

Albert  
**KETELBEY**

**Cockney Suite • Jungle Drums • Fiddle Fun**

Orchestras conducted by the Composer



Historical Recordings 1908-1940

## The Music of Albert W. Ketèlby, Volume 3

### Cockney Suite • Jungle Drums • Fiddle Fun

Like Elgar, German and Coates, Albert W. Ketèlby was a composer from the provinces who came to London and celebrated its busy life-style in music. *Cockney Suite: Cameos of London Life* is with its five movements the longest of his compositions. The opening march portrays a *State Procession* from Buckingham Palace down the Mall, and indeed King George V himself is reported to have asked for an encore of this movement at a Royal Variety Performance. The middle section of the march is not the normal broad trio melody, but a series of incomplete phrases intended to convey the idea that the band has marched out of earshot before the stationary listener hears the end of the tune. Next comes *The Cockney Lover*, a short serenade based on two drinking songs, 'Arf a Pint o' Mild and Bitter and Little Brown Jug, harmonized in what the composer called a 'Debussy-like manner'. This is followed by a waltz, *At the Palais de Danse*, apparently played by a dance-band with a liking for extravagant key-changes. The middle section of the waltz consists of four phrases ABAC, but the middle BA phrases are repeated several times in different keys, showing off different sections of the band in turn - saxophone, muted brass, piccolo and xylophone, trombones and banjo - before the cornet rounds off the final phrase with a brilliant trill. Suddenly the mood becomes sombre, in *Elegy (Thoughts on Passing the Cenotaph)*. Muted strings play a repetitive melody not unlike the slow movement from Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*, accompanied by pianissimo timpani rolls played with side-drum sticks, before we hear a soaring melody which would have graced a Mahler symphony. To end the suite, we are back in a boisterous crowded atmosphere, this time on Hampstead Heath ('Appy 'Ampstead) on a *Bank Holiday*. As in earlier movements of this suite, the middle section is given over to musical fun and games; this time a dance tune including mouth-organ chords is played three times, with a variety of other sounds stuck over it in a kind of musical collage. We hear busking

cornets, revellers singing part of the gospel hymn *Tell me the Old, Old Story*, fragments of drinking-songs, a military band playing *Semiramide Overture*, and a showman with his rattle touting for his fair, which features a steam organ playing *Over The Waves*.

*Cockney Suite* was published in 1924, and first recorded in 1926 under the baton of Sir Dan Godfrey. Sir Dan had long been a friend of Ketèlby and some twenty years earlier had championed another of his works. The ballad *Aberfoyle* had been written in 1900 and published under the pseudonym of 'Raoul Clifford'. It turned out to be so successful that the composer realised his reputation would profit if it were re-issued under his real name. By 1905 it had become a recognised 'popular song', and Godfrey used it as the introduction and main theme of a set of waltzes, probably at his Bournemouth summer season. On this recording, the melody lasting the first thirty seconds is the refrain of *Aberfoyle* transformed into waltz rhythm, while the other tunes are by Godfrey.

Ketèlby himself effected a similar transformation when he came to write *In a Camp of the Ancient Britons* (1925), dedicated to Mr H. C. Burgess and Capt. Matthews. He described the genesis of the work thus: 'My tone-picture was inspired by a visit to Weston-super-Mare. When I saw the gay promenade and in the background the old ramparts (Worlebury) carrying the mind back to the time of the Roman legions and the Druids, I felt the vividness of the contrast, and I wrote music that, I hope, conveys the atmosphere of the old drama, gradually merging into present-day brightness and gaiety'. After a modal introduction suggesting an ancient religious ceremony, we hear a solemn melody as the Britons pray, a march to battle with the invading Romans, the battle itself, the march in retreat and the prayer which is gradually transformed into a waltz, as day-dreaming returns to modern reality.

Another work intended for the seaside was *A Desert Romance*, written for Henry Lyell-Taylor and the Brighton Municipal Orchestra in 1923. This piece is

written with remarkable economy of material, with both melodies consisting entirely of phrases in just two basic melodic shapes, whose repetitive undulations form a suitable metaphor for a desert landscape. No wonder it was soon being used to accompany the film *The Great Sahara!*

Three of the pieces in this selection date from Ketèlbeÿ's days attached to Trinity College of Music, when he had ambitions to become a serious composer by dint of studying the works of previous masters. Even before reaching college, he had composed a piano sonata in the style of Haydn. By 1892 his source of inspiration had moved on a few decades, for a review of his *Caprice for piano and orchestra* commends its Mendelssohnian clarity. Mendelssohn might even have written the opening melody of *Sunset Glow*. This had been used in an organ piece published in 1896, when the composer was organist at St John's Church, Wimbledon. The theme was recycled in a new piano piece in 1921, and shortly afterwards arranged for military band.

At a Trinity College concert on 23rd May 1898 Ketèlbeÿ performed *Danse à la tarentelle*, a rapid dance for piano solo that again draws on the musical language of Mendelssohn. The music is constructed from just a single theme, played alternately in minor and major keys. In 1909 the piece was arranged for that small group of instruments which passed as an orchestra in the contemporary recording studio. At the same concert in 1898 he accompanied his friend Giuseppe Villa in the song from *As You Like It*, *Blow, blow thou winter wind!*, music which shows he had studied the lieder of Schubert. It is sung here by the Wagnerian bass, Norman Allin, who at the time of recording was not only appearing at Covent Garden, but was also a director of the British National Opera Company.

Ketèlbeÿ's compositional expertise is nowhere better demonstrated than in the patrol *Jungle Drums* (1926). The drumming and chanting may suggest tropical Africa but the musical content is a tight economical structure in the best European tradition. The section lasting the first 45 seconds is built up entirely from two four-bar phrases which are permuted in

different keys and registers. The big tune played by the brass at the loudest point of the piece has previously been hinted at as an inconspicuous countermelody, a technique beloved by Sibelius. The unpretentious intermezzo *Gallantry* (1921) also reveals Ketèlbeÿ's skill, as two separate melodies for cello and violin are played in counterpoint as a delightful *duo d'amour*.

Surprising though it may seem, the reviewer in the May 1916 issue of *Musical Opinion* was even able to admire the skill behind *Mind the Slide!* 'Whatever the composer touches, he seldom fails to leave the impress of his inherent musicianship upon it.' The music is a skit on ragtime, which had recently been introduced to Britain by Alexander's Ragtime Band. A sequence of melodies, each with its own pattern of syncopation, is played against vulgar interruptions from a raucous trombone. The piece was dedicated to Mr E. Steade, who must surely have been the 'troubled trombone' of the subtitle.

Dating from the same wartime period is another novelty piece, *Fiddle Fun*, for a comic duo of violin and piano. The performers hid under the pseudonyms of 'Louis and Lewis', names taken from the family of Ketèlbeÿ's wife. The pianist is surely the composer himself, but the violinist has not been identified. The music itself is described as a '*fantasia burlesca*', and is a vehicle for virtuoso violin effects such as double-stops, harmonics, glissandi and left-hand pizzicato, as well as a variety of animal imitations, all within the broad framework of a musical switch. A purer example of a switch comes in *A Musical Jig-Saw* (1923). A succession of 53 (cut to 44 on this recording) well-known musical phrases are incongruously dovetailed together, leaving the listener the puzzle of identifying them. A puzzle even occurs in the authorship of the piece, 'by A. William Aston, orchestrated by Albert W. Ketèlbeÿ', the solution being that they are one and the same person, 'Aston' being, like 'Louis and Lewis', a family name.

Ketèlbeÿ set many texts by Florence Hoare, the daughter of his landlady when he was a student. The song *I call you from the shadows*, published in 1912, was the last in the series, and is yet another example of

the composer writing 'serious' music. The song is unified by two musical features - a descending quaver phrase and a four-note alternation of the notes E flat and F ('*Farewell, farewell*'), both of which occur in the introduction. Irregular phrase-lengths and the avoidance of repeated patterns in the vocal melody indicate that the composer wanted this to be categorised as 'art-song' rather than as the less prestigious 'ballad'. For this recording Ketèlbej was lucky to catch the tenor Morgan Kingston during his brief British career before moving to the United States.

Our selection ends as it began, with a march connected to King George V, *With Honour Crowned*. This time it was in celebration of his jubilee in 1935 and first performed by the Band of the Royal Horse Guards on 9th February of that year. Unlike *State Procession*, this march is replete with a conventional trio in broad singing style. The present performance was recorded by a vast gathering of massed military bands at the annual Tidsworth Tattoo, so turn the volume up for the authentic effect!

**Tom McCanna**

*With thanks to Michael Plant and Roger Thorne for lending some rare early material to make these albums possible.*

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	<b>Cockney Suite</b>	<b>16:07</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>No. 1 - A State Procession (Buckingham Palace)</b> (Columbia WAX 4516)	<b>3:05</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>No. 2 - The Cockney Lover (Lambeth Walk)</b> (Columbia WAX 4517)	<b>2:55</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>No. 3 - At the Palais de Danse (Anywhere)</b> (Columbia WAX 4518)	<b>3:09</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>No. 4 - Elegy (Thoughts On Passing The Cenotaph)</b> (Columbia WAX 4522)	<b>4:20</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>No. 5 - Bank Holiday ('Appy 'Ampstead)</b> (Columbia WAX 4523)	<b>2:37</b>
	A. W Ketèlbey's Concerto Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Recorded January, 1929)	
<b>6</b>	<b>Gallantry</b> A. W Ketèlbey's Concerto Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Decca DR 4760, recorded in June 1940)	<b>3:29</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>I Call You From The Shadows</b> Morgan Kingston, tenor • Columbia Studio Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Columbia 6294, recorded in 1912)	<b>3:40</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind</b> Norman Allin, bass • Columbia Studio Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Columbia 76865, recorded in 1923)	<b>2:57</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>In A Camp Of The Ancient Britons</b> A. W Ketèlbey's Concerto Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Columbia WAX 4581-4582, recorded January 1929)	<b>7:24</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>A Musical Jigsaw</b> A. W Ketèlbey's Concerto Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Columbia AX 159-160, recorded circa 1923)	<b>8:36</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Danse à la tarentelle</b> Empire Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the Composer (Rena Double Face S665, recorded circa November 1909)	<b>2:51</b>

<b>12</b>	<b>Mind the Slide (The Troubled Trombone)</b> The Regal Orchestra, conducted by the Composer (Regal 29922, recorded circa January 1916)	<b>2:58</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Jungle Drums</b> A. W. Ketèlbey's Concerto Orchestra conducted by the Composer (Columbia WAX 4560, recorded in January 1929)	<b>3:47</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Aberfoyle (Waltz)</b> Empire Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the Composer (Columbia-Rena R45, recorded circa November 1908)	<b>2:47</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Fiddle Fun</b> Violinist unknown • A. W. Ketèlbey, piano (Regal 29318 & 29319, recorded circa June 1915)	<b>6:10</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>A Desert Romance</b> The Casino Orchestra, conducted by the Composer (Columbia A 313, recorded circa December 1923)	<b>2:43</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Sunset Glow</b> The Silver Stars Band, conducted by the Composer (Columbia A 4042)	<b>3:23</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>With Honour Crowned (Processional March)</b> Massed Bands of the Aldershot & Eastern Commands, conducted by Leslie Seymour (HMV 2ER 126, recorded Aldershot, 1936)	<b>4:06</b>

All tracks recorded in London unless otherwise stated

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# ALBERT KETÈLBEY

(1875-1959)

## Cockney Suite

Orchestras conducted by the Composer

(All tracks recorded in London between 1908 and 1940)

ADD

 Playing  
Time  
70:58

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KETÈLBEY: Cockney Suite

8.110869

KETÈLBEY: Cockney Suite

NAXOS Historical

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|------------|---|--------------|
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| <b>18</b>  | <b>With Honour Crowned</b>              | <b>4:06</b>  |

Though a quintessentially British composer, Albert Ketèlbey achieved enormous fame throughout Europe as both a composer and a conductor. As a composer his deft melodic touch and sentimental charm placed him alongside Eric Coates as a master of the light music genre, while he simultaneously forged a highly successful career as a conductor, performing with some of Europe's leading orchestras, including the Concertgebouw Orchestra. These treasurable recordings represent authoritative versions of some of the best-loved English music of the early twentieth century.

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Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Peter Dempsey

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A complete track and artist list can be found in the booklet

