

**Chandos**

CHAN 8390



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In the early 1930s John Ireland wrote two works for brass band — the *Downland Suite* and the *Overture Comedy*. In 1936 the latter was not simply transcribed but wholly transformed into a new orchestral work, *A London Overture*. Similarly, when in 1941 Ireland began to make a version for strings of the *Downland Suite*, he completely reconceived it. Only the two central movements had been finished when Ireland had to flee from his home in the Channel Islands to escape the German invasion. This seemed to break the thread, and work on the transcription was never resumed. In 1978 the John Ireland Trust commissioned Geoffrey Bush (who studied with Ireland and knew him well — see Bush's recently published book *Left, Right and Centre*) to complete the work along similar lines, in readiness for the centenary of the composer's birth the following year.

In the string orchestra version of the *Downland Suite* the *Prelude* and *Minuet* have been shortened and the *Elegy* considerably expanded (notably by the addition of an entirely new introduction). In both versions the theme of the *Elegy* is restated at the climax of the final *Rondo*; but whereas the brass play it *fortissimo* throughout in G major, the strings modulate to E flat for a moment of repose before the triumphant final flourish.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



*The Holy Boy (A Carol of the Nativity)*, composed on Christmas Day, 1913, for piano, was published as No. 3 of the *Four Preludes for Piano*. The composer transcribed it for strings in 1941.

*Elegaic Meditation* was written for organ in 1958 under the title *Meditation on John Keble's Rogationtide Hymn* (a favourite of the composer's) and was Ireland's last work. Because of failing eyesight the fair copy had to be made with the help of a magnifying glass. In it he seems to be looking back to favourite phrases from earlier works, such as the *Piano Concerto* and *The Forgotten Rite*. Geoffrey Bush transcribed it for strings in 1982, putting at the head of the score a quotation from J B Priestley's play *The Linden Tree*:

'Listen — he's remembering the earlier themes now . . . and saying goodbye to them.

'Wandering through the darkening house of life — touching all the things he loved — crying Farewell — for ever — for ever.'

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The repertory of English string music in the last 100 years, from Elgar through to Tippett, abounds in fine pieces but few surpass Frank Bridge's Suite of 1909/10. Although published in 1920 and first recorded in 1939, it has been surprisingly underplayed until the last decade:

surprisingly since its appeal is immediate and its technical demands are not great.

Bridge was a highly accomplished string player and the suite is clearly the work of someone who knew exactly what he was about. It has a technical polish and depth of feeling which make it one of the most totally satisfying of all his works. Thematic transformations are deftly achieved, and the *Nocturne* hauntingly exposes a world of private intensity. Other parts of the suite show that uncloying charm and vein of wistfulness that were features of Bridge's earlier music.

As Anthony Payne says in his recent study of the composer (*Frank Bridge: radical and conservative*, Thames, 1984) the suite is 'one of Bridge's most elegantly composed works. It brings to an orchestral ensemble the command of purely musical thought which distinguished his chamber music of the period' — the chamber music on which Bridge's reputation was built.

John Bishop

This record has been made with financial support from The Frank Bridge Trust and The John Ireland Trust.

**DAVID GARFORTH** began his full time studies at the Royal Manchester College of Music and was awarded the Ricordi Opera Prize for conducting. A French Government Scholar at the Paris Conservatoire, he obtained First Prize at the final competition examinations. Concurrently a Prince Rainier Scholarship gave him the opportunity of working with Igor Markevitch and the Monte Carlo Opera Orchestra.

On completion of his studies he returned to the Royal Manchester College of Music and joined the Music Staff of the Opera Department as Assistant Conductor and Repetiteur. In 1975 he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Tehran Opera House and on completion of his contract joined Scottish Ballet as Staff Conductor. He has recently completed two tours for the Australian Broadcasting Commission conducting the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra for public concerts and radio recordings.

David Garforth's conducting is divided between the theatre, currently Guest Conductor for Aterballetto and the Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Emilia Romagna 'Arturo Toscanini', and the symphonic repertoire and he has recently performed with the Orchestra Filharmonia Veneto, London Mozart Players, RTE Symphony Orchestra in Dublin and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

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Assisting Engineer: Bill Todd.

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**JOHN IRELAND**  
(1876–1962)

**A Downland Suite** (17:28)

- 1 I — Prelude (4:10)
- 2 II — Elegy (5:23)
- 3 III — Minuet (4:25)
- 4 IV — Rondo (3:20)

5 **The Holy Boy** (2:46)

6 **Elegaic Meditation** (5:16)

Transcribed by Geoffrey Bush

**FRANK BRIDGE**  
(1879–1941)

**Suite for String Orchestra** (21:13)

- 7 I — Prelude (8:15)
- 8 II — Intermezzo (3:06)
- 9 III — Nocturne (6:02)
- 10 IV — Finale (3:41)

DDD

**ENGLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**  
conducted by  
**DAVID GARFORTH**