

**Chandos**

**CHAN 8498**

**THE SOLOISTS OF AUSTRALIA  
IN CONCERT  
Volume II**

**J.S. BACH**

**Violin Concerto No. 2  
in E major BWV 1042 (17:47)**

- [1] I Allegro (7:40)
  - [2] II Adagio (6:58)
  - [3] III Allegro assai (2:41)
- RONALD THOMAS *Violin*

**MOZART**

**Serenade No. 6 in D minor  
K.239 (Serenata Notturna) (12:58)**

- [4] I March (4:10)
- [5] II Minuet and Trio (3:23)
- [6] III Rondo (5:20)

RONALD THOMAS,  
ROBERT INGRAM *Violins*  
BERIAN EVANS *Viola*,  
JOHN GRAY *Bass*

**TIPPETT**

**Little Music for  
String Orchestra (10:06)**

- [7] I Prelude (1:22)
- [8] II Fugue (3:05)
- [9] III Air (3:37)
- [10] IV Finale (1:58)

**HOWARD**

[11] **Sun and Steel (10:37)**

**ELGAR**

**Serenade in E minor Op. 20 (11:21)**

- [12] I Allegro piacevole (3:23)
  - [13] II Larghetto (5:14)
  - [14] III Allegretto (2:38)
- TT = 62:55

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**DIGITAL**

**THE SOLOISTS OF AUSTRALIA IN CONCERT**  
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BACH: Concerto No 2 · MOZART: Serenata Notturna  
ELGAR: Serenade · TIPPETT: Little Music for String Orchestra  
BRIAN HOWARD: Sun and Steel



  
**FESTIVAL OF PERTH**

**J.S. BACH (1685-1750)****Violin Concerto No. 2 in E major BWV 1042**

This light-hearted, cheerful concerto was written during one of the happiest periods of Bach's life. He had become very unhappy at the Weimar Court and, after asking permission to leave, was thrown into prison until his dismissal was granted one month later. On his release from prison he moved to Cothen, taking up the position of Kapellmeister (at the age of 32) at the court of the great music-lover Prince Leopold, where he stayed for the next 6 years (1717-23). It was during this time at Cothen that Bach wrote the only 2 violin concertos still extant in their original form, modelled on those of Vivaldi with their distinct solo and tutti sections. The concerto form as we know it today was undergoing a transition from the concerto grosso to the solo concerto form.

The E major Concerto begins the first movement with majestic opening chords erupting into a merry dancing rhythm. As the movement develops, the solo violin becomes more virtuosic, leading into a short, lyrical Adagio section before the final return to the original theme. The exquisite second movement begins with an intense basso ostinato, which continues throughout, contrasting with the tenderness of the expressive solo violin line. The concerto concludes in the third movement with a Rondo dance form. The light-hearted Tutti which constantly reappears is interspersed with brilliant episodes from the solo violin, whose part increases in difficulty throughout the movement.

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)****Serenade No. 6 in D major K. 239  
(Serenata Notturna)**

Written during his employment at the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg, this charming light-hearted Serenade belies an intensely frustrating and depressing period through which Mozart was living at the time. His opportunities within

the court were limited, and as the Archbishop was reluctant to allow Mozart time off, he felt his talents and gifts were being stifled, and longed to expand in a more exciting musical environment. Despite these frustrations, his genius still triumphed and, taking a break from the writing of symphonies, he experimented with a broadening orchestral style, writing divertimentos and serenades for varying combinations of instruments.

This Serenade (literally translated 'Night Serenade') was written for the interesting combination of two violins, viola and double bass as soloists, with a string orchestra, harpsichord and timpani accompanying. The majestic March movement is followed by an elegant Minuet, and a Trio played only by the solo instruments. The third (Rondo) movement is full of jokes, interrupted by a serious Adagio and Allegro section similar to a Recitative and Aria in an opera. Throughout the movement, each soloist has a chance to 'speak' individually in a short spontaneous cadenza (beginning with the second violinist). The movement ends with a last return to the Rondo section.

**MICHAEL TIPPETT (born 1905)****Little Music for String Orchestra**

Michael Tippett has emerged as one of the great British composers of our century. Born in 1905, it has taken a long time for public recognition of his genius to be realised. From the age of 8 or 9 he wanted to be a composer, and after a visit as a teenager with his school to a symphony concert conducted by the famous Malcolm Sargent, Tippett bought a book on counterpoint to teach himself composing. It is this love of counterpoint and from there, polyphony of the Renaissance and Baroque, which has become the characteristic feature of Tippett's music. In true perfectionist's spirit, he discarded most of his early works written after leaving the Royal College of Music and all his major works have been written since the Second World War (during which he was imprisoned as a conscientious objector).

The short opening Prelude movement of the *Little Music for String Orchestra* begins strongly with Baroque-type ornamentation and leads gently into the



second Fugal movement with its dense, yet clear polyphony. The second movement links directly to the expressive slow third movement, with its persistent ground bass beneath the melismatic individual lines of the violins and violas. The cheeky opening of the final fourth movement erupts into boisterousness ending with a surprise pianissimo. Tippett summed up the essence of his music in the motto written in the cover of his opera *Midsummer Marriage* — 'You shall say: I am a child of earth and of starry heaven.'

**BRIAN HOWARD (born 1951)**  
**Sun and Steel**

Widely regarded as one of the finest young composers in Australia, Brian Howard has already established an international reputation. A graduate of music from the Universities of Sydney and Adelaide, he studied composition with Peter Sculthorpe, Bernard Rands, Richard Meale and Peter Maxwell Davies. He is also an experienced conductor, has been a member of the music staff of the Australian Opera, and held several university teaching posts. In recent years, Brian Howard has received many commissions including operas and works for the Fires of London.

*Sun and Steel* was commissioned by the Festival of Perth for the debut concert of the Soloists of Australia in 1986. It is the second work by Brian Howard which pays homage to the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima (*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* 1978). Howard finds a parallel between the power and delicacy of Mishima's writing and the city of Perth (Australia) with its fierce summer sun reflected in the river and the steely heat of the city. The complex score is written for twelve solo instruments (in this case conducted by the composer) and calls for harsh, metallic, aggressive sounds contrasting images of turbulence and anguish, as they reach higher into the more delicate upper registers of the strings. This difficult work was written specifically for the members of the ensemble and calls for highly skilled playing. The double-bass part in particular was written to reveal this player's great virtuosity and range as he embarks on a long expressive soliloquy in the centre of the work.

*Sun and Steel* is a work of great depth, originality and maturity and will stand up to the test of time.

**EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)**  
**Serenade in E minor Op. 20**

Elgar wrote this deeply personal romantic work three years after his marriage in 1892, when he was 35. Before his marriage he had been actively involved in music in the provinces as an orchestral player, conductor, and composer, although his composing had been progressing slowly. After his marriage and two years of living in London he returned to his home county, Worcestershire, where he remained for the rest of his life.

With his wife's support and encouragement his composing career flourished, and he moved into the writing of larger musical works, although the *Serenade* is one of the few small works written after his marriage. The work seems to reflect Elgar's love of the English countryside and ideally quiet surroundings to which he had returned. The first movement begins with a gentle swaying pastore theme which undulates and throbs with an inner intensity of feeling. The second movement, sensuous and simple with large leaps in the melodic line, creates a brooding tranquility before returning to the short final movement with its echoes of the themes of the first movement.

*Also available*

**The Soloists of Australia in Concert Vol. 1**

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This recording has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of the following organisations:

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## The Soloists of Australia

The exciting birth of this new ensemble, the concept of which is entirely new in Australia, was the mastermind of the Festival of Perth Director David Blenkinsop and the virtuoso violinist and conductor Ronald Thomas.

It is a special orchestra drawn from the most distinguished Australian performers resident within Australia and overseas. The ensemble is not permanent but comes together for festivals and important occasions by invitation only, to perform and record a repertoire that is a lively mix of periods and styles with regular inclusion of centenary Australian works. New works are commissioned whenever possible.

Violins:	Ronald Thomas — Director	(WA/UK)
	Robert Ingram	(NSW)
	Robert Cooper	(WA)
	Paul Wright	(WA)
	Alan Bonds	(WA)
	Graham Wood	(WA)
Violas:	Barbara Gilby	(TAS)
	Berian Evans	(WA)
	Robert Harris	(QLD)
Cellos:	Gregory Baron	(WA)
	Catherine Finnis	(NSW)
Double Bass:	John Gray	(NSW)
Harpsichord:	Linnhe Robertson-Thomas	(NSW/UK)
Timpani:	David Pye	(WA)

**Ronald Thomas** left his native Australia at the age of 17 to study in London and Switzerland. After winning the Carl Flesch International String Competition at 21 he embarked on a highly successful career as a soloist, leader and conductor of most of the major British chamber orchestras. His own group, the New London Soloists Ensemble, has achieved fame as an ensemble of quality, precision and style. Apart from the high acclaim received for recordings made by the group, it has performed with great success worldwide; including a tour of the USA.

In 1979 he was appointed Musical Director of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, and under his guidance this lively chamber orchestra reached new heights, particularly in the field of recordings, for which it has gained many awards. Apart from his work with orchestras, Mr Thomas has performed regularly in a piano-harpsichord duo with his wife, Linnhe Robertson, and in the Thomas, Wallfisch, Goldstone Piano Trio in London.

He has frequently returned to Australia to give concerts, broadcasts and make recordings, and is now working internationally as a soloist and conductor.

## A Chandos Digital Recording

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