SERENADE
TOMMY REILLY
with
THE ACADEMY OF
ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS
Chamber Ensemble
This album marks the second occasion on which Tommy Reilly has recorded with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The previous recording was with the full orchestra, but this time it is with the much acclaimed string octet led by Kenneth Sillito. Some of the pieces have the addition of double bass played by Raymond Russell. The pieces chosen contain an interesting cross-section of musical styles, some with stories of their own to tell.

Reflected in the album are two long-standing friendships. James Moody, one of the most original and knowledgeable composer-pianists of today, has written many serious works for Tommy Reilly and their friendship, which has lasted for many years, suggests a great respect for each other and for their musical abilities.

Some of the first recordings by George Martin at EMI were made with Tommy Reilly several years before the heady days of The Beatles. George has arranged two of Lennon and McCartney's most famous songs for the album and contributed a piece of his own.

Gordon Langford, though a fine composer in his own right, has on this album brought his considerable talents as an arranger to bear on works by Grieg, Fauré and Mendelssohn.

The selected movements from Handel's sonatas for flute and piano were chosen by James Moody from those which did not contain trills impossible to play on the harmonica. Music from this period suits the instrument admirably.

In complete contrast, George Martin's arrangement of "Eleanor Rigby" and "Michelle" by Lennon and McCartney shows how well these compositions work with the combination of harmonica and string octet.

Adagietto, George Martin's own composition, seems to reflect an atmosphere of sad romanticism; a haunting piece indeed.

Tommy Reilly's love of Norway and its people meant the inevitable inclusion of one of Grieg's Norwegian Dances, well chosen to portray this beautiful country's musical heritage.

Debussy's melodic style has always suited the tone colour of the harmonica and James Moody's arrangement of "Brüelé viewed from Preludes Book Two is a fine example.
Three pieces by Fauré were selected for this recording. Again the composer’s style lends itself perfectly to the harmonica and string octet. The song Au bord de l’eau and Romance, originally composed for violin and piano, have been arranged by James Moody.

Fauré’s Pavane was written for chorus and orchestra. It is a particular favourite of mine, and Gordon Langford’s transcription retains the character of the original score.

It is difficult writing sleeve notes about one’s own composition, but Aviator was specially composed for my father, and I must thank the Academy for including it on the album. Needless to say, I am delighted with the performance.

Mendelssohn has always been a popular composer with Tommy Reilly, and Gordon Langford’s arrangement of On Wings of Song shows how well transcriptions can work in the hands of a sympathetic arranger.

Bulgarian Wedding Dance by James Moody is a piece I have grown up with. It was written for Tommy Reilly several years ago. This fiery Slavonic-style work has been performed throughout the world both with orchestra and piano, but this performance must be the definitive one.

My Lagan Love, arranged for unaccompanied harmonica, is one of the most beautiful of Irish folk songs, its honest romanticism characterising the Irish nation’s love of music.

Some years ago Tommy Reilly wrote the test piece for the World Harmonica Championship Serenade for unaccompanied harmonica. It asks a great deal of the performer both in technique and interpretation, and clearly shows the extraordinary abilities of this small instrument in the hands of a master.

David Reilly

With special thanks to Sigmund Groven for all his help and enthusiasm in the production of this recording.

For several decades Tommy Reilly has been successfully convincing composers and conductors, as well as other musicians, critics and concertgoers, that the harmonica belongs on the concert stage.

Resident in Britain for many years, Tommy Reilly was born in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, and began studying the violin at the age of eight. A few years later he took up the harmonica and became fascinated by its latent musical potential, at that time unexplored.

While studying violin at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1939 he was arrested by the Gestapo. The five-and-a-half years he spent as a prisoner of war in Germany gave him time to develop the basic classical harmonica technique. Practically nothing was known about this at the time and so Tommy had to find out everything himself. He based his ideas of phrasing and interpretation on the playing of his violinist ideal, Jascha Heifetz. It was this pioneer work and his early violin training which became the foundation of his career after the war. In and, when in the words of Gordon Jacob, he made the harmonica into a solo instrument of high artistic worth.

He was the dedicatee of the first important full-scale Harmonica Concerto (by Michael Spivakovsky; first performance at the Festival of Britain, 1951). In 1967 he designed the first concert harmonica of all time. The precision-made instrument was built to his specifications out of solid silver.

In 1977 his LP of four original works with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields was warmly applauded by the critics. These are some of the milestones not only in Tommy Reilly’s career but also in the history of the harmonica as a legitimate musical instrument.

Tommy Reilly’s tours have taken him to all corners of the globe. His musicianship has inspired a number of composers, and he performs continually with some of the world’s finest orchestras. These were the words used by Sir Neville Marriner in a BBC broadcast: Many of the ingredients of the Academy’s original ambitions are embodied in Tommy’s musicianship: technically he achieves remarkable virtuosity with a minimum of fire. Musically, he exploits his instrument with refinement and bravura, and ultimately it does not seem to matter what he plays, but how he plays it.
THE ACADEMY OF ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS
CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Violins:  
Kenneth Sillito
Malcolm Latchem
Roger Garland
Andrew McGeach

Violes:  
Stephen Shingles
Anthony Jenkins

Cello:  
Denis Vigay
Roger Smith

Double bass:  
Raymond Koster

A Chandos Digital Recording
Recording Producer: Brian Coutes
Sound Engineer: Ralph Coutes
Assistant Engineer: Philip Coutes

Recorded in All Saints’ Church, Tooting, London
on May 5 & 6, 1986
Front Cover Photo: Stephen Waywell
Sleeve Design: Hansie Studer, London
Art Direction: Janet Osborn

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>BULGARIAN WEDDING DANCE (2:21)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>PAVANE Op. 50 (5:12)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>ROMANCE (2:14)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>NORWEGIAN DANCE Op. 35 No. 2 (2:14)</td>
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<td>ADAGIETTO (5:51)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>AVIATOR (5:15)</td>
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<td>III - Allegro (1:54)</td>
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<td>MY LAGEN LOVE (2:21)</td>
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<td>Eleanor &amp; Michelle (5:37)</td>
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James Moody
Fauré arr. James Moody
Fauré arr. James Moody
Grieg arr. Gordon Langford
George Martin
David Reilly
Tommy Reilly
Handel arr. James Moody
from Flute and Piano Sonatas

Fauré arr. James Moody
Debussy arr. James Moody
from Preludes Book 2
Mendelssohn
arr. Gordon Langford
Irish trad. arr. Tommy Reilly
Lennon & McCartney
arr. George Martin

TT = 49:18