

**NAXOS**

Edwin York  
**BOWEN**

**Viola Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2  
Phantasy**

**The Bridge Duo**

**Matthew Jones, Viola • Michael Hampton, Piano**



## Edwin York Bowen (1884–1961)

### Viola Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 • Phantasy

Edwin York Bowen was born in Crouch Hill, London, in 1884, the youngest son of the owner of whisky distillers Bowen and McKechnie. Bowen's mother gave him piano and harmony lessons at an early age, and once aware of his prodigious talent, enrolled him at the North Metropolitan College of Music. He made his concerto debut at the age of eight, and shortly after began studies at the Blackheath Conservatoire. At the age of fourteen he won a scholarship to enter London's Royal Academy of Music, where he studied piano with Tobias Matthay and composition with Frederick Corder. Here he demonstrated his extraordinary versatility, becoming an accomplished organist, violist and horn player as well as winning prizes in his principal studies.

During his studies, Henry Wood invited Bowen to perform his *First Piano Concerto* in the Royal Albert Hall Promenade concerts at the age of just nineteen. Camille Saint-Saëns, moreover, described him as "the most remarkable of the young British composers". With a highly individual style, despite clear influences to his composition, Bowen's path to greater fame seemed secure. At the age of 25 he was appointed Professor of the Royal Academy, and by this time he had performed his own works with such collaborators as violinists Fritz Kreisler and Joseph Szigeti, violist Lionel Tertis and singer Sylvia Dalton. Miss Dalton became his wife in 1912, and their son Philip was born in the following year.

The First World War led Bowen to play French horn in the Scots Guards band, until he contracted pneumonia while serving in France. Once back in England, he returned to prolific composition and frequent performing. Bowen was a remarkably complete musician – he was rumoured, like fellow composer Paul Hindemith, to have been able to play almost all orchestral instruments to a competent degree, and adored teaching, giving lectures, producing new editions of works, adjudicating and examining.

Bowen's romantic melodies and harmonies led to his

being nicknamed, 'the English Rachmaninov'; some have since observed that 'the English Chopin' may have been more appropriate. In the post-war years he wrote works for many more of the great performers of his day, such as Dennis Brain, Leon Goossens and Carl Dolmetsch. Despite his many supporters, however, (Henry Wood, for instance, complained that Bowen "never took the position he deserved" in music history), his compositional style become considered outdated in comparison with that of his more 'modern' contemporaries.

Bowen's contribution to the piano repertoire was considerable. Not only did he write works for almost all ability levels, but many of his works were specifically aimed at improving piano technique, continuing the lineage of his esteemed teacher at the Royal Academy of Music. Above all, his *Twenty Four Preludes for Piano, Op. 102*, covering all major and minor keys, is generally recognized as a masterpiece. Although Bowen's orchestral works are still occasionally performed, it is his duo and chamber music that has best stood the test of time, with many of his works being published or reprinted only in recent years.

Bowen's parallel performing career included the first British performance of Mozart's *Concerto in F major for Three Pianos and Orchestra* and the first performance of Walton's *Sinfonia Concertante*, as well as the first ever recording of Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto*. His piano duo with fellow Royal Academy professor Harry Isaacs lasted until Bowen's death in 1961.

Preferring the tone of the viola to the violin, Bowen was inspired, like so many composers of the time, by Lionel Tertis, often known as the 'father of the modern viola'. They gave many duo recitals together and Tertis premiered Bowen's *Viola Concerto in C minor, Op. 25*, in 1908. Inspired by Tertis's virtuosity and depth of sound, Bowen was one of the first of his generation of composers (along with Arnold Bax and Benjamin Dale) to champion the viola as a solo instrument. In the process, the

boundaries of what was considered possible on the viola were changed beyond recognition.

Bowen's *Viola Sonatas* date from 1905 and were given their première at London's Aeolian Hall by Lionel Tertis, with the 21-year-old composer at the piano, in May 1905 and February 1906 respectively. The openings of the sonatas could barely be more contrasting, despite sharing a 3/4 time signature and having two bars of piano alone to prepare for the entrance of the viola. The darkly mysterious piano chords of *Sonata No. 1* are joined by a repeated 'sighing' viola figure, while the *Sonata No. 2* begins with a lilting, 'gondoliera'-style figure in the piano joined by a simple, singing viola melody.

Bowen's compositional use of conventional structures often disguises the ingenuity employed in his treatment of such forms. He uses subtle variation in a theme's return or adjusts a few notes within the harmony of a repeated section of music, in a similar manner to Sir William Walton. His music often goes through an extraordinary variety of keys within a short space of time, but never loses its melodic thread in the process. Bowen's ear for unusual, yet satisfying, harmonies is clear in both sonatas, never more so than the slow movements. Another characteristic is his use of original but effective textures, such as those found in the lyrical sections of the finale of *Sonata No. 1*. Bowen was encouraged by Tertis not to shy away from virtuosic techniques which were frequently used in violin works but rarely at that time in viola pieces, such as extended passages of double-stops, fast scale-like passages and the use of the highest end of the viola's pitch range. The last movements of both sonatas highlight this aspect and create considerable technical difficulty. This is matched by the virtuosity of the piano writing,

reminding us of Bowen's own extraordinary pianistic talents. He was a master of contrasts, crafting absorbing, coherent movements within the sonatas' framework, yet constantly surprising the listener with his inventive ideas.

The *Phantasy, Op. 54*, was written in 1918 as Bowen's entry to the Cobbett 'phantasy' composition competition. Though roughly half the length of the *Sonatas*, the work is clearly divided into three (interconnected) movements. Beginning with a brief 'prelude' in which the viola introduces the work's central theme without accompaniment, *Phantasy* takes us on a journey through a huge variety of tempo, texture, tonality and moods. Bowen's compositional brilliance is apparent here in the cohesion of the sections, the use of the full range of pitches and timbres of the viola and the sheer exuberance and joy of the work's conclusion, never losing sight of the original motif with which it begins.

All three works presented in this recording were considered phenomenally difficult at the time of composition, and it is likely that this was one of the reasons why they were performed only very rarely until recently. It is frustrating that Tertis did not record any of these works – listening to his recordings of works from the same period one can imagine how perfectly suited Bowen's writing was to the viola maestro's sound and style. However, as violists and indeed all musicians become increasingly aware of Bowen's extraordinary gifts and the extent of his compositional output, it seems likely that these works will attain the status they so richly deserve.

© Matthew Jones

## The Bridge Duo

Matthew Jones, Viola • Michael Hampton, Piano

### Matthew Jones



Photo: Carolyn Cowan

Hailed as 'a worthy successor to Tertis', Matthew Jones is widely acknowledged as one of the leading violists of his generation. Recent recital and chamber music venues include London's Wigmore Hall and South Bank, and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing; he made his critically acclaimed Carnegie Hall recital début in 2008. He was also a member of the Badke String Quartet when they won the 2007 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, and is a member of chamber group Ensemble MidtVest. He is greatly in demand as a concerto soloist, festival artist and contemporary music performer. He is Senior Tutor of String Chamber Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Professor of Viola at Trinity Laban in London, and has given masterclasses in colleges around the world including the United States (Indiana, Cincinnati), Australia, Israel and Japan. He also directs courses at the Pro Corda International Chamber Music Academy. His extensive discography includes Prokofiev and English viola works for Naxos, in addition to seven other solo and chamber releases. Born in Swansea, Wales, Matthew Jones is also a composer, mathematics graduate and teacher of the Alexander Technique and Kundalini Yoga and Meditation. His holistic approach to music-making has led to great demand for his workshops and seminars; his students of the Alexander Technique have included world-renowned conductors and soloists, world champion athletes and orchestras

including the New World Symphony, Melbourne Symphony and the European Union Youth Orchestra. He is in great demand around the world for his workshops and seminars on healthy practice for musicians and techniques for enhancing performance. For more information, visit [www.matt-jones.com](http://www.matt-jones.com).

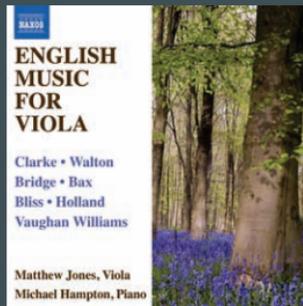
### Michael Hampton

Michael Hampton performs regularly on major stages around the world, including the Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall, and is broadcast frequently on radio. He works both as a soloist and chamber musician, equally at home in both instrumental and song repertoire. Since graduating from the Royal College of Music in 1999, he has established himself as one of the leading young artists in his field. Winner of numerous prizes and scholarships, he held the Sir Henry Richardson Award from the Musicians Benevolent Fund, as well as the Geoffrey Parsons Junior Fellowship in Keyboard Accompaniment, and in 2000 won the Ferdinand Rauter Memorial Award in the Richard Tauber singing competition. He performs regularly with bass baritone Jonathan Lemalu, with whom he gave the world première performance of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *Songs Before Sleep*. He has given concerts at all the major chamber music venues in London and at the Royal Festival Hall, recitals in Italy and Sweden, music societies and festivals around the United Kingdom, and a performance of Brahms and Schumann *Liebeslieder* with Roger Vignoles at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

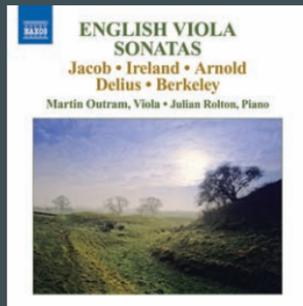


Photo: Tina Foster

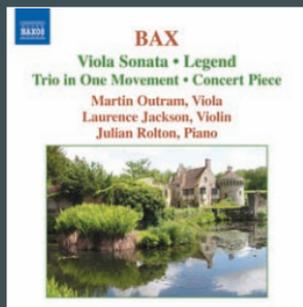
Also available:



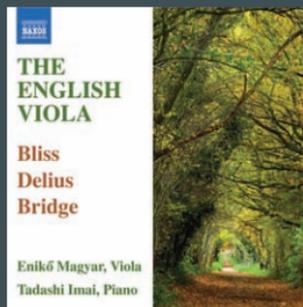
8.572579



8.572208



8.557784



8.572407



8.572580

DDD

Playing Time  
71:18

www.naxos.com

© & © 2011 Naxos Rights International Ltd  
Booklet notes in English  
Made in Germany

Inspired by the 'father of the modern viola' Lionel Tertis, London-born composer Edwin York Bowen preferred the tone of this instrument to that of the violin. Encouraged by Tertis, his two widely contrasting *Sonatas* are pioneering in their use of the viola as a virtuoso solo instrument. Though roughly half the length of the *Sonatas*, the exuberant *Phantasy* takes us on a journey through a huge variety of tempo, texture, tonality and moods. The Bridge Duo's recital of English Music for Viola (8.572579) was acclaimed as 'excellent' and 'essential listening'. (*MusicWeb International*)

Edwin York  
**BOWEN**  
(1884–1961)

<b>Viola Sonata No. 1 in C minor, Op. 18 (1905)</b>	<b>30:05</b>
① I – Allegro moderato	11:20
② II – Poco lento e cantabile	9:44
③ III – Presto	9:01
<b>④ Phantasy for Viola and Piano, Op. 54 (1918)</b>	<b>14:12</b>
Poco andante e tranquillo – Poco più allegro – Poco adagio – Allegro vivo	
<b>Viola Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 22 (1905)</b>	<b>27:01</b>
⑤ I – Allegro assai	10:54
⑥ II – Grave	9:09
⑦ III – Finale: Allegro giocoso	6:58

**The Bridge Duo**  
Matthew Jones, Viola • Michael Hampton, Piano

Recorded at Wyastone Concert Hall, Monmouth, UK, from 28th to 29th March, and 4th June, 2011  
Producer and Engineer: Michael Ponder • Editor: Jennifer Howells • Booklet notes: Matthew Jones  
Publishers: Schott Music International (tracks 1–3 and 5–7) and Josef Weinberger Ltd. (track 4)  
Cover photo: *Sunrise in Richmond Park 1* (© Tomasz Dubinski / Dreamstime.com)