

The Grand Passions of Albert W. Ketèlbey

The Palm Court Theatre Orchestra
Anthony Godwin

collect

Albert W. Ketèlbey (1875–1959)

1	In the Moonlight Poetic Intermezzo (1919)	4:17
2	In a Persian Market Intermezzo-Scene (1920)	6:55
3	Bells Across the Meadows Characteristic Intermezzo (1921)	4:11
	The Cockney Suite	16:17
	Cameos of London Life (1924)	
4	1 A State Procession (Buckingham Palace)	3:04
5	2 The Cockney Lover (Lambeth Walk)	2:18
6	3 At the Palais de Danse (Anywhere)	2:50
7	4 Elegy (Thoughts on Passing the Cenotaph)	5:21
8	5 Bank Holiday ('Appy 'Ampstead)	2:36
9	Wedgewood Blue Intermezzo (1920)	4:15
10	The Clock and the Dresden Figures (1930)	3:55

	Suite: In a Lovers' Garden (1925)	12:32
11	1 A Song of Love	4:24
12	2 The Golden Wedding –	3:25
13	3 A Garden Fete	4:40
14	In a Chinese Temple Garden Oriental Phantasy (1923)	6:08
15	Sanctuary of the Heart Meditation religieuse (1924)	4:48
16	Jungle Drums Patrol (1926)	4:56
		TT 68:58

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'Art is not confined to so-called classical music', Albert W. Ketèlbey wrote soon after he won the £50 first prize in a *Tit-Bits* music competition with a tuneful little composition for cello and orchestra called *The Phantom Melody*. 'One grows tired of the intolerant attitude of the "Highbrows" towards light music. One would think that a good dinner may only consist of dry bread and solid beef. Don't they ever eat a sweet?'

Tit-Bits was a rather saucy but exceedingly popular magazine and Ketèlbey was a brilliant but impoverished classical composer. The critics, who had praised all his previous works, were appalled by this sudden switch of style, but the public loved it and Ketèlbey went on to write some of the most popular light music of all time.

Ketèlbey was a remarkable and extraordinary composer. Born in Aston Manor, Birmingham, on 4 August 1875, he showed exceptional talent for music whilst still very young. He composed and played a Piano Sonata in Worcester Town Hall at the age of eleven, which was greatly admired by Elgar, and two years later gained the Queen Victoria scholarship to Trinity College, London where he studied composition, french horn, cello, clarinet, oboe

and organ, winning many medals and prizes, yet more scholarships and eventually becoming an examiner at the college. Whilst still in his early twenties he was appointed musical director at the Vaudeville Theatre where he wrote a certain amount of incidental theatre music and music for the silent films such as the *Bacchanale de Montmartre – for cabaret, orgy and riotous continental scenes* under the tongue-in-cheek pseudonym, Anton Vodorinsky. He became musical editor at Chappell & Co. and eventually musical director for Columbia Records. He composed much critically acclaimed serious music. 'Unfortunately, however,' he later explained, 'it was mainly artistic satisfaction that one derives from this kind of work, and as I was in the position of knowing music only as a means of earning a living, I had to turn to something lighter and more likely to catch the popular fancy.' In this he certainly succeeded.

He began to compose music which was theatrical, exotic, wildly romantic and at the same time superbly melodic with masterly use of solo instruments and elegant straightforward harmonies, beautifully orchestrated and never sentimental even at its most passionate. It was music with an imaginative and cinematic story line. Ketèlbey described the pieces as tone

pictures, full of the atmosphere of drama. You smile at the extravagance and are beguiled by the sheer beauty of the melodies. It is music perfectly of its period but with sudden flurries of the unexpected – a military band and a fairground steam organ playing one tune against another, drunken roisterers, a fairground barker with his rattle in 'Appy Ampstead'; Chinese coolies having a street fight in *A Chinese Temple Garden*; natives chanting in *Jungle Drums*, whilst a patrol marches by and an organ plays eerily in the background. Ketèlbey has written detailed instructions in the music for the orchestra – sing, whistle, chant etc. and on this recording the musicians comply with style and enthusiasm.

Ketèlbey was a master craftsman, fashioning and polishing every aspect of each piece to perfection, fully orchestrating his work, writing the words when words were needed and even adding a splendidly idiosyncratic synopsis of the plot.

He gave the public 'melody well harmonized and well constructed, which is what they want, instead of what the "Highbrows" think they ought to have.'

'I never consider a composition finished' he wrote 'until to my mind, no single note of it can be altered without spoiling it. I have invariably found that a splendid test. It all means hard work but the responsiveness of the public is a very satisfying reward.'

In his forties, at the height of his popularity, Albert W. Ketèlbey retired to Cowes on the Isle of Wight and led a happily reclusive life until his death on 26 November 1959.

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In a Persian Market – Intermezzo-Scene

The camel-drivers gradually approach; the cries of beggars for 'Back-sheesh' are heard; the beautiful princess enters carried by her servants, (she is represented by a theme, given at first to clarinet and cello, then repeated by the full orchestra) – she stays to watch the jugglers and snake-charmer. The Caliph now passes through the market and interrupts the entertainment, the beggars are heard again, the princess prepares to depart and the camel-drivers are heard faintly in the distance and the market place becomes deserted.

The Cockney Suite – Cameos of London Life

No. 1 A State Procession (Buckingham Palace) – One is to suppose that the King and Queen are going to open Parliament and Pall Mall is crowded with onlookers. Pomp and pageantry, brilliant uniforms and military bands all combine to make a brilliant spectacle, and this march is what might be played by regimental bands as they pass along the route.

No. 2 The Cockney Lover (Lambeth Walk) – The Cockney whistle, 'Arf a pint of mild and

bitter', has been here employed as the leading theme in a little Cockney serenade. The suggestion (in the accompaniment of the second part) of 'Little Brown Jug' indicates that the lovers have retired to a public house, and the chimes from Big Ben and other buildings are intended to indicate that it is night and very near closing-time. The sweethearts leave the public-house and the young fellow once more sings his melody softly to his girl.

No. 3 At the Palais de Danse (Anywhere) – A feature of the Jazz bands in any 'Palais de Danse' is the way in which the *key* of the music is suddenly changed. The waltz has been treated in this manner (in the second part), and other 'Jazz' effects are introduced.

No. 4 Elegy (Thoughts on Passing the Cenotaph) – This represents the serious thoughts which would occur to anyone on passing the Cenotaph in Whitehall. The second part, in the major key, suggests the feelings of affection and tender remembrance which would prevail in the hearts of sweethearts and wives, yet with a feeling of gratification that their loved ones had died in a noble cause.

No. 5 Bank Holiday ('Appy 'Ampstead) – Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday is here represented by a lively dance tune of a country-like character, then the mouth-organs are heard as a preliminary introduction to a

one-step tune to which 'Arry and 'Arriet dance. While it is proceeding, a cornet in the vicinity plays snatches of various other tunes, roisterers bawl a few bars of 'Tell me the old old story'; another band plays a bit of 'Semiramide' Overture, shouts of the showman (with a rattle) and a noisy steam-organ playing the old waltz 'Over the Waves' are all heard while the dance is still in progress. A return to the opening dance-tune brings this suite to a lively conclusion.

The Clock and the Dresden Figures – for Solo Piano and Orchestra

Two Dresden-China Figures standing on each side of a clock come to life and dance to the ticking of the clock; after a while the clock goes wrong, the spring breaks suddenly and the two figures rush back to their former positions.

In a Lovers' Garden (On melodies from the Composer's songs)

No. 1 A Song of Love – Two young lovers are lingering in the sun-lit garden, and amidst singing of birds they exchange ardent thoughts and caressing glances.

No. 2 The Golden Wedding – Two old people are sitting in the garden where they first plighted their troth, the bells of an adjacent church remind them of their wedding-day.

No. 3 A Garden Fete – Lovers young and old mingle in one joyous throng at the garden fete on a summer's day, laughter and gaiety reign over all.

In a Chinese Temple Garden – Oriental Phantasy

After a few bars characteristic introduction – the incantation of the priests in the Temple – the perfume of incense floats on the air – a melody (given to cello, viola and oboe with *pizzicato* accompaniment) represents two lovers – a Manchu wedding procession passes noisily by – a street disturbance ensues amongst the coolies, (founded on an actual Chinese scale) – the beating of the gong in the Temple restores quietude, the incantation of the priests is heard again, and the lovers' song (amidst the singing of birds) with a brief quotation from the Temple and coolies' music brings the piece to a conclusion.

Sanctuary of the Heart – Meditation Religieuse

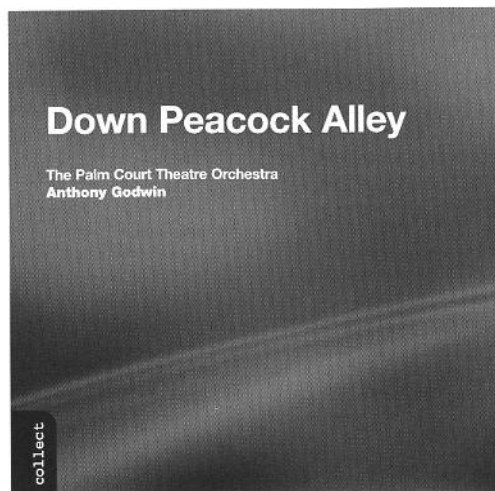
I wandered alone in a strange land
And life seemed so dark and drear,
When the sound of a voice seemed to call
me
And brought to my mind a mem'ry dear;
It told of the Joy and the Gladness
That comes from the One above –
'Oh Lord, hear our prayer,
Take all our care, And fill all our hearts
with love.'

Jungle Drums – Patrol

Drums of different sizes play an important part in all native ceremonies, and tribes are said to be able to converse secretly with each other by means of the 'drum-language'. The drums are beaten by hand as well as with the drum-sticks, and during the incessant drumming, other natives drone a sort of dirge. In this patrol the drums should be fairly prominent throughout.

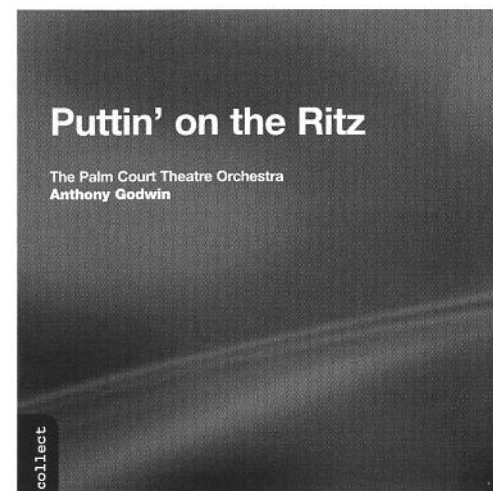
These synopses are by Ketèlbey himself and appear in the scores.

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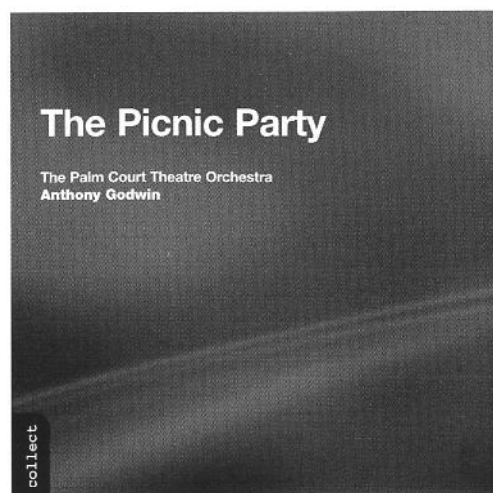
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