

Chandos

CHAN 8314



Hamilton Harty c. 1905

© 1981 Chandos Records Ltd. © 1981 Chandos Records Ltd.  
Printed in West Germany  
CHANDOS RECORDS LTD, LONDON, ENGLAND

HAMILTON HARTY  
*an Irish symphony*  
*a comedy overture*

Chandos

DIGITAL

The Ulster Orchestra  
Bryden Thomson,  
conductor



#### THE COMPACT DISC DIGITAL AUDIO SYSTEM

offers the best possible sound reproduction — on a small, convenient sound-carrier unit. The Compact Disc's remarkable performance is the result of a unique combination of digital playback with laser optics. For the best results, you should apply the same care in storing and handling the Compact Disc as with conventional records.

No further cleaning will be necessary if the Compact Disc is always held by the edges and replaced in its case directly after playing. Should the Compact Disc become soiled by fingerprints, dust or dirt, it can be wiped (always in a straight line from centre to edge) with a clean and lint-free, soft, dry cloth. No solvent or abrasive cleaner should ever be used on the disc.

If you follow these suggestions, the Compact Disc will provide a lifetime of pure listening enjoyment.

This recording was made with  
financial assistance from  
**THE ULSTER ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION**

Recording Producer: Brian Cousins

Sound Engineer: Ralph Cousins

Recording Dates & Location: The Ulster Hall, Belfast on October 4 and 5, 1980

Front Cover Photo of the Antrim Coast by Kenneth McNally, Ulster Television Ltd.

#### CHANDOS DIGITAL RECORDING

This recording was mastered and edited on Chandos Complete PCM Digital System. This system is superior to conventional analog (tape recorder) recording in dynamic range, signal to noise and distortion.

##### Equipment used:

- Schoeps & Neumann microphones
- New classical mixing console—State of the Art specification designed and built by Chandos
- Sony PCM 1610 Digital processor
- DAE-1100 Digital electronic editor
- Digital information stored in BVU 200A recorders

Although analog tape recorders have been remarkably improved today, they are still limited by a number of drawbacks resulting in distortion and dynamic range limitations. These limits are inherent in the tape, heads, and other mechanical factors, and it is virtually impossible to eliminate them completely.

Digital recording, including PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) is a revolutionary technique to leave these limitations of present analog recorders behind. With digital systems, the sound signal is recorded and transmitted in the form of digital codes and this provides a whole host of features.

##### Outstanding among them are:

- Wide dynamic range • Flat frequency response regardless of input level
- Extremely low distortion • Superior transient characteristics
- No deterioration when repeatedly duplicated



## The Special Sound of Chandos on Compact Disc WORLDS AHEAD FOR CLARITY

**BAX: Symphony No. 4 and Tintagel**  
Bryden Thomson/Ulster Orchestra  
**CHAN 8312** (ABRD/ABTD 1091 LP & Cassette)  
*"Technically this recording is in the demonstration class."*  
GRAMOPHONE

**BAX: November Woods • Summer Music •  
The Garden of Fand • The Happy Forest**  
Bryden Thomson/Ulster Orchestra  
**CHAN 8307** (ABRD/ABTD 1066 LP & Cassette)  
*"This is one of the most valuable Compact Disc releases so far."*  
GRAMOPHONE

**ELGAR: In the South • Froissart •  
Cockaigne • Handel Overture in D minor**  
Alexander Gibson/Scottish National Orchestra  
**CHAN 8309** (ABRD/ABTD 1077 LP & Cassette)

**HARTY: An Irish Symphony and A Comedy  
Overture**  
Bryden Thomson/Ulster Orchestra  
**CHAN 8314** (ABRD/ABTD 1027 LP & Cassette)

**HOLST: The Planets**  
Alexander Gibson/Scottish National Orchestra  
**CHAN 8302** (ABRD/ABTD 1010 LP & Cassette)  
*"The fullness, bloom and natural balance on the Chandos issue  
puts it ahead of both rivals in sound quality."*  
GRAMOPHONE

**MOZART: Sinfonia Concertante K364 and  
Concertone for 2 Violins K190**  
Norbert Brainin, Peter Schmidlof/English Chamber  
Orchestra/Gibson  
**CHAN 8315** (ABRD/ABTD 1096 LP & Cassette)

**PURCELL: Dido and Aeneas**  
Emma Kirkby as Dido  
Taverner Choir & Players/Andrew Parrott  
**CHAN 8306** (ABRD/ABTD 1034 LP & Cassette)  
*"The present Dido is the nearest approach yet to an 'authentic'  
performance."* GRAMOPHONE

**SCHUBERT: Piano Trio No. 1 in B flat Op. 99**  
The Borodin Trio  
**CHAN 8308** (ABRD/ABTD 1064 LP & Cassette)

**SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 2 in D major Op. 43**  
Alexander Gibson/Scottish National Orchestra  
**CHAN 8303** (ABRD/ABTD 1062 LP & Cassette)

**TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 2. "Little  
Russian"**  
(Original Version)  
Geoffrey Simon/London Symphony Orchestra  
**CHAN 8304** (ABRD/ABTD 1071 LP & Cassette)  
*"It is very good to have issued, so soon, this remarkable record  
of Tchaikovsky's first thoughts on his symphony."*  
GRAMOPHONE

**TCHAIKOVSKY: RARE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC  
including "Hamlet" Incidental Music**  
Geoffrey Simon/London Symphony Orchestra  
**CHAN 8310/11** (DBRD/DBTD 2003, 2 LP/  
Cassette set)

**WEBER: Clarinet Concertos 1 & 2 and Clarinet  
Concertino**  
Janet Hilton/City of Birmingham S.O./Neeme Jarvi  
**CHAN 8305** (ABRD/ABTD 1058 LP & Cassette)

Herbert Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) grew up in the northern Irish village of Hillsborough, Co. Down. His father was organist of the church there, and local music teacher, and it was from him that young Bertie (as he was known in those days) received all his early musical training. When he was still only sixteen he moved south to Bray in Co. Wicklow to take up the post of organist there, and it was not long before he was caught up in the musical life of Dublin. The principal forum for his talents was the Feis Ceoil, an annual competitive music festival first held in 1897. The various instrumental and singing classes provided him with ample opportunity to display his exceptional qualities as a piano accompanist. It was on such an occasion in 1903 that he accompanied the young John McCormack when he won the gold medal, and thus established a lifelong friendship. Another facet of Harty's musicality found expression in the composition classes of the festival. Between 1899 and 1904 he entered a number of works — including two string quartets — for the competition, and he later wrote that the main attraction was not so much the prize money but the opportunity of hearing one's own music well performed.

Harty's *Irish Symphony*, composed for the 1904 festival, had its origins in a strange misapprehension.

In 1901 the festival committee announced that it was going to institute a special prize for a suite or symphony based on traditional Irish airs. The inspiration for this idea came from a recent performance in Dublin of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, a work (so The Irish Times informed its readers) 'founded upon negro melodies'. The prize was first offered in 1902, when the winning entry was the Irish Symphony of Michele Esposito, a Neapolitan composer and pianist who had settled in Dublin and was a close friend and mentor of the young Harty. In 1904 it was Harty's turn, and his own Irish Symphony was performed to great acclaim at the prize-winners' concert on 18 May. In the opinion of The Musical Times, 'the place of honour in the prize compositions must be given to Mr. Hamilton Harty's symphony — a work of very great ability and one that displays a quite remarkable knowledge of orchestration. The composer, who conducted the work admirably, received quite an ovation at its conclusion'. Harty later revealed that this was the first time he had ever conducted an orchestra — an auspicious start to what was to be a distinguished conducting career. He subsequently included the work in his concerts on a number of occasions, one notable one being his farewell concert with the Hallé in 1933. He revised it at least twice, in 1915 and 1924, and it was only in this final

BRYDEN THOMSON was born in Scotland and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy. He then studied in Europe under Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt and Igor Markevitch before taking a post at McMaster University in Hamilton. He returned to Scotland as Assistant Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and from 1968-1973 was Principal Conductor of the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra.

Since then, Bryden Thomson has become a much-sought-after and highly respected figure on the international music scene, with engagements in Europe, especially in Norway and Sweden, and with most of the major orchestras in Britain. He has made several television programmes for both the BBC and Independent Television, and has conducted for the South African Broadcasting Commission in Johannesburg.

Bryden Thomson's work in the operatic field has included posts with the Norwegian Opera in Oslo, the Royal Opera in Stockholm, Scottish Opera and the BBC, for whom he has recorded many operas.

Bryden Thomson, in addition to his current post as Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Ulster Orchestra, is also Principal Conductor of the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra.



A **Comedy Overture** was composed in 1906 and first performed at a Queen's Hall Promenade concert in 1907. The following year he revised the score, and it was published in 1909 with a dedication to his friend Esposito. By now Harty was settled in London, married to the singer Agnes Nicholls, and much in demand as a brilliant and sensitive accompanist. A **Comedy Overture** is one of the works written at this time which brought him to public notice as a composer. The title simply reflects the lively character of the music and does not imply that it ever had any theatrical connection or programmatic content. There are two main themes: the first is played on the oboe after the bustling introduction, and its jaunty rhythm pervades much of the work; the second is slower and more reflective and is first heard on the woodwind. Two instances must suffice to illustrate the varied and imaginative way in which Harty treats these. One occurs at the end of the Development, where the piccolo embarks on a false recapitulation of the first theme over a drone accompaniment on the bassoons. This being in the 'wrong' key, it is left to the timpanist to beat out the 'right' notes and prepare the way for the real Recapitulation on the clarinet. The other example occurs later in the movement, when the second theme is heard on the cellos with the accompanying harmonies most subtly altered.

© David Greer 1980

revision that he added the movement titles and inserted a brief programmatic description at the front of the score. How far he had these in mind when he composed the work twenty years earlier one cannot tell, but there is no doubt that he had a deep love of his homeland and that his feelings for the Hillsborough of his boyhood, the countryside of Co. Down and the glens of Antrim were an ineradicable part of the man and his music.

I. On the Shores of Lough Neagh (Allegro molto). This sonata-form movement incorporates two Irish melodies. The first is 'Avenging and Bright' which is heard first on the strings pizzicato and then on the woodwind. The second is 'The Croppy Boy,' a slower melody played by the clarinets and bassoons. These form the First and Second Subject respectively. There is one other melody which is important in the construction of the movement, though it does not seem to have been taken from traditional music. It is a flowing melody first played by the oboe, and it forms a continuation of the First Subject. All three melodies are used in the Development. In the Recapitulation, 'Avenging and Bright' is solemnly intoned by muted trombones, and 'The Croppy Boy' becomes a rhapsodic violin solo with delicate accompanying arabesques on the woodwind.

II. The Fair Day (*Vivace ma non troppo presto*). This delicately-scored movement begins with the sound of the village fiddler tuning up, and then launches into a reel known as 'The Blackberry Blossom'. This leads to another tune well-known as 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' or 'The Wandering Labourer': the skill with which Harty makes a smooth and natural transition from one tune to the other is one of the many delights of the movement. It will be noticed that 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' is played 'in fifths' so that it sounds as if it is being played in two keys simultaneously. Harty once explained that this was in imitation of flute bands he had heard in the north of Ireland, in which instruments of different pitches played the same tune together. The xylophone and tuba add their distinctive touches to the humour of the movement.

III. In the Antrim Hills (*Lento ma non troppo*). Impassioned outcries on the strings and a sweeping clarinet cadenza lead to the main theme, a sorrowful melody on the oboe and bassoon. This is an old song, 'Jimín Mo Mhile Stór', and the opening lines explain the lament-like character of the movement.

You maidens, now pity the sorrowful moan I make;  
I am a young girl in grief for my darling's sake;  
My true love's absence in sorrow I grieve full sore,  
And each day I lament for my Jimín Mo Mhile Stór.

Following on this melody there is a new, wistful theme on the strings. Though it is not a borrowed melody it forms a completely natural counterpart to the first theme, and illustrates very well the artistic manner in which 'old' and 'new' material is integrated throughout this symphony. These two themes are then extended and ornamented in a rather improvisatory style, and here as elsewhere, many of Harty's turns of phrase are imbued with the idioms of Irish folkmusic.

IV. The Twelfth of July (*Con molto brio*). The title refers to the Battle of the Boyne, the annual commemoration of which is a colourful and noisy feature of Ulster folk-culture. Harty appropriately uses as his main theme the tune 'Boyne Water', played by the cor anglais at the beginning of the movement. In continuing this he creates several other themes before returning again to the strains of 'Boyne Water'. At this point there is a dramatic change of mood and key, and we hear once again the sombre tones of the tune 'Jimín Mo Mhile Stór' from the third movement. Strings 'sul ponticello', muted horns, and soft strokes on the gong add to the mysterious effect. Following this there is a Development and Recapitulation. The culmination of the movement is a grand fortissimo restatement of 'Jimín' Mo Mhile Stór, which leads to a lively Coda.



Chandos

CHAN 8314

HAMILTON HARTY  
*an Irish symphony*  
*a comedy overture*

THE ULSTER ORCHESTRA  
Leader, Richard Howarth  
BRYDEN THOMSON, Conductor

AN IRISH SYMPHONY

- I – On the Shores of Lough Neagh (Allegro molto)
- II – The Fair Day (Vivace ma non troppo presto)
- III – In the Antrim Hills (Lento ma non troppo)
- IV – The Twelfth of July (Con molto brio)

A COMEDY OVERTURE

© 1981 Chandos Records Ltd. © 1981 Chandos Records Ltd.  
Printed in West Germany  
CHANDOS RECORDS LTD, LONDON, ENGLAND

HARTY: AN IRISH SYMPHONY – Thomson/Ulster Orchestra • Chandos CHAN 8314

HARTY: AN IRISH SYMPHONY – Thomson/Ulster Orchestra • Chandos CHAN 8314