Havergal Brian

Orchestral Music Volume Two
Music from the Operas

The Tigers: Symphonic Variations
The Cenci: Preludio tragico
Faust: Night Ride of Faust and Mephistopheles
Turandot: Three Pieces, Suite

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Garry Walker, conductor

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS
HAVERGAL BRIAN: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC FROM THE OPERAS
by Malcolm MacDonald

Havergal Brian once described his operas as containing ‘the best in me.’ But to date there have been pitifully few opportunities to get to know these works, which have received much less exposure than his 32 symphonies. None of Brian’s five operas – The Tigers (composed 1917–19, to his own libretto), Turandot, Prinzessin von China (1949–51, after Schiller’s version of Gozzi’s ‘fable’), The Cenci (1951–52, after Shelley’s tragedy), Faust (1955–56, after Part I of Goethe’s drama) and Agamemnon (1957, after Aeschylus) – has ever been staged. Three of them (The Tigers, The Cenci and Agamemnon) have received concert or studio performances. Of Faust, only the Prologue has been performed, for a studio broadcast; and nothing at all has been heard of Turandot apart from the (admittedly substantial) orchestral extracts contained on this disc.

Yet, with the exception of Agamemnon, all the operas contain orchestral music suitable to be extracted for concert performance, a process that Brian himself initiated by making concert works from The Tigers, Turandot and The Cenci. The anthology of orchestral pieces on this CD, derived from four of those five operas, can at least provide something of the flavour of their parent works, while demonstrating that it is indeed in his operas that some of Brian’s most impressive music may be found.

The Tigers (1917–19 and 1927–29)
Brian’s first opera was begun in the middle of World War I and is essentially a satire on the shambolic unpreparedness of the British army in training on the home front, far away from the actual, brutal warfare on the other side of the Channel. In this he was drawing on his own experience as a volunteer in 1914, and his later job as a clerk listing the effects of men killed in action. He concocted his own libretto, and the result lies somewhere between music-hall farce and proto-Brechtian ironic commentary. The three acts of the opera concern the slapstick misadventures of a regiment of volunteer recruits (the ‘Tigers’ of the title) in training somewhere in the Home Counties. Brian’s original title was actually The Grotesques, probably to make clear that the various characters are

1 In a letter to Robert Simpson dated 4 December 1968. On other occasions he said much the same about his gigantic two-act cantata (described as a ‘lyric drama’) on Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound (1937–44), which cannot be heard as Brian intended because the full score has been missing since the 1950s.

2 It is uncertain whether Brian intended a contemporary allusion to an actual regiment of the British army. The Leicestershire (later Royal Leicestershire) Regiment was popularly known as The Tigers; from 1825 they displayed a royal tiger on their crest and cap badges in recognition of long service in India. (Cf. The Tigers, Act III scene 2: ‘The clothes I wear, / and this emblem in my hat upon which you an animal see, / proclaim that I to the Tigers belong’) Fourteen new battalions of the Leicestershires were formed in August 1914, on the outbreak of the Great War, during which the regiment lost approximately 6,000 dead.
in fact mere types of officialdom and embodiments of conventional attitudes. But there is a parallel vein of absurdist fantasy which opens up the action at least to suggest the real war horrors which the characters on stage are unaware of, either through ignorance or a determined refusal to look at what their jingoistic rhetoric actually means. Thus the more serious side of the opera emerges in several extended orchestral sequences, notably a ballet of devils and angels on the towers of a Gothic Cathedral: elements of Brian’s huge First Symphony, The Gothic (1919–26), are prefigured right there.

Before the ‘military’ acts Brian placed a two-scene Prologue. This remarkable theatrical conception takes place during Bank Holiday Carnival on Hampstead Heath, with fairground roundabouts, stallholders crying up their wares, and crowds of holidaymakers taking the air. The plethora of focal points means that generally several actions are going on simultaneously. Not far into Scene 1, a bill-poster sticks up an official proclamation; but nobody can read it. Eventually a costermonger named Henry laboriously spells it out: War has been declared, and every man under 75 is wanted for military service. The assembled company greets this news with a chorus of astonishment and excitement, whereupon – to the strains of the music-hall tune ‘Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?’ – a pair of policemen enter, looking for a missing person. The young man in question also enters and does his best to avoid detection, passing among the stallholders. Various other events occur – a man tries to cross the stage on an enormous elephant, and a photographer attempts, with much frustration, to take tableaux of a fashionably dressed party – but the motif of the missing person runs through the rest of the scene, right up to the end when the young man is found but evades capture by disguising himself in a costume from the Old Clothes Seller’s stall as the Commedia dell’arte character Pantalon. And right through the music runs the ‘Kelly’ tune, or elements or variants of it.

**Symphonic Variations on ‘Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?’**

Although The Tigers was completely composed in 1917–19, Brian did not actually get round to orchestrating the opera until 1927–29, after the composition of The Gothic. (He may have recognised that its subject-matter and approach made it pretty well unstageable in the years immediately following the Great War.) But he did, in 1921–22, extract and fully score six orchestral numbers for concert performance. Five of these are ‘symphonic dances’ based mainly on the opera’s ballet sequences. The sixth is an orchestral reworking of the whole ‘missing person’ portion of the First Scene of the Prologue, which he entitled *Symphonic Variations on ‘Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly’*.³ When he came to make the full score of the opera proper, he seems to have used the *Symphonic

³ Some of the original orchestral parts bear an alternative title – *Symphonic Variations on an Old Rag*, perhaps chosen by analogy with Brian’s earlier variation-work, *Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme*, though there was nothing ‘old’ about the Kelly song.
Variations as the basis for orchestrating that portion of Scene 1 of the Prologue, but with numerous differences in detail reflecting the presence of the voices.

The Symphonic Variations was in fact the first of the Tigers extracts to be performed: it was premiered in Bournemouth on 28 February 1924 under the baton of Sir Dan Godfrey, who liked it enough to repeat it on 4 May as part of the Bournemouth Music Festival. For the premiere Brian provided a programme-note (something he very seldom did), in the course of which he makes these observations:4

the motif of ‘Kelly’ is hardly ever absent – its disguise being readily recognisable. The variations are treated symphonically, which means that the motif is made to carry a structure which is quite as consistent as the Tristan Prelude and which goes on continuously from the beginning of the music until the very last bar. [...] The composer’s reason for using the ‘Kelly’ as a motif for variations is that it was necessary to illustrate a dramatic incident in the opera and also to prove that it is just as relevant and possible to treat a music-hall theme symphonically as either a chorale, nursery rhyme or folk-song.

Indeed, the Symphonic Variations functions perfectly well as a concert work without even a hint of programme. It is as independently enjoyable as ‘pure’ (or at least semi-pure) music, like Brian’s previous orchestral variation work, Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme, to which it is superior as an example of subtlety and resourcefulness in variation technique.

The music-hall song Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?, the lament of an Irish girl who has been abandoned in London by her boyfriend, was a fairly recent hit, dating from 1908. The music was by C. W. Murphy5 to lyrics by Will Letters6 – the verses included topical reference to the suffragette movement, but it was the chorus that became immortal:

Has anybody here seen Kelly?
K-E-double-L-Y.
Has anybody here seen Kelly?
Find him if you can!
He’s as bad as old Antonio,
Left me on my own-ee-o,
Has anybody here seen Kelly?
Kelly from the Isle of Man!

5 The given names of Murphy (1875–1913) appear variously as Clarence Wainwright or Charles William. An enormously prolific and successful songsmith, Murphy composed, in addition to Kelly, several other songs that get occasional outings even today, notably I Live in Trafalgar Square (1902), Oh, oh Antonio (1908 – apparently referenced in the Kelly chorus), Let’s All Go Down the Strand (1910), Have a Banana! (1910) and Hold Your Hand Out, You Naughty Boy (posthumously published 1914).
6 Probably a pseudonym.
This chorus provides Brian with his theme, though in fact he never uses the initial upbeat (the ‘Has’ note: his theme is the more demotic ‘Anybody here seen Kelly?’). His variation-technique in this score is very intricate. Although he does vary the complete theme at several points, he more generally splits it up into a number of constituent motifs, all of which he keeps separately in play. Chief among these is the eight-note Hauptmotiv of the song’s first line, with its characteristic four-semiquavers-four-quavers rhythm (Brian also uses a shortened six-note form, four-semiquavers-two-quavers), but in fact all the motifs are worked hard. Brian combines them, reshapes them, reharmonises them, augments them, diminishes them, inverts them, reduces them to mere rhythms, makes ostinati of them and so on. He also plays them off against an intermittently recurrent counter-theme, which is itself varied, and a subsidiary figure, derived from the later stages of the theme, that functions as a quasi-independent entity.

This work, then, earns its title of Symphonic Variations because its entire texture is developmental. Brian doesn’t write a sequence of separate, formal variations in which the tune is modified or titivated; instead every aspect of the tune, and every technique of the variation-process itself, is called upon to build and develop a number of large-scale, highly eventful spans of music. These spans could be called ‘variations’ at a push, but it would be more accurate to say that they are contrasted passages of intense motivic development, deployed as follows:

1. **Molto Allegro e con brio**, C major. Introduction – a lively affair in 3/4 time for the full orchestra (actually an orchestral version of the excited chorus with which the holidaymakers greet the announcement of the declaration of war). From the four-semiquavers-one-quaver figure in the very first bar, the various elements of the Kelly tune are adumbrated or present in embryo. The music is cut off short for a one-bar timpani solo in the four-semiquaver-four-quavers rhythm, and replaced by

2. **Allegro spiritoso**, E major, 4/4. Theme (and counter-theme). A trio of bassoons presents a (modified) version of the Hauptmotiv, and then the full Kelly tune – already with a few Brianic changes – is introduced on strings and woodwind. As soon as it has appeared, Brian switches to an entirely different tune, Più Lento – espressivo molto (also E major), scored for cor anglais and harp, a combination appropriate to its – on this its first occurrence – gentle pastoral character. Always recognisable by its constant dotted rhythm, this tune functions as a kind of counter-subject in Brian’s design.

7 The numbering of the sections is mine, for the purpose of this note.
8 In The Tigers, after Prologue Scene 1 is over, this counter-subject becomes a subject in its own right as the main theme of the Symphonic Dance entitled ‘Wild Horsemen’.
Allegro spiritoso, still E major but not for long: the ‘variation’ process begins with a restatement of the Kelly tune that soon begins to wander. The Hauptmotiv, extended to ten notes (four-semiquavers-six-quavers), becomes a chromatic bass ostinato while some of the other figures take on lives of their own – notably a woodwind figure in anapestic rhythm, derived from the latter stages of the theme: this figure is often associated with hurry or the chase on stage, and will become a subordinate idea in its own right. An Allegro molto transition sees the strings having a three-semiquaver ostinato against dotted rhythms in the side-drum and triplet flourishes in piccolo, flutes and harp, a complex that suddenly deposits the listener in Pomposo e Grave, D major, 3/4. A heavy, raucous music (the ‘elephant’ episode in the opera). In his programme-note Brian describes this passage succinctly: ‘the trombones hurl out the motif accompanied by crashes on the horns and the jingling of bells’. By ‘the motif’ he means here the triplet flourishes, already heard in the preceding transition, which have migrated from the flutes to the trombones and can now be heard as a distortion of the first phrase of the Kelly tune. He does not mention the gong and drum strokes which help the horn chords to ‘crash’, and the manically upward-scrambling dotted rhythms in the rest of the orchestra, reinforced by side-drum, which are the pastoral counter-theme turned savage. The passage dissolves in a flurry of different figures in 4/4, moving to Allegro Moderato, B flat. Every bar now contains the Hauptmotiv in the strings, being twisted hither and thither while the other figures expand and caper around it, rising to a fortissimo statement of the motif in the brass followed by a pianissimo one in the strings. A brief interlude in 6/8, scored for only a few instruments, leads to Andante quasi Lento, uncertain tonality, 4/4. A mysterious episode which continues for a while to be transparently scored for only a few players while the horns softly punch out the rhythm of the Hauptmotiv. Violin tremolandi, a sinister bass figure, a shaft of light on piccolo, all contribute to an eerie atmosphere. Then the rhythmic excitement is whipped up, the orchestration grows fuller, and a remarkable heterophonic climax emerges, Poco Lento e Grandioso, with a large number of independent lines (some of them vocal lines in the opera: the elephant and its riders are finally allowed to pass and the police have been told the missing person is not their responsibility). Characteristically Brian cuts this climax off short, and chortling woodwind lower the temperature in preparation for Lento, D flat. A romantic interlude. (In the opera, the episode of the photographer and his
This is the only section in which the nagging four-semiquaver figure of the Hauptmotiv is largely absent. Instead, Brian presents a new, gently ruminative variant of the Kelly tune in the cellos, with a teneramente string counterpoint above it. He develops this double idea up to a grandiloquent outburst in E major (with a time-change to 3/4) that is soon undercut by an ironic transition involving fragments of the dotted-rhythm counter-theme, the Kelly motif and cello tune that moves seamlessly into

\[ \text{Allegro molto, roving tonality, 3/4.} \]

A quick ‘variation’ with plenty of appearances and reiterations of the Hauptmotiv but also still interpenetrated with elements of the previous section, ending Più Lento with a return to 4/4 and a gentle, almost nostalgic statement of the Kelly tune on bassoons, cellos, double-bassoon and double-basses.

\[ \text{Allegro molto, E major.} \]

A reminiscence of the hurrying anapestic motif sets off a whirlwind coda in which practically every melodic entity heard in the preceding parts of the work takes its place in what is clearly a chase sequence, culminating in a fortissisimo statement of part of the theme and a final cadence into the C major in which the Symphonic Variations began.\(^{10}\)

**Turandot, Prinzessin von China (1949–51)**

Brian composed his second opera, the three-act German-language Turandot, Prinzessin von China (‘Turandot, Princess of China’) between 1949 and 1951, subtitling it ein tragikomisches Märchen (‘a tragi-comic fairytale’). His libretto is extracted from Friedrich Schiller’s German translation (1801, published 1802) of the Italian fiabe (fable) of 1762 by the Venetian dramatist Carlo Gozzi (1720–1806).\(^{11}\) Though Schiller altered Gozzi’s text a good deal, it remains nearer in spirit and substance to the original than the version of the story familiar from Puccini’s Turandot.

Gozzi’s dramas (which also furnished the stories of Prokofiev’s The Love of Three Oranges and Hans Werner Henze’s König Hirsch) depend on the fantastic and grotesque, one aspect of which is his bizarre infiltration of the stock characters of the Commedia dell’Arte (Tartaglia, Truffaldino, Pantalon and so on, who talk in Venetian dialect) into such an unlikely milieu as the Chinese court. Schiller’s German version is more elevated in tone, but the Commedia dell’Arte figures remain to disturb and subvert. It was for Schiller’s Turandot that Weber provided incidental music; and it is a remarkable aspect of Brian’s opera that his music, especially in Acts 2 and 3, sometimes takes on a ‘mock-classical’ character, as if harking back ironically to the age of Schiller and Weber, and

\(^{10}\) Prologue Scene 1 of The Tigers has a different ending, in E (the key in which the scene opens). By ending the Symphonic Variations in C, Brian reverts to the key of the ‘War’ chorus, the point at which the extract starts.

\(^{11}\) Gozzi’s ultimate source for the story of Turandot was the Persian text known as The Book of 1001 Days, first translated (into French) in 1722.
indeed Beethoven. Why Brian should have chosen this particular subject for his return to the operatic genre, apart from his long-standing admiration for Schiller, remains unknown. In its subtle layering of fantasy and irony Brian’s Turandot is nearer to the world of Busoni’s Turandot than Puccini’s, but its musical stance is Germanic (and British) rather than Italianate. I suspect, however, that it may have something to do with Brian’s strong admiration for Richard Strauss’ opera Die Frau ohne Schatten, a work he had not had an opportunity to hear but which he studied closely in full score in 1931. He saw that opera as Strauss’ magical oriental fantasy; and in a sense Turandot is his. He also drew attention to the unique colouristic aspects of Die Frau ohne Schatten, calling it ‘a musical mirror which reflects continuously the swish and rush of opalescent and rainbow colours in one baffling and incomprehensible mystery’, Turandot, too, is a feast of colour woven around a mystery – the enigma of Turandot herself, described by Schiller as ‘the Chinese Sphinx’.

Like The Tigers, Turandot contains a large amount of music for orchestra alone, or where the voices make comparatively minimal contribution. Thus it offers considerable potential for orchestral excerpts. In 1962–63, over a decade after completing Turandot, Brian returned to the score and began making extracts from it. At one point he seems to have envisaged a five-movement suite including voices, but eventually he produced a purely orchestral score which he entitled simply Three Pieces from ‘Turandot’. These Pieces, numbered simply I, II and III, without titles, are all drawn from the opening scenes of the opera. Piece I is identical with the Act I Prelude, and II and III are portions of the immediately ensuing lengthy dialogue between the wandering prince Kalaf and his former servant Barak before the gates of Peking. In the opera the dialogue functions essentially to set up the back-story to the action that will shortly unfold, but it is accompanied by music of such vivid colouring and vigorous invention that Brian evidently felt it was worth resurrecting in a purely orchestral context. In the event, he merely suppressed the voice parts (apart from a few phrases which he transferred to wind instruments) and separated off the two Pieces, which in the

12 Turandot is completely unmentioned among possible operatic projects in any of his known correspondence of the 1920s to 1940s. Subjects that Brian did claim to be considering, at various times, included Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Richard II, Marlowe’s Tamburlaine, Ibsen’s Peer Gynt, J. M. Synge’s Riders to the Sea and various tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides.

13 ‘Die Frau ohne Schatten’ by ‘H. B.’ Musical Opinion, October 1931, p. 18. It may be a mere detail, but both librettos include a character named Barak, and refer to a ruler by the name of Kaikobad or Keikobad: the Empress’s father in Die Frau ohne Schatten, a Caliph from whose clutches Kalaf has escaped in Turandot.

14 Brian may also have been pointed in the direction of Turandot by Hindemith’s Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber, given its UK premiere at the 1946 Royal Albert Hall Proms under Constant Lambert; the second movement of this work is a ‘Chinese’ scherzo on themes from Weber’s incidental music to the Schiller Turandot. Brian admired Hindemith and would naturally have taken an interest in it.

15 I had not seen the score for years’, Brian wrote to Robert Simpson on 14 February 1963, ‘& now it impresses me by its contrasts – surge, & force, as I slowly recognize it again’.
opera run as a continuous sequence, by slight recomposition of their opening and closing bars. In a letter of 2 October 1972, he recalled that he had arranged the Three Pieces with Bryan Fairfax and his Polyphonia Orchestra in mind, because Fairfax had seen Turandot in score and had been very impressed by it. Fairfax and the Polyphonia had premiered Brian’s Symphony No. 18 earlier in 1962, before he started arranging the Three Pieces, but they call for a considerably larger orchestra than the symphony does, and Fairfax did not, in fact, perform them.

When I examined the scores of Turandot and the Three Pieces in 1972, I was surprised that Brian had made no attempt to extract any of the portions of Acts 2 and 3 which struck me as being easy to make into concert items. In correspondence with the composer, I suggested he could make such further extracts. He replied that it was certainly possible and he would consider doing something about it, but there the matter rested until his death later in the year. Taking his comments as at least partial authority to attempt the task, in 1975 I devised A Turandot Suite of six movements drawn from Acts 2 and 3, giving the movements appropriate titles or adapting the titles they carry in the opera score.16

On the occasion of their first performance – at St James’s, Piccadilly, London, on 27 May 1995, by the Millennium Sinfonia conducted by James Kelleher – the Three Pieces and the Suite were presented as a continuous nine-movement sequence. Though such treatment should always be an option (it amounts to a partial orchestral synopsis of the opera), it is at least equally arguable that they are better presented as separate works. Brian designed the Three Pieces as a unit, and I believe the Suite also functions as such, with the Act 2 Prelude marking a new beginning. Indeed, that seems to have been Brian’s intention in composing this movement, for there is a palpable shift in style between Act 1 of the opera and Acts 2 and 3. Whereas Act 1 is harmonically more chromatic, motivically involved and continuously developmental, the other two Acts are more diatonically based, occasionally with ironic reference to classical idioms, and manifest a higher number of self-contained structures. This shift, naturally, is also reflected in the styles of the Pieces as against the Suite. The Three Pieces can be regarded as a musical entity the music of which runs essentially continuously, whereas the Suite is, well, a suite: a collection of six contrasted movements with a certain narrative component. On the other hand, there are a number of significant motifs that give motive power to the unfolding of the opera, most of which are introduced in the Prelude to Act 1 (the first of Brian’s Three Pieces) and they continue to play a role all the way through the opera,

16 My motives were partly selfish: I felt there was a good chance otherwise that I would not hear these particular enticing passages played in my lifetime, and I also felt that performing them could make a case for a full performance of the opera and generally do Brian’s ‘cause’ some good.
including the portions selected as movements of the *Suite*. So as concert works the *Three Orchestral Pieces from Turandot* and *A Turandot Suite*, though distinct in content and style, draw upon a common fund of motivic invention.

**Three Pieces from ‘Turandot’**

I. *Andante moderato*. This piece corresponds to the Prelude to Act I of the opera: the curtain rises on the city gates of Peking, with dwellings on either side and people passing back and forth. It serves a scene-setting function, both by establishing the highly coloured orchestral palette of the opera, and by introducing a number of figures and motifs (one could hardly call them themes) that seem to stand for situations or characters in the opera and which recur in more or less developed forms throughout its length. But it is an impressive and evocative composition in its own right. Most important among the salient figures are (a) a four-note figure with a prominent falling semitone, used as an ostinato at the very outset – this figure is associated with weeping, wailing, gurning and so on, of which there is a lot in the opera; (b) a dancing, double-dotted theme in flutes, associated with Princess Turandot herself (0:58); (c) a *Risoluto* bass theme in leaping dotted rhythms, associated with Prince Kalaf (1:57, then on solo clarinet at 3:36); (d) a pentatonic theme in dactylic rhythm (oboe, 3:51) which has a variety of uses, for giving either an oriental or an archaic, mock-classical colour to the proceedings. Around and about these elements woodwind weave quasi-oriental arabesques, brass and percussion evoke solemn pageantry, a solo violin emotes fantastically, woodwind, celesta and harp hint at a porcelain fragility; and all seems infused nonetheless with an all-encompassing sense of irony.

II. *Allegro molto* (Kalaf, Prince of Tartary, in disguise, encounters his former tutor Barak; they recount what has happened to them in the years since they were parted on the battlefield, and Barak tells Kalaf of the Emperor’s daughter, the haughty Turandot, and the cruel trials she imposes on her suitors, who are beheaded if they cannot answer her riddles.) In the opera, Brian sets Schiller’s lengthy dialogue on the voices but enlivens it by continual changes of subject, mood and scoring in the accompaniment. With the dialogue removed, that accompaniment emerges in this substantial second number of the *Three Pieces* as a fascinatingly ‘anti-symphonic’ structure in its own right, remarkable for its continual changes of subject and texture. As in the first *Piece*, but even more so, the large orchestra is used sparingly, with few and brief tuttis but an ever-shifting, kaleidoscopic range of smaller ensembles exploring many different kinds of instrumental colour, full of striking
and sometimes bizarre textural invention. Virtuosity is demanded of everyone – percussionists, the tuba, the trumpets, the E flat clarinet, individual string players – as if in a kind of concerto for orchestra. Yet within its riot of sonic invention, several of the salient motifs from the first Piece are perfectly recognisable and continue to be developed: notably Kalaf’s dotted-rhythm motif (c) in the opening stages, and recurring. A particularly languorous and flighty version of Turandot’s motif (b) appears dolce cantabile on a pair of solo violins, and the woodwind ensemble makes a contrapuntal invention on the weeping figure (a). And so it goes, but in the context of continually surprising short episodes, each fascinating in itself. Like the first Piece, this one ends with a tutti climax and a heavily descending unison bass line.

III. Allegro vivo [12] (Dialogue of Kalaf and Barak continued.) Compared to the other two Pieces this third one is very short, almost a coda made up of a series of brief and brilliant orchestral flourishes. Variants of the Kalaf and Turandot motifs can be heard in the opening section. The last flourish ends the piece with a bump.

**A Turandot Suite (devised by Malcolm MacDonald)**

I. ‘At the Court of the Emperor Altoum’ (= Prelude to Act 2). Adagio solenne – Allegro con brio [15]. The curtain rises on the great Hall of the Imperial Council of State – the Divan, in oriental parlance. Doorways lead offstage to the Emperor’s apartments and to the seraglio of Princess Turandot. A proper overture, alternating solemn brass-dominated pageantry with comic hurry and bustle. Motif (a) sounds out clearly in the cellos at one point. A grotesque march in 3/4 heralds the entry of the aged Emperor himself. The piece ends unexpectedly with a quiet cadence for strings alone.

II. ‘Minuet’ (marked ‘Minuett’ in the score of the opera). Launisch (capriccioso) [16]. A mocking solo for Tartaglia, in the role of the Emperor’s chancellor, pityingly describing the latest suitor for the Princess’s hand – a handsome prince (actually Kalaf) who refuses to reveal his name. A little mock-antique dance; Tartaglia’s voice is here transferred to solo cello. Forms of motif (d) are much in evidence here, as well as the whining figure (a) in the final bars.

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17 The term ‘Divan’ (from the Iranian *diwan*) – a new word in German literature in Schiller’s time (*cf.* also Goethe’s *West-östlicher Diwan* of 1814–19) – originally meant the process of compiling and collating administrative records for the purposes of government, and by extension came to refer to the hall or chamber in which government was conducted. The English usage of ‘divan’ as a kind of couch seems to have arisen from British travellers of the eighteenth century observing Ottoman officials seated on cushioned benches while conducting business, and confusing the seat with the justice dispensed from it.
III. ‘Entrance of Princess Turandot and her Retinue’. *Moderato maestoso* [17]. In the opera, Brian dispenses with the voices in this extended processional of wit, pageantry and formal gesture, sumptuous in its polyphonic textures, which functions rather like a ballet interlude. Turandot’s theme (b) naturally makes an appearance, first in the strings, and is extensively developed, as is motif (d) before the beautiful, reflective close.

IV. ‘Nocturne’ (= Prelude to Act 3). *Andante comodo ma misterioso* [18]. On the walls of Peking, at night. A beautiful reflective piece scored for two harps, divided strings, bassoon, two horns and percussion including a bell. The rocking, lullaby-like rhythm of the opening bassoon solo and the ensuing string section are only one aspect of the evocations of night in this brief scene-setter.

V. ‘To the Divan!’ *Tempo vivo – Adagio* [19]. (This is the ending of Act 3 scene 1 and the start of scene 2, but they play continuously, develop the same basic materials and form a perfect musical unit – a *Zwischenspiel* covering a change of scene.) Kalaf is being hurried by Brighella, Captain of the Guard, from the palace apartments and back to the Divan, where he will have his final confrontation with Turandot. As the music – one of the most virtuosic and eventually awesome outbursts in the entire opera – makes clear, this is a moment of high drama. The return to the Divan brings reminiscences of the Act 2 Prelude, but developed to a grimly majestic climax before an unexpectedly serene coda.

VI. ‘Lugubre-Marsch’. *Deciso – Adagio solenne* [20]. (Man hört einen lugubren Marsch mit gedämpften Trommeln, says Schiller’s – and Brian’s – stage-direction: ‘a lugubrious march with muffled drums is heard.’) Turandot enters with her slaves and servants, all dressed in black. Kalaf has solved her riddles, and she must marry him unless she can solve the counter-riddle: what is his name? But she believes she knows the answer. Thus this movement, a magnificent mock-classical invention, may sound like a funeral march but is rather a *pre-funeral* march. For Turandot, marriage would be like death, the death of her freedom (thus the mourning costume). But she still hopes at this stage that Kalaf will be the one to die. I include the previous, urgent orchestral flourish as introduction. The march-tune, in its two forms – bassoons and basses state the first, solo oboe the second – is based on a melding of her motif (b), now in simple dotted rhythm, with figure (d). After the introductory bars the music settles down into A minor, but following the spooky central episode the march comes back, climactically, in C sharp minor.
**The Cenci (1951–52)**

Brian's third opera, *The Cenci*, is a concise and splendidly dramatic treatment of the tragedy by Percy Bysshe Shelley, in one substantial act divided into eight scenes. Shelley's lurid but high-minded verse drama (1819) was long considered unstageable because of its themes of incest and parricide and its negative portrayal of the Roman Catholic Church. It is based on the story of the premeditated murder of the tyrannical Count Francesco Cenci in his castle at La Petrella del Salto in the Abruzzi Mountains on 9 September 1598 by the agency of his daughter Beatrice, whom he had raped, and who was executed for his murder, along with her mother and brother, in Rome a year and a day later. The Count had been messily and bloodily murdered (Shelley decorously merely has him strangled) and his body flung over the castle balcony into the refuse heap below the castle rock. For Shelley the story was a matter of the purest black and white. Inspired by the example of Elizabethan revenge tragedies, he casts the Count as an almost demonic figure, Beatrice as a pure and courageous heroine for whom one can only feel, as he wrote, ‘romantic pity [...] and a passionate exculpation’ for her crimes; he also – inspired by a supposed portrait of her by Guido Reni – depicts her as a young woman of extraordinary beauty.¹⁸

Brian was a long-time admirer of Shelley, whose *Prometheus Unbound* had already furnished the subject of one of the most important of all his works.¹⁹ In *Prometheus* he had set the first two acts of Shelley's lyric drama uncut. In composing *The Cenci* he compressed Shelley's Shakespearean five acts into a sequence of eight scenes, without indicating an interval (though in the concert performance the opera received in 1997 one was inserted between scenes V and VI), and prefaced them with a large-scale overture.²⁰

**Preludio Tragico**

Brian was proud of the overture, and well aware that it could stand on its own, for he subsequently made two scores for concert performance, re-christening it *Preludio Tragico* for the purpose ²⁴.

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¹⁸ For a modern overview of the case, showing that the charge of rape remains unproven, that the famous ‘portrait’ is probably not of Beatrice nor the work of Reni, and that the historical murderess, over-romanticised by tradition, was a tough young woman in her twenties (rather than her teens, as in Shelley) who had probably born an illegitimate child to one of her father's murderers, cf. Charles Nicholl, ‘Screaming in the Castle: The Case of Beatrice Cenci’, *The London Review of Books*, Vol. 20, No. 13 (2 July 1998), pp. 23–27. Nicholl does not dispute that Count Cenci was ‘an arrogant, greedy, lecherous and violent man’ and that Beatrice had no shortage of reasons to want him dead.


²⁰ It is curious to note that in 1947 Brian had wished to compose an opera on J. M. Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, but was not permitted to use the text because it had already been chosen by Karl Rankl as the subject of the opera he was writing for the 1951 Festival of Britain operatic competition; and yet *The Cenci*, as Brian would have known, was the basis for one of the winners of the same competition, the two-act *Beatrice Cenci* by Berthold Goldschmidt.
Almost a concise one-movement symphony in its own right, in general style the work has affinities with the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies between which *The Cenci* was composed, though the *Preludio* perhaps out-does them in sheer range of orchestral invention within a small space.

At the opening, a short *Solenne e Maestoso* exposition, centred on F, presents two themes which Brian said stood for the opera’s principal characters. The first is a menacing theme rising from the bass, with a convulsive identifying rhythmic motif (two demisemiquavers snapping up to an accented quaver) that is associated with the brutal and incestuous Count Cenci, and then a sad, smooth, chromatically descending melody, *espressivo molto*, also first heard in the bass, that stands for the heroine of the opera, the Count’s daughter Beatrice, who eventually murders him and is herself condemned to death. (This melody only comes fully into its own in the final scene of the opera, one of Brian’s most moving theatrical conceptions.) After its first statement Beatrice’s theme is heard again on unison strings, and a long and eventful development begins. The Count’s theme proves especially malleable, always extending itself through clusters of other motives that group around it, and soon Brian treats it in a vigorous fugato, *animato*. Beatrice’s theme, by contrast, remains virtually unchanged on each appearance, though fragments are drawn into the fugato, after which it appears *molto espressivo* on solo oboe, exactly as it does in the last scene of the opera during Beatrice’s final (spoken) soliloquy.

In the course of the work several other motives and elements come to the fore. A festive, dance-like section – perhaps evoking the festivities and banquet that Count Cenci hosts, at which he announces, with venomous satisfaction, the death of two of his sons – leads to a furious *Allegro agitato* that is interrupted time and again by a distant, marching side-drum rhythm (a harbinger of fate, or of the Papal emissaries who arrive unexpectedly as soon as the murder has taken place). After a climax this rhythm gives way to a kind of hallucinatory mirage for celesta, two harps, glockenspiel and multi-divided strings, opening an intensely lyrical *Adagio* section. The march-rhythm, in combination with the Beatrice theme, then brings in a recapitulatory section that climaxes passionately on variants of both main themes. After that the work dies away in a haunting coda in C minor. The very end, with its muffled side-drums, bare-fifth chord in the strings, the characteristic rhythm on the cor anglais (finally dissolving Count Cenci’s theme) and terminal gong-stroke, packs four unmistakable Brian finger-prints into a mere four bars.

**Faust (1955–56)**

Goethe’s two-part ‘*Tragödie*’, perhaps the iconic key-work of literary Romanticism, was one of the texts that most profoundly stirred Brian’s imagination. It was a principal source of inspiration for his
immense First Symphony, *The Gothic*, which bears on its title-page a couplet from the final scene of *Faust, Part II*. Brian often said that Part I of *The Gothic* (the three purely orchestral movements) was ‘largely coloured’ by *Faust, Part I* and that he had originally intended to set ‘a large portion of the last act’ of *Faust, Part II* in the symphony’s choral finale.\(^1\) (In the event he chose to set the *Te Deum laudamus* instead.) I have suggested elsewhere\(^2\) that Brian, particularly at the time he composed *The Gothic*, felt a strong personal identification with the figure of Faust, and especially that aspect of Goethe’s character through which the whole two-part drama is a symbolic representation of the nature of western man in his ceaseless quest for knowledge and thirst for experience. His actions and passions will always result in error and crime, but they are also the result of the divine spark in human nature, which can be affirmed as positive despite its negative consequences. (This is essentially the reason that in *Faust, Part II* Faust’s soul is eventually saved, and Mephistopheles cheated of his triumph.)

Brian himself wrote of Goethe’s drama:

The idea behind Goethe’s *Faust* strikes at the very root of existence, and of good and evil. What do we know of these things? What do we know of the origin of life or what happens at death? Apart from the faith of the Western churches, both Eastern and Western cultures are strewn with endless epics inspired by these fascinating problems. Though the present age scorns the credulous and demands hard facts, every religion is based on the acceptance of the working of miracles by holy men. In the secular world, miracles are worked by magicians, sorcerers and witches, whose evil work is combatted by divine interference: hence the thousand and one legends to be found amongst the cultured and uncultured races on the miraculous. No modern play demands so much belief in the unseen world as Goethe’s *Faust (Part II)*. […] This legend has been a magnet for the imagination and intellect of many poets and musicians, and some have attained the sublime in their pursuit and presentation of it, but if *Faust* teaches us anything it is the futility of seeking a solution to the mysteries of the unknown.\(^3\)

It was in 1955–56 that Brian got round to setting *Faust* as an opera (that is, *Faust, Part I*, as published in 1808 – much the more familiar part of the story, with Faust’s diabolical pact with Mephistopheles, and his seduction and betrayal of the innocent Gretchen), in German, using his own deftly slimmed-down version of Goethe’s text. (In 1939 he had observed that ‘Messrs. Barbier

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\(^3\) ‘The Legend of *Faust*’ by ‘La Main Gauche’ (= Havergal Brian), *Musical Opinion*, March 1939, pp. 491–92.
and Carré mangled and carved Goethe’s tragedy to provide Gounod with the opportunity to write a popular opera – the actual tragedy of Faust (as written by Goethe) was thrown overboard. Precisely what moved him to undertake this opera at that time is unknown. His three previous operas remained unstaged, and there had been no serious prospect of their performance since Fritz Busch’s abortive plan to produce The Tigers in German in Dresden in 1934 (perhaps that was one reason that he had composed Turandot in German, and now did the same with Faust). It seems he had made sporadic attempts to interest opera companies in them, but without success. Whatever the reason, he produced a highly impressive and dramatically swift-moving work: omitting the scene in Auerbach’s Cellar and the Walpurgisnacht, he concentrates on Faust’s pact with Mephistopheles and the Gretchen tragedy.

Night Ride (Nacht – Offen Feld)
Brian’s Faust consists of a Prologue and four Acts. In Scene 1 of Act 4, Faust learns that Gretchen has been imprisoned for the murder of her illegitimate child by Faust and has been condemned to death. He implores Mephistopheles to take him to her so he can set her free, and Mephistopheles agrees to befuddle the gaoler’s senses so Faust can get hold of the keys and free Gretchen. At this point the brief Scene 2 begins – Goethe describes the setting as ‘Night – Open Field’; Faust and Mephistopheles are seen racing by on black horses. In Goethe’s text they have a few lines of dialogue, for they see a coven of witches performing mysterious rites around a gallows tree. These lines Brian dispenses with, keeping the Night Ride as a purely orchestral piece. Though this is not the end of his opera – it closes, as does Goethe’s text, with the final scene in the prison – his view of it was coloured by Berlioz’s use of the Night Ride in La Damnation de Faust, in which Mephistopheles tricks Faust and takes him straight to Hell.

He envisaged the possibility that Scene 2 could be performed on its own as a concert work, but – probably because of its relative brevity – suggested that in that case it should be prefaced, as in the present recording, by the last 27 bars of Scene 1, beginning where Mephistopheles says ‘Auf! Auf! Ich führe dich, und was ich tun kann, höre!’ (‘Away! Away! I will conduct thee; hear what I can do!’) There is no necessity to score the voice-parts for instruments as virtually all the salient vocal lines are already doubled in the orchestra.

24 Ibid., p. 491.
26 The scene is vividly rendered by Delacroix in his 1828 illustrations to Faust, in a lithograph that Goethe is known to have admired.
27 In ‘The Legend of Faust’ cited above, Brian even says this is ‘the original Goethe ending, with Faust and Mephistopheles riding to Hell on coal black horses’ (ibid., p. 491).
28 The ‘Auf! Auf!’ (‘Away! Away!’) is Brian’s own interjection; the rest of the line is as translated by Sir Theodore Martin in the Everyman’s Library Edition of Faust, J. M. Dent, London, 1954, p. 165. Brian approved of this version – he recommended it to me in a letter of 15 May 1971 as ‘a good translation’ – which was published shortly before he began composing his opera.
Starting Vivo in a choppy 12/8 time, this introductory portion flings the listener in medias res at a key moment in the drama, urgent and fragmented in its textures. Very soon – when Mephistopheles has mentioned his ‘magic horses’ (Zauberpferde) – the music is invaded by a galloping rhythm that carries it up to the beginning of the Night Ride itself, heralded by a quietly thrumming timpani solo. There is little thematic work per se, though some motifs do recur: the music is carried by the constant changes being rung on the galloping 12/8 rhythms, scored at first for comparatively small ensembles, with restrained dynamics and spooky sonorities. Given that there is plenty of work for percussion, the effect is almost of a toccata for orchestra, sometimes more polyphonic in texture, sometimes topped off by flurries of high woodwind or hard-edged, glinting writing for brass, xylophone, glockenspiel and the two harps. The pace slackens momentarily – perhaps this passage represents the dialogue about the witches – and then the music presses swiftly on to a crescendo that is abruptly cut off. In a sudden cessation of motion there is a pianissimo coda in which the high strings, four players at two sets of timpani, and (if possible) organ pedals hold on to a long, cavernous bare-fifth on D, a blackness into which solo woodwind vanish in a final, precipitous descent.

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Garry Walker is Permanent Guest Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. His relationship with the RPO began in October 1999 when at very short notice he replaced an indisposed Daniele Gatti in the Orchestra’s opening concert of their Barbican season.

Garry Walker studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and in July 1999 won the Sixth Leeds Conductors’ Competition. He made his debut with English National Opera in David McVicar’s production of Benjamin Britten’s The Turn of the Screw, which he also conducted at the Aldeburgh Festival. For Scottish Opera he has conducted Cimarosa’s The Secret Marriage.

In the UK Garry Walker has worked with all the BBC orchestras, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, English Northern Philharmonia, the Hallé, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, London Sinfonietta, Northern Sinfonia, the Philharmonia, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He regularly appears at the Edinburgh Festival and

Abroad, he has appeared with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, the Nieuw Ensemble in the Netherlands, the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester in Berlin and Collegium Musicum in Denmark. In 2008 he made a very successful début with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

The **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** is widely regarded as one of Europe’s leading orchestras and enjoys an enviable position as a cultural flagship for the BBC and for Scotland. Originally a studio-based orchestra, formed in Edinburgh in 1935, the Orchestra now appears in venues across Scotland, is a core part of the BBC Proms in London, performs regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and is in demand at major festivals throughout the world.

As befits its busy schedule of broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Television, the Orchestra has the widest repertory of almost any ensemble in the UK. It is the only Scottish orchestra to win the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for best orchestra, and its commercial recordings have received a number of prizes, including four *Gramophone* Awards.

Since 2006, the BBC SSO has much expanded its programme of concerts and recordings from its home base at Glasgow City Halls, and each season it continues to appear in other Scottish towns and cities. The Orchestra is Scotland’s leading supporter of new music and through an innovative learning programme has established strong links with local communities. Abroad, it has appeared in many of the major musical centres of Europe and has toured the USA and South America and twice been to China, most recently in 2008.

Donald Runnicles became Chief Conductor of the BBC SSO in September 2009, holding the post concurrently with his position as General Music Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. He succeeded Ilan Volkov (Chief Conductor from January 2003 to September 2009) who now holds the post of Principal Guest Conductor.

For more information please visit: www.bbc.co.uk/bbcsso.
The Havergal Brian Society

The Havergal Brian Society, which was founded in 1974, promotes the music of Havergal Brian through a range of activities. The aims of the Society are:

1. To act as an information source about the composer and his music for both the general public and for musicians. The Society has a comprehensive website – at www.havergalbrian.org – and a substantial archive, housed at the University of North Staffordshire in Keele.

2. To promote and sponsor recitals, concerts and recordings of Brian's music. Piano and song recitals have been given, a major contribution was made towards the first performance of his first opera, *The Tigers*, produced and broadcast by the BBC, and numerous recordings have been sponsored, including most of the CDs in the 'Brian Cycle' first released on the Marco Polo label and now on Naxos. Concert performances of orchestral music have been supported, including the first-ever fully professional all-Brian orchestral concert and a concert premiere of the opera *The Cenci*.

3. To advise and assist prospective performers in their choice of works and in the acquisition of performing materials. Scores not previously published in engraved form are gradually being typeset on computer.

4. To publish original material on Brian and his music. Over 200 issues of a bimonthly Newsletter have been published, many containing authoritative articles on the composer and his music. The Complete Music for Solo Piano has been reissued in a single hardback volume, and a book about the *Gothic Symphony* published. The Society is also collaborating with Toccata Press in an ongoing six-volume series of Brian's journalism.

5. To gather as much information as possible on the whereabouts of Brian’s missing scores, most importantly the full score of the massive choral setting of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, for which a reward is offered. The full score of *The Tigers* was recovered in 1977 after being missing for 30 or more years.

For further information, please send a stamped, addressed envelope to:

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Recorded in City Halls, Glasgow, on 25 and 26 June 2009
Recording Producer: Simon Lord
Recording Engineer: Graeme Taylor

Booklet notes: Malcolm MacDonald
Design and lay-out: Peter Handley, Imergent Images Ltd., Kidderminster
Cover photograph of Havergal Brian courtesy of Lewis Foreman;
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Executive producer: Martin Anderson

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The English composer Havergal Brian (1876–1972) is renowned for his 32 symphonies, 21 of them – written after his 80th birthday – constituting one of the most remarkable Indian summers in the history of music. It is less well known that Brian also composed five operas; since none of them has yet been staged, this CD reveals for the first time some of the remarkably inventive and powerful orchestral pieces hidden within those scores.

**Symphonic Variations on ‘Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly?’**

1. Molto Allegro e con brio – 0:46
2. Allegro spiritoso – Piu Lento – espressivo molto 1:08
3. Allegro spiritoso 1:06
4. Pomposo e Grave – 0:54
5. Allegro Moderato – 0:48
6. Andante quasi Lento – 1:38
7. Lento – 3:45
8. Allegro molto – 0:38
9. Allegro molto – 1:28

**Three Pieces from ‘Turandot’**

10. Andante moderato 6:55
11. Allegro molto 8:40
12. Allegro vivo 1:38

**A Turandot Suite (arr. Malcolm MacDonald)**

15. I. At the Court of the Emperor Altoum. Adagio solenne – Allegro con brio 5:02
16. II. Minuet. Launisch (capriccioso) 1:48
17. III. Entrance of Princess Turandot and her Retinue. Moderato maestoso 4:16
18. IV. Nocturne. Andante comodo ma misterioso 2:04
19. V. To the Divan! Tempo vivo – Adagio 4:33
20. VI. Lugubre-Marsch. Deciso – Adagio solenne 4:27

**Faust: Night Ride of Faust and Mephistopheles**

13. 5:16

**The Cenci: Preludio tragico**

14. 13:37

**TT 70:53**

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Garry Walker, conductor

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