

Chandos

CHAN 8318



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Chandos

DIGITAL

SIR · EDWARD · ELGAR
WAND · OF · YOUTH · SUITES
NURSERY · SUITE

ULSTER · ORCHESTRA · + · BRYDEN · THOMSON





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 Schidlöf/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)

ELGAR'S love of children and their intimate world was something he never lost. His music contains a variety of works which are happily associated with that subject: *The Starlight Express* (excerpts of which can be found on Chandos CBR 1001), the *Dream Children*, the song *A Child Asleep* and the three suites here.

In March 1907 Elgar visited the United States where in the course of a six-week tour he conducted various works to considerable critical acclaim. Following his return he plunged into composition with renewed vigour writing among other pieces the *Fourth Pomp and Circumstance* March. However the later summer months were spent by Elgar looking through his 'Shed' or jotting books. There were six of these, the earliest containing sketches dating back to 1871. They were to prove of much assistance in the production of the orchestral scores of the two *Wand of Youth* Suites.

The origins of this music dated back over 30 years previously when the teenage Elgar children had written a play in which there was a perfect untainted world from where ill-tempered adults were barred. The only outsiders to this dream world were butterflies, fairies, giants and moths but if the adults were to repent the error of their ways due consideration might be given to their request for admission. The young Edward devised some suitable music later copying them into his 'Shed' books and it was from this material that the two suites were drawn.

The First Suite opens appropriately with an *Overture* of which sketches existed from 1879 although Elgar reworked much of the material. The mood here is exuberant, lively and fast moving which the composer marks *Allegro molto* in 4/4 in the key of B flat. The *Serenade* is a gentle lilting piece with a delicate melody first heard from the clarinet but then taken over by the violins, later joined by the woodwind, the melody then being tossed between the two. The

Menuet (subtitled *Old Style*) is a charming 17th-century pastiche which had existed since 1881 but only in short score. Marked *Andante* in 3/4 the opening bars carry the following inscription: "The two old people enter" (referring originally to Elgar's parents!). The *Sun Dance*, cast in 3/4 and marked *Presto*, is the most strongly developed piece within the First Suite. Part of its origins however go back to 1879 when it was devised as a waltz. (There are two glimpses here: first at the change of key from C to A flat and later when the tune is repeated a third higher up). This movement is basically a dialogue between the higher wind who in turn let the light and busy strings take over the glittering arabesques. The use of horns and brass are judiciously reserved for the final climax. (Incidentally, this movement was also used in the later *Starlight Express* incidental music.) Next comes the contrasting *Fairy Pipers* which is set in a rocking 6/8 rhythm and marked *Allegretto*. The clarinets give out a soothing melody over a rippling string accompaniment, only for the strings to have their tune before the clarinets return. The score here remarks: "Two fairy pipers pass by in a boat, and charm them to sleep". The following *Slumber Scene* is for muted strings with 2 bassoons and a single horn. Marked *Moderato* in 4/4 the nocturnal mood is exquisitely caught and conveyed. A point of interest here is that the bass part uses just the open strings (the original childhood player in 1979 was only able to manage this). To conclude the First Suite Elgar calls the movement *Fairies and Giants*. The delightful contrast of higher wind and lower strings creates a marvellous effect of two extremes. The origins of the music date back to 1867 but the brilliance of the 1907 orchestration shows Elgar at his richest. The brass and percussion are given suitably ponderous music to suggest the size and slowness of pace of the larger creatures. The scoring employed here is the largest in the Suite.

The first performance took place in the Queen's Hall on December 14th, 1907 with Sir Henry Wood conducting. The work was dedicated to Charles Lee Williams (1853-1935) who was organist at Gloucester Cathedral from 1882 until 1898.

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 the 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.

Recording producer: Brian Couzens

Sound engineer: Ralph Couzens

Recorded in the Ulster Hall on June 27, 1982

Front of sleeve: *Cecile and Adeliza Drummond* by Carl Bauerle -

reproduced by courtesy of John Brown (photographer),

Priests Antiques, Thame, and Mr. R. A. Schuck.

Sleeve design: Clare Osborn

Bryden Thomson was born in Scotland. After studying at the Royal Scottish Academy and in Europe with Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt and Igor Markevitch, he spent two years at McMaster University in Canada. He returned to Scotland to take up an appointment as assistant conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra, and from 1968 to 1973 was Principal Conductor of the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra which he took on a highly acclaimed European tour.

In addition, Bryden Thomson has conducted the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Scottish National, Scottish Chamber and English Sinfonia orchestras; for the South African Broadcasting Commission; the Goteborg Symphony Orchestra and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm. His work in the operatic field has included posts with Norwegian Opera in Oslo, Scottish Opera, and the BBC, for whom he has recorded several operas.

In 1977 Bryden Thomson was appointed Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra, and in January 1979 Principal Conductor of the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra.

The Ulster Orchestra began as a chamber-sized ensemble in 1966 and was enlarged in 1980/81 incorporating players from the disbanded BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra, and its reputation has increased enormously as a result of the Chandos series of recordings of the music of Hamilton Harty and Arnold Bax.

THE ULSTER ORCHESTRA SOCIETY
acknowledges the assistance given by the
FRIENDS OF THE ULSTER ORCHESTRA
in the production of this record.

Such was Elgar's enthusiasm that he wrote a Second Suite which he himself conducted in Worcester on September 9th, 1908. The music was dedicated to Hubert Leicester, a friend since boyhood days.

This Suite has only six movements, beginning with a *March* (the opening of which was sketched in 1897) which is in sombre mood being in the key of E flat in 4/4 with much use of triplet rhythms. There is an attractive change into G major when the strings have a jaunty semiquaver pattern. The ensuing *Little Bells* (subtitled *Scherzino*), also containing sketches dating back to 1879, is an *Allegro molto* in 2/4. The mood is at once gossamer-like in its delicacy in the airy woodwind writing. The contrasting middle section using a falling five note falling phrase is wistful and autumnal, set in the melodic minor. Elgar imparts a warm autumnal glow when the horn melody enters. However, the opening mood quickly returns although the composer briefly repeats the tune of the middle section now up a third. *Moths and Butterflies*, another piece containing sketches from 1879, is an *Allegretto* in 2/4 in which the prevailing mood is quiet, fairy-like and soft. The *Fountain Dance* gracefully conveys the idea of rising and falling jets of water, the lower strings and timpani forming a drone bass. The fifth movement (an *Allegro moderato* in 2/2) is called *The Tame Bear*. Here Elgar graphically captures the sad picture of a chained, clumsy performing animal being exhibited in the streets. Note the subtle use of the oboe part to suggest the pitiless animal and the tambourine and cymbals to convey the shuffling of the pathetic creature. *The Wild Bears*, one of the Powick pieces of 1879 (originally a quadrille) is fittingly a vivid, vibrant and exhilarating finale which contains evocative animal-like growls in the bass and percussion parts. The pace and excitement of the dancing whirl is exuberantly caught.

The death of his wife Alice in April 1920 was a poleaxe blow to Elgar. He was stunned and never really recovered from the loss. Her inspiration, encouragement and assistance were greatly missed and with the marked change

in the musical climate and prevailing tastes in post-war Britain the composer virtually ceased writing music, certainly any completed large-scale score. He sensed his era was over. The brash, vulgar, garish mood of the 1920s was not for a sensitive man approaching his retirement years.

Elgar had been the unofficial Master of the King's Music for two decades before his official appointment in 1924 following the death of Sir Walter Parratt. The duties were scarcely onerous but the 67 year-old incumbent devoted time and effort to re-organising the King's Music Library which was housed in the British Museum. His basic role however was more of an adviser to King George V but there were occasions when suitable ceremonial music was called for. These included *Good Morrow* ("a simple carol for His Majesty's happy recovery"), a four-part setting to words by George Gascoigne dating from 1929, and the *Nursery Suite*, written to mark the birth of two children to the Duchess of York in 1926 and 1930.

Elgar began work on this following the success of the *Severn Suite* which was written for the National Brass Band Championship in 1930. That, like much of the music written in this last decade of Elgar's life, had its origins in the 'Shed' books. The first movement marked *Aubade* (subtitled *Awake*) opens with a single long held G major chord. The ensuing passage which Elgar marks *Allegretto* has a rocking 12/8 quaver/crochet rhythm. The change of key into E flat minor with the time signature 4/4 contains part of an F major hymn tune *Drake's Broughton* to the words "Hear Thy Children" (Westminster Hymnal 151) which Elgar had written in 1878. The opening mood soon returns until the *fortissimo* climax where the hymn tune is repeated. The *Serious Doll* (marked *Andantino*) opens with a gentle and decorative solo flute over rocking muted strings. The middle section is introduced by oboe and clarinet passages only for the opening melody to return in a more rhapsodic manner. There is a delicacy and simplicity in the orchestral writing here which has an endearing mellowness and warmth. *Busy-ness* is in essence a miniature scherzo in 4/4 marked *Allegro molto*. The effect of hustle and bustle are evocatively caught here with rising and

falling passages for wind and strings. The whole of this brief movement is enhanced by the judicious use of brass. *The Sad Doll* (marked *Andantino*) is in the form of a slow waltz in which the strings are muted and divided with harp and woodwind. The skill with which Elgar conveys a mood of gentle wistfulness for the children's toys and the nursery is beautifully captured. *The Wagon (passes)* which is marked *Allegretto*, is in 4/4 and depicts a lumbering, heavily-laden horse-drawn vehicle which at the beginning can be heard in the distance making its journey ponderously. Slowly the cart rumbles into the foreground only to disappear again out of sight. Elgar skilfully suggests the sense of size and lugubrious pace by the use of percussion and lower brass in a rhythmic *ostinato*. The contrasting tune whistled by the driver is introduced by a solo clarinet accompanied by violas. *The Merry Doll* forms an effective contrast, being a second scherzo which Elgar marks *Allegro molto* in 2/4. The overall mood is brisk, cheerful and entertaining with much use of timpani and percussion (notably glockenspiel) to enhance the whole effect. Everything hurries about and the movement concludes in a boisterous and rumbustious manner. *Dreaming* opens with muted strings alone in a warm, tender, reflective and dreamlike mood with various Elgarian fingerprints. This section concludes with two violins playing in octaves. Then follows a solo violin cadenza marked *Envoy (Coda)*. The succeeding pages offer a recapitulation of some of the music heard earlier in the work, concluding with a return to the opening of the *Aubade*.

The first performance took place in the Kingsway Hall on June 4th, 1931 with the composer conducting the work for recording purposes. The occasion was attended by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York who were anxious to hear the music. They greatly liked *The Wagon (passes)* and immediately requested an encore before hearing the rest of the Suite. The score is "dedicated by permission to their Royal Highnesses, the Duchess of York [now Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother] and the Princesses Elizabeth [Queen Elizabeth II] and Margaret Rose [Princess Margaret]".

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ELGAR: THE WAND OF YOUTH & NURSERY SUITES

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SIR · EDWARD · ELGAR

(1857-1934)

ULSTER ORCHESTRA · BRYDEN THOMSON Conductor

• THE WAND OF YOUTH Suite No. 1, Op. 1a

- 1 1. Overture
- 2 2. Serenade
- 3 3. Minuet
- 4 4. Sun Dance
- 5 5. Fairy Pipers
- 6 6. Slumber Scene
- 7 7. Fairies and Giants

THE WAND OF YOUTH Suite No. 2, Op. 1b

- 8 1. March
- 9 2. The Little Bells
- 10 3. Moths and Butterflies
- 11 4. Fountain Dance
- 12 5. The Tame Bear
- 13 6. Wild Bears

NURSERY SUITE

(1931)

- 14 1. Aubade
- 15 2. The Serious Doll
- 16 3. Busy-ness
- 17 4. The Sad Doll
- 18 5. The Wagon (Passes)
- 19 6. The Merry Doll
- 20 7. Dreaming Envoy



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