Parnassius Piano Duo
Simon Callaghan
Hiroaki Takenouchi

PERCY SHERWOOD
Sonata & Suite

HUBERT PARRY
Grand Duo
Percy Sherwood & Hubert Parry

Music for Two Pianos

Percy Sherwood (1866-1939)

Suite for Two Pianos  First recording

1  I  Praeludium  Allegro  3.53
2  II  Minuetto  Allegretto grazioso  4.35
3  III  Romanze  Andante con moto  3.25
4  IV  Scherzo  Presto  3.40
5  V  Finale  Non troppo allegro, un poco maestoso  6.48

Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918)

Grosses Duo in E minor (c.1875)

6  I  Allegro energico, ma moderato  5.56
7  II  Andante tranquillo e molto espressivo  6.19
8  III  Maestoso – Allegro ma non troppo  7.21

Percy Sherwood

Sonata for Two Pianos (1896)  First recording

9  I  Allegro con brio  8.06
10  II  Adagio  11.59
11  III  Scherzo. Allegro molto  5.48
12  IV  Finale. Moderato – Allegro molto  11.08

Total playing time 79.01

Parnassius Piano Duo

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triumphant, with a number of features that characterise Sherwood's musical sound – a foreboding main theme initially intoned in the bass with an insistent ostinato accompaniment; sudden explosions of will-o-the-wisp passagework; and dramatic rising clusters of chords – before ending in a blaze of C major.

C. Hubert Parry, *Grosses Duo* in E minor for two pianos

At the time that he composed his *Grosses Duo* in late 1875 and early 1876, the 27-year-old Charles Hubert Parry (1848-1918) was simultaneously following his musical calling whilst pursuing a more conventional professional path. Having taken a job working for the insurance company Lloyd's of London at the behest of his father in 1870, Parry had nevertheless continued his musical studies with the composer George Alexander Macfarren (1883-87) and German pianist and writer Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905), an early champion of Wagner's music. Under Dannreuther's guidance, Wagner would become a major influence on the young Parry in the 1870s.

Another significant development was Parry's engagement as a writer and later sub-editor for George Grove's ambitious new *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, for which he contributed numerous entries. Among his more extensive contributions was a 12-page article on the general topic of 'Piano Music', which essentially consisted of a chronological listing of key composers and their solo piano works from 1760 onwards, but with some interesting asides and recommendations. A fugue by August Alexander Klengel on the duet 'Là ci darem la mano' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, for example, is described as a 'veritable gem'. Parry also professes that interest in the music of Brahms is 'not so much in spontaneous charm or graceful expression, as in their solid substance, intellectual character and logical development, which rivet the attention and sustain it to the last.'

In his introduction, Parry cautions that the entry could not 'lay claim to thorough correctness' and bemoans the difficulties he had experienced with sourcing English piano music, stating that 'most of the works of the English composers of the last century...
Percy Sherwood

The composer and pianist Percy Sherwood (1866-1939) was born in Dresden, the son of an English teacher and a German singer. His compositional output encompassed five symphonies, concertos for piano, violin and cello, a Requiem for solo voices and orchestra, chamber music for various combinations of instruments, and numerous solo piano pieces. While a significant collection of manuscripts of his music was deposited at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in the 1970s, much remains to be published, performed and recorded.

Sherwood’s career was almost equally divided between Germany and England. In the twenty-five years before the outbreak of the First World War, Sherwood established himself as a prominent figure in Dresden’s musical life. He was most closely associated with Dresden Conservatoire, where he studied with the composer Felix Draeseke (1835-1913) and pianist Bertrand Roth (1855-1938) before being appointed as a teacher in the early 1890s. He was subsequently awarded the honorific title ‘Königlicher Professor’ (‘Royal Professor’) in 1911. Sherwood’s name features prominently in the programmes of concerts given at the Conservatoire and by the Dresden Tonkünstler-Verein before 1914, both as a composer and pianist. Villa Sherwood, the family home from about 1903, also became a focal point in the social and cultural life of the city, hosting visits by such prominent musicians as the conductor Artur Nikisch and the violinist Fritz Kreisler. Sherwood also presented an annual series of 14 ‘Chronological Lectures on the Great Composers’ from his home, which he illustrated at the piano and delivered both in German and separately in English.

While Sherwood’s concert and teaching activities were largely confined to Dresden, a few works were also published by major German music publishing firms, such as Bote und Bock (Berlin) and Kistner (Leipzig), gaining him wider recognition. News of his activities also reached Britain. In June 1902, for example, the Musical Times reported from Dresden on a concert that featured the first performance of a string quartet in G major and a suite in C major for two pianos, both of which were ‘well received’. A particularly notable event was a widely reported concert given at the Bechstein (later
Wigmore) Hall in London on 20 March 1906, at which Hans Neumann (violin) and Ada Thomas (piano) performed Sherwood’s violin sonata in F major. A report of the concert in the *Pall Mall Gazette* observed that ‘Mr Sherwood will have none of your ultra-modern methods of expression; he prefers to deal simply with his subjects, and to treat them rather in the fashion of eighteenth-century chamber music, than in any other way that we know of.’ Concerts of Sherwood’s music followed at Steinway Hall on 22 May 1913 and 20 May 1914, the programme for the latter event consisting of two string quartets together with the Quintet for piano strings, with the composer himself at the piano.

Despite the promise of these individual events, Sherwood never gained a lasting foothold in London’s musical life despite settling there after the outbreak of the First World War. It seems that he was accidentally stranded in the UK when war was declared on 4 August 1914, preventing him from returning to Dresden. According to research undertaken by the cellist Joseph Spooner, Sherwood instead took up residence with his wife in Adelaide Street, NW3, from where he would carve out a life of teaching, composing and occasional performances mostly outside of London itself. On 29 May 1915, for example, he gave a lecture recital on the life of Beethoven at a private address in Bedford. Further performances would follow in Luton after the war, notably the premiere of *A Night Fantasy* for soprano, tenor and orchestra at the Winter Assembly Hall on Wednesday 15 March 1922, in which the Luton Orchestral Society was conducted by the composer himself.

**Suite in C major for two pianos**

The two works by Sherwood presented on this disc were not published during the composer’s lifetime and are recorded here for the first time, using texts prepared and edited by Hiroaki Takenouchi from manuscripts held by the Bodleian Library. The Suite presumably dates from 1901 or early 1902, shortly before its first known performance, which was given by the composer and Bertrand Roth on 20 April 1902 as
part of Roth’s regular series of salon concerts at his home in Dresden. An inscription on the surviving manuscript names two dedicatees: Lucy Bambring and Edith Hempseed, a pianist active in the UK from around 1900 until the 1930s.

The musical language of the Suite is clearly rooted in the classical and early romantic tradition. The opening Praeludium sets a lyrical tone, its rippling accompanying texture supporting an expansive melodic line shared between the two pianists. The restrained mood is untroubled by any significant harmonic disturbance, and interrupted only briefly by a climactic passage based on an extension of the second half of the principal theme. The second movement is in the form of the classical Minuet and Trio, its concise melodic material and carefree expression providing a light contrast with the first movement and the central Romance. The latter, by contrast, moves into a sound-world more akin to Schubert, both in the contours of the main theme – strongly reminiscent of the opening of the Sonata in B flat major, D. 960 – and in the turbulent middle section.

Arguably the most confidently articulated movement of the work, the scherzo seemingly takes its lead from Mendelssohn, bringing to mind the glittering virtuosity of the Variations Serieuxes and the sorcery of the Rondo Capriccioso. The Finale opens with an imposing introduction that prefaces the exposition of a noble theme (bringing to mind the Prelude to Wagner’s Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg), initially by the primo part alone but then repeated and shared by both pianists. A central Trio, which introduces a pastoral theme based on repeated triplet figures, provides a suitably tranquil interlude before a varied repeat of the opening material leads to a grandiose climax.

**Sonata in C minor for two pianos**

More ambitious than the Suite in terms of its scale and emotional range, the Sonata in C minor for two pianos was first performed by Sherwood and Hermann Scholtz under the auspices of the Dresden Tonkünstler-Verein on 27 April 1896. The work’s gestation is documented in the autograph manuscript held by the Bodleian Library, in
which Sherwood noted the dates on which he completed the second, third and fourth movements over the course of a few weeks in April and May 1890. Seemingly unhappy with the original conclusion to the last movement, Sherwood revised it around the time of the first performance, dating the newly composed ending with the inscription ‘Fine. 1896’.

The work opens with a surging Brahmsian theme that sets a tone of irresistible momentum that characterises the first movement as a whole. A more subdued second subject in the relative key of A flat major is nevertheless underpinned by an unsettling syncopated bass ostinato and leads into a crescendo of cascading semi-quaver chords. There are no repeats, but traditional sonata form is observed with a development section that explores the remote key of C sharp major and a recapitulation in which the main thematic material returns, albeit in different permutations. The hushed reverie of the second movement exemplifies Sherwood’s interest in varied repetition, the touching opening theme being subjected to several textural and registral transformations. Punctuated by moments of near stasis, the music expresses a grave beauty reminiscent of a Beethovenian slow movement, albeit with echoes of Schumann – notably, a motivic fragment apparently drawn from the song *Ich grolle nicht*.

Rather like the fourth movement of the Suite, the scherzo has a demonic energy propelled by an insistent semiquaver accompaniment that emerges from the depths of the keyboard. Flashes of virtuoso passagework add to the sense of nervous intensity, relieved only by a brief Schumannesque interlude that introduces a change in gear and texture, with a buoyant theme built from unison octaves, before the music returns to the animated material of the opening. Instead of building to a climax, however, the movement ends in laconic fashion, with a faltering recapitulation of the various thematic fragments that dominate the movement.

The introduction to the final movement perhaps comes closest to the style of the so-called New German School – represented by composers such as Franz Liszt and Sherwood’s teacher Felix Draeseke – in its declamatory flourishes and improvisational character. The main body of the movement is by turns turbulent, brooding and
triumphant, with a number of features that characterise Sherwood’s musical sound world – a foreboding main theme initially intoned in the bass with an insistent ostinato accompaniment; sudden explosions of will-o-the-wisp passagework; and dramatic rising clusters of chords – before ending in a blaze of C major.

C. Hubert Parry, *Grosses Duo in E minor for two pianos*

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In his introduction, Parry cautions that the entry could not ‘lay claim to thorough correctness’ and bemoans the difficulties he had experienced with sourcing English piano music, stating that ‘most of the works of the English composers of the last century
are out of print, and are often only to be obtained with great difficulty’. It is in this context that Parry himself composed a handful of keyboard works during the 1870s, including two solo piano sonatas and the *Grosses Duo*, which would remain his only composition for two pianos.

If Parry’s dictionary survey reflects a broad familiarity with the piano repertoire, the *Grosses Duo* shows how much of the classical tradition he had assimilated into his compositional technique. Baroque influences are especially apparent in the opening of the work, with its forceful gestures redolent of Bach’s organ music, and in the central Pastorale. The shadow of Bach is also evident to the final movement, which takes the form of a prelude and fugue based on an angular three-note descending motif spanning two major seventh intervals. As the musicologist Jeremy Dibble has explained, however, the work also owes much to Parry’s preoccupation with more recent musical developments in Germany, notably Brahms’s organisation of thematic and harmonic material and approach to sonata form. It is no coincidence that the *Duo* was composed at a time when Parry was undertaking a detailed study of Brahms’s Piano Quintet and its earlier incarnation as a duet for two pianos.

First performed in 1877, the *Duo* appeared in print in the same year as part of Breitkopf und Härtel’s high profile ‘Klavier-Bibliothek’ (‘Pianist’s Library’) series – the first edition of Parry’s music to be published abroad. Perhaps recognising the new opportunities that international recognition might bring, Parry also relinquished his insurance job in 1877 in order to focus his efforts on developing a career as a composer, teacher and writer. Despite inhabiting a quite different sound-world to Parry’s later choral works – such as *Blest Pair of Sirens*, with which he is now indelibly associated – the *Duo* therefore emerges as a pivotal work in his early career and musical development.

Dr Rupert Ridgewell, October 2018
Parnassius Piano Duo  Simon Callaghan and Hiroaki Takenouchi

As students of the late Yonty Solomon at the Royal College of Music, Simon Callaghan and Hiroaki Takenouchi met in 2003 and since then have had a thriving duo partnership, giving concerts throughout the UK, Europe and Japan. During that time they have developed a wide-ranging and extensive repertoire and their engagements have included gala performances with principals from the English National Opera and a number of significant recordings. Their two volumes of Delius’s orchestral works in arrangements for two pianos (mostly world premiere recordings, to coincide with the composer’s anniversary year) on the SOMM label were warmly received, International Record Review (June 2012) describing their playing as “sparkling and sincere” and BBC Music Magazine (July 2012) saying: “Simon Callaghan and Hiroaki Takenouchi…play with such love, panache, and exact synchronisation”. As well as playing all the mainstream works for both piano–four hands and two pianos, the Parnassius Piano Duo are particularly keen advocates of lesser-known repertoire, and have recently included works by Parry, Medtner, Percy Sherwood and Sterndale
Bennett in their recital programmes. Their own arrangement of Rachmaninov’s second symphony for two pianos was premiered in London in 2017 and will be published in 2019.

Simon and Hiroaki also have a busy international calendar of solo and chamber music engagements. Simon’s recent release for Hyperion with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra reached No.3 in the specialist classical charts and the top ten in the Classic FM chart. Hiroaki’s premiere recording of the concertos by Sherwood and Catoire with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Martin Yates (on Dutton) which garnered enthusiastic reviews across the press was an addition to his discography which includes works by Sterndale Bennett, Schumann and a number of contemporary composers. They are both expecting further releases in 2019 and 2020. Simon and Hiroaki also put great value on teaching, Simon being Head of Piano at the Ingenium Academy while Hiro teaches at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

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Engineering and production by Adrian Farmer

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