was unobtrusive perfection'.

Returning home, he devoted a good deal of time to composition and his scores were soon taken up and published by Oxford University Press. His music attracted the attention of the competitive world and not long after his return from the Antipodean tour he became one of the most sought after adjudicators in the UK. Guy Jonson has remarked upon Richardson's success in this capacity: 'His faultless and effortless command of the English language delivered with a lovely speaking voice riveted the attention of his listeners, making abundantly clear his explanations and commentaries in adjudication'.⁶

During the 1930s Richardson worked with the BBC in three distinct musical capacities. Firstly, in two-piano items with Leonard Shepherd Nunn under the pseudonym of Alleyne and Leopardt;⁷ secondly, as a member of the Quartet bearing the name of its

⁴ Jonson, *ibid.*

⁵ Concert pianist Mark Hambourg contributed solo items to the recitals.

⁶ *Ibid.*

leader, Elsie Owen, and thirdly, as one of the Keltic Trio, in which he was joined by violist Watson Forbes and flautist William Powell. In addition to his BBC duties he was also accompanist to the celebrated violinist Carl Flesch from 1936 to 1939.

His war service consisted of full-time Civil Defence in London. After the war he gave piano lectures at the RAM and in 1960 he was appointed professor of piano at the Academy. The following year he married the celebrated oboist Janet Craxton, daughter of his former teacher Harold Craxton. This happy personal and musical union resulted in the formation of a duo partnership of great distinction. They travelled extensively and their collaboration resulted in many new pieces by Richardson for oboe, including two books of oboe pieces for beginners, demonstrating his interest in composing for the younger player: he had already completed two similar books for horn, and contributed the lion's share of those for clarinet and trumpet. The Da Vinci Trio, consisting of Richardson, Janet Craxton and the flautist Douglas Whittaker, was formed in 1963. Their first London recital took place at the Wigmore Hall on 25 October of that year and offered an adventurous programme including the first performance of *Three Episodes for Flute and Piano* by Don Banks and the premiere of *Presages* for solo oboe by Elisabeth Lutyens, as well as Trios by Peter Racine Fricker, Thea Musgrave and Walter Leigh. Also in 1963 Alan Richardson shared with Janet Craxton a successful recital-tour of the Middle East, visiting Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Cyprus and Malta.

He continued to carry out his academic duties at the RAM until his death on 29 November 1978 in London. At his memorial concert held at the Wigmore Hall on 3 January 1980, the premiere took place of Witold Lutosławski's *Epitaph: in memoriam Alan Richardson* for oboe and piano. This tribute from an international figure in contemporary music was a measure of the high esteem in which Alan Richardson was held within his profession.

Guy Jonson attributed Richardson's success in the musical world to the humanity and curiosity of the man himself: 'he possessed an endearing warmth of personality, an utter integrity in everything he did, and a lively interest in extra-musical things which had the effect of broadening his horizons. Amongst many other interests he was a keen

⁷ According to William Richardson's memoirs, recordings of the Alleyne and Leopardt piano duo were made by the Parlophone Company.

philatelist, an enthusiastic student of languages, he played a first class game of golf and was a true lover of the countryside, not least of that of his native Scotland. His unfailing courtesy, charm and above all else his music, will live on in the memories of so many'.⁸

Though Richardson's creative output consists chiefly of piano solos and duets, he also wrote a significant amount of chamber music, including sonatas for violin (1948), oboe (1950), viola (1954) and bassoon (1968); sonatinas for oboe (1965) and flute (1968), as well as *Roundelay* for oboe or clarinet and piano (1936), the Suite 'In the Lowlands' for tuba and piano (1968), *Three Inventions* for flute and piano (1970), a Trio for viola, bass clarinet and piano (1973), a Duo for oboe and cello (1973) and the Overture *Coronach and Capricietto*, for bass clarinet and piano (1973). He also composed a *Junior Concerto* for piano and orchestra (1960). In addition to his original scores, he collaborated with Watson Forbes in producing viola transcriptions of pieces by Purcell, Bach, Handel and other composers.

'When it comes to keyboard writing, Alan Richardson is definitely one of the few notable figures among modern composers'. 'Whatever he [Richardson] writes for the piano is worth playing and hearing'.⁹ These quotations from issues of the *Pianomaker* magazine dating from the early 1950s are a reflection of the esteem in which Richardson was held at the time as a composer for his own instrument. He wrote numerous short piano pieces, many of them studies for educational purposes. The picturesque titles of several of these scores (*Pastoral Sketch, At Eventide, Silver Night, Over the Moors*) are indicative of their character, though, according to Conrad Wilson in his entry on Richardson in the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001), some of the names were apparently added as afterthoughts. The lighter piano pieces feature geographical items (*Sussex Lullaby*), character vignettes (*Columbine* and *Jack in the Green*) and rhythmic novelties (*On Tip-Toe* and *Scallywag*).

Richardson's **Bagatelle** (1938) is marked 'grazioso e preciso', which encapsulates the dual strengths of the composer's piano writing with its lyrical elegance and rhythmic rigour. There are delightful harmonic sideslips in the charming principal theme and

⁸ Jonson, *ibid.*

⁹ *Alan Richardson, Composer. A Catalogue of his works with press comments.* Held in the Alan Richardson family archive.

the expressive central melody, whilst the closing section teases the listener with several capricious fluctuations in tempo before the delicate throwaway ending.

Clorinda (1938) has a classical elegance, reinforced by its gratifyingly symmetrical phrases. The haunting opening phrase pervades the work and even, unexpectedly, punctuates the contrasting middle section's songlike melody. The concluding paragraphs are a model of taste and proportion.

Richardson has written at the head of the score of his 1939 treatment of the **Minuet** by Boccherini, from the String Quintet in E major, Op.11, no.5, 'feely transcribed and pianisticated by Alan Richardson'. Heralded by an extended introduction in the manner of a recitative, the familiar theme, immortalised by the 1955 Ealing comedy *The Ladykillers*, is rendered in Richardson's most florid and sophisticated manner. Authenticity is not the order of the day here, but there is much to savour in Richardson's continual development and embellishment of material in this good-humoured tribute from one composer to another.

The alluring **On Heather Hill**, for two pianos (1946) provides constantly changing perspectives on its themes and motifs as they pass smoothly between the four hands and subtly interlace. Richardson's harmonic shifts are at their most subtle and alluring in this fine, free-form tone poem.

Deftly incorporating variants of its deceptively blithe main theme, as well as several contrasting episodes, the **Rondo** (1947) finds the composer at his most confident and adroit. Like Haydn before him, Richardson shows taste and good judgment in knowing exactly how far to develop and extend simple basic ideas without straying into grandiosity.

Rachmaninov 'held a very special place in Alan's heart', both as a composer and as a pianist, according to Janet Craxton.¹⁰ The 1951 transcription of Rachmaninov's **Vocalise** shows a great empathy with the Russian master. There is emotional intensity and lyrical simplicity in this accomplished arrangement.

¹⁰ 'About the programme', in the booklet accompanying the 'Thanksgiving Concert in memory of Alan Richardson', held in Wigmore Hall, 3 January 1980.

Marionette, Op.29 No2 (1955) is quintessential Richardson. Evocative and beguiling, its main idea is instantly memorable.

The Two Nocturnes, Op.30 (1957) contain some of the composer's most impressive writing. The spare textures in the outer sections of **Nocturne No.2 in E flat** are counterbalanced by the richer sonorities of the work's middle portion. This dark-hued score is characteristically idiomatic, but, beyond this, it has a resonance and reach, indicating that Richardson was, on occasion, predisposed to explore psychological territory somewhat at variance with his reputation as a crowd-pleasing tunesmith. *Musical Opinion* (1958) commented on the 'exquisite keyboard writing' of the Nocturnes. In the July 1958 issue of *Music and Letters*, I.K.¹¹ remarked that the Nocturnes were 'wonderful as ever to play', showing the composer 'in an unusually enigmatic mood in which the music is sometimes swept into gusts of passion which are bold and striking'.

Arguably the crowning achievement from the late 1950s, an artistically fertile period for Richardson, is the **Piano Sonata**, Op.26 (1958). The central *Vivace* is free-flowing, though in its own fleet-footed way, it is just as taut and obsessive as the previous *Allegro* movement. *Musical Opinion* (June 1958) wrote of Richardson's score that, 'As one would expect, this is a lyrical, rather than an epic Sonata. It is remarkable not for its strength of design, but for the constant flowering of ideas, beautifully and inherently expressed in terms of the keyboard ... Undoubtedly one of the finest of recent piano works'.

Published by the Associated Board, **The Running Brook** (1958) is a *moto perpetuo* with an appropriate flowing quality to its incessant semiquavers. Richardson wrote several educational pieces that challenge the player as well as delighting the listener and this is a prime example.

Dedicated to Shura Cherkassky, the **Three Pieces**, Op.35 (1959) find Richardson at his most virtuosic. The opening 'Tableau' literally signals a widening of the composer's range with its exploitation of the extreme upper register of the keyboard. The wistful

¹¹ These are probably the initials of Ivor Keys, a regular contributor to *Music and Letters* at the time.

nocturne 'Silver Nights' rises to a powerful climax which has a cadenza-like flourish. The concluding 'Fantasy-Study' is a bravura piece of writing that is recognisably by the same creative artist who penned the more modest studies and vignettes which make up the greater part of his output. The May 1959 edition of *Pianomaker* contained the following rave review: 'Readers will by now be aware that, in my opinion, we in this country have, in Alan Richardson, an outstanding composer for the piano. (How many such are there in the world?). The first two of his Three Pieces, Op.35, are exquisite miniatures, closely knit, but impressionistic in their use of colour. The third is a brilliant, shimmering Fantasy-Study, which calls for fine interpretative as well as technical powers. I urge recitalists very strongly to consider these Three Pieces'. *Musical Opinion* (May 1959) was equally enthusiastic about the finale: 'well proportioned, brimming with ideas and incorporating a wide range of keyboard effects, it is among the finest works of a composer who can rightly claim a foremost place among modern composers for the piano'.

The **Sonatina in F**, Op.27 (1960) has a classical elegance and refinement. Tuneful and varied in its approach to piano writing, it is a model of lucidity and balance. Critics had a tendency to describe Richardson as a creative artist in terms of sanity, e.g. 'The composer is sanely modern' (*Musical Times*, February 1956); '...how ably he [Richardson] demonstrates that sanity and musical imagination are compatible' (*Musical Opinion*, c.1958) and such reassuring qualities as coherence and poise are present throughout this compact and eloquent score.

Ballerina (1960) is an educational piece, classified as Grade 'Difficult'. Richardson never loses sight of the descriptive aspect in any of his study-like vignettes and the delicacy and fastidiousness of the title character is subtly and concisely conveyed in this engaging miniature.

The **Piano Sonata No.2 in D major**, Op.39 dates from 1967. Its haunting slow movement, marked 'Lento piacevole' suggests disturbing undercurrents beneath a serene surface. The faster central episode soon becomes disquieted and rises to a peak before the hushed sequence of repeated chords returns. Echoes of Chopin's Prelude Op.28, No.4 could be said to pervade the outer sections of this movement, though the

melodic lines and harmonic adventurousness of the writing are, of course, entirely characteristic.

Valerie Dickson performed *Kaleidoscope: 10 tone-sketches*, Op.52 (1967) at the composer's 70th birthday concert given at Duke's Hall in the Royal Academy of Music on 12 June 1974. As its title suggests, this set of miniatures is a showcase for the composer's diversity of expression. They range from the muted, Satie-esque expressiveness of no.2 to the grandly Romantic gestures of no.8 and the darting, toccata-like energy of no.10.

Writing about Alan Richardson's solo piano works played by Hamish Milne at Richardson's memorial concert, the critic Noël Goodwin observed that 'their bright-eyed character and easy flow of melody was that of a composer for whom the piano must have been simply an extension of speech, certainly of thought'.¹² It is perhaps that very ease of utterance and spontaneity of gesture and harmony that exalts the works of Alan Richardson and serves to place him among the leading composer-pianists of his generation.

Paul Conway, 2019

¹² Noël Goodwin, 'Memorial Concert: Wigmore Hall', *The Times*, 4 January 1980, p.7.

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Cover image: Courtesy of Jane Craxton

Recording location: Concert Hall of the Nimbus Foundation, Wyastone Leys, Monmouth UK.

Recording sessions on :

Solo works : 3- 5 April 2017 & 11-13 September 2017

Duo & Duet works : 13-15 January 2018

Production: Adrian Farmer

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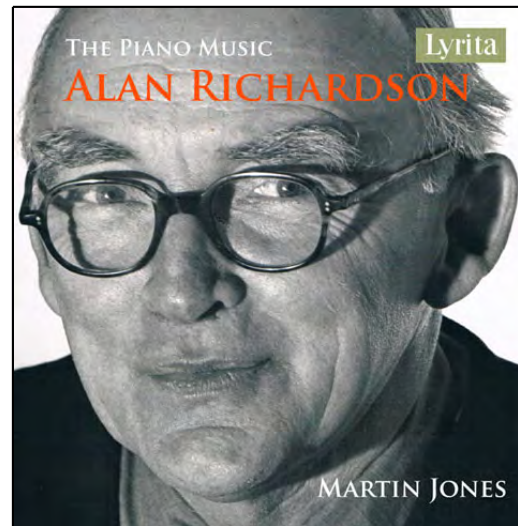
DISC ONE CONCERT PIECES

DISC TWO CONCERT PIECES

DISC THREE WITHOUT OPUS

DISC FOUR EDUCATIONAL

DISC FIVE DUET & DUO
with Adrian Farmer



DISC ONE

Suite Op.6
Impromptu Op.14
Scherzo in A Op.20
Intermezzo Op.17
Sonata No.1 in B Op.19
Legend Op.24
Scherzo Fantastique Op.26

DISC TWO

Twelve Preludes & Fugues Op.32
Variations on 'The Lambeth Walk'

DISC THREE

Zodiac - piano suite Op.41
Five Modern Pieces for Piano
Sonata No.2 in A-flat Op.40
Malcolm Arnold 'English Dances'
arr. for piano duet with Adrian Farmer

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Alan Richardson (1904-1978)

A selection of Richardson's piano music taken from the 5 CD complete recording

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15	Nos. I, II, IV, V	5.15
16	Nos. VIII, IX, X	3.35

Total playing time 72.18

Martin Jones, piano

