



Harold **TRUSCOTT**

Piano Music Volume One

Piano Sonata No. 5

Piano Sonata No. 7

**20 Variations and Fugue
on an Original Theme**

Suite in G major

Ian Hobson, piano

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

HAROLD TRUSCOTT: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by Guy Rickards

The Sonata always has been and still is for me the most fruitful vehicle of musical thought. This is not today a fashionable attitude, but that is unimportant. I compose as I must.

So wrote Harold Truscott shortly before his death in 1992, in an entry for inclusion in a dictionary of living composers (in his case, the publication turned out to be posthumous).¹ The sonata as a *genre* dominates his catalogue of 128 works, of which 78 are either complete or contain completed movements. There are 22 piano sonatas – three left unfinished at his death – plus two sonatinas, four sonatas for violin with piano (one incomplete) and a curious set for unaccompanied violin (forming potentially three separate works) and – all with piano – three for clarinet, one each for viola (lost), cello, oboe, and horn (or cor anglais), a total of 37 works: almost half his total viable compositions.² Truscott's inclusion in the St James Press *Contemporary Composers* was belated recognition of a musical career and output produced often in the face of near total indifference. Given his humble origins and early life – he left school at sixteen with no educational qualifications to his name – it is remarkable that he became a practising musician, let alone a composer, at all. His dogged persistence in creating new works is as much a testament to his strength of character and single-mindedness of expressive purpose as is his lifelong focus on the sonata *genre*.

Truscott was born on 23 August 1914, to working-class parents in Seven Kings, Ilford, now a suburb of north-east London. The elder of two brothers, Harold was born – like another famously musical 'Essex boy', Dudley Moore – with congenital *talipes equinovarus*, the physical deformity colloquially known as a 'club foot'. It was corrected by surgery in infancy, but Truscott required a decade of physiotherapy and the wearing of a hip-brace until he was twelve years old. As a consequence, he developed a passion for books, and music in particular, rather than for physical

¹ *Contemporary Composers*, ed. Brian Morton, St James Press, London, 1993, p. 932.

² He also began but abandoned a host of other works, including ten symphonies, concertos for flute, piano, violin, and orchestra and at least one string quartet, as well as sonatas for flute, clarinet, unaccompanied horn, horn quartet, organ and violin. The RC numbers given here are from the catalogue of Truscott's works assembled by the present writer (his manuscripts are kept in the Royal College of Music in London).

activities. He learned to read music from piano lessons in his pre-teens and avidly copied out the masterworks of the classical repertoire in order to learn them from the inside. He obtained scores from the then abundantly stocked local library and soon took to playing them on the piano, learning the music through his hands and developing what would become a formidable skill as a sight-reader and practical knowledge of the classical keyboard repertoire that later caused college sight-reading examiners enormous difficulties in finding scores he didn't already know.

The years Truscott spent studying music in this way led to a reputation (in the 1950s and 1960s) of knowing almost 'all music' in the classical genres and to a passion for uncovering neglected composers whose present-day reputations owe much to his advocacy: Alkan, Havergal Brian,³ Clementi, Dussek, Medtner, Franz Schmidt (on whose orchestral music Truscott wrote the authoritative study⁴), Schubert's piano sonatas (several unfinished movements of which Truscott completed, broadcasting them in 1958), and many more.

From his avid youthful self-education, it was a simple step to start writing his own music and by his mid-teens he had completed several pieces. His earliest surviving score is a pencil sketch of a song entitled *Requiem*, RC3, setting R. L. Stevenson's 'Under the wide and starry sky', dated to 1928 when he was only fourteen. In his unfinished, unpublished autobiography, *Laughter in the Dark* (written in the 1970s), he records that his first pieces were for piano, written in 1926–27 when he was twelve and by 1930 had composed two string quartets and a piano quartet as well. At a family gathering at this time he performed a piano solo (RC2, reworked from an attempt at a concerto movement which has not survived), which impressed his uncle enormously, though not his father, Ernest, who believed that in 1930 no-one was writing classical⁵ music any longer. Matters came to a head a few months later before Harold's sixteenth birthday and school matriculation when Ernest arranged with a psychiatrist to have him hospitalised for three months in a local asylum. The catalyst appears to have been an argument after Ernest saw Harold writing out a score; he had seen Harold copying from printed compositions but this time there was only one manuscript. Harold stated he was writing his own music – possibly the piano quintet in C minor, RC9, for which the title page is lost – but Ernest insisted his son was lying and merely copying out. One consequence of Ernest's drastic over-reaction was that Harold never took his school certificate. There was an ironic compensation: the nurses in the ward – filled mostly with geriatric patients (the next youngest

³ Truscott and Brian corresponded regularly during the late 1940s and 1950s and fitfully thereafter; Brian's letters were preserved by Truscott (though he did not keep copies of his own) and were published in *The Havergal Brian Society Newsletter*, edited by the present writer, in 1993–94 under the title 'From Hitler to Horticulture'.

⁴ *The Music of Franz Schmidt*, Volume One: The Orchestral Music, Toccata Press, London, 1984. Truscott planned two other volumes, to cover all of Schmidt's music, but did not live to complete them.

⁵ In *Laughter in the Dark* Truscott pillories his father for mispronouncing 'classical' as 'clarisical'.

occupant was three times Harold's age) – realised their quiet young charge was no trouble and so asked if he needed anything. Harold requested music manuscript paper and pencils, which they duly supplied, whereupon he spent the next three months composing.

After Harold had spent a further six weeks convalescing in Kent, Ernest realised that he had made a terrible mistake and attempted to rebuild his relationship with his son, even offering to fund further music lessons. Harold, as might be expected, would have none of it and slowly began to make his own way without parental involvement. He was employed for a time as ship's pianist, leading a small light-music combo for the New Zealand Shipping Company. Although the music was rarely to his taste and the relationships with the other (older) musicians proved difficult, the experience was enormously useful in providing regular, practical music-making. Essentially self-taught, Truscott was twice able to take more formal studies, part-time, thanks to small bequests from elderly relatives, firstly in 1934 at the Guildhall School with the redoubtable Orlando Morgan⁶ and later, from 1943 to 1945, at the Royal College of Music, where he studied piano with Angus Morrison,⁷ horn with Frank Probyn⁸ and composition – as part of the instrumental courses – with Herbert Howells (1892–1983). He seems not to have enjoyed his time at the Guildhall with Morgan, but the grounding he received gave him the confidence in the next few years to undertake larger-scale compositions, including two symphonies (RC13 and 18; both lost) and a planned opera based on Shakespeare's *Falstaff* (RC15; 1937–38), of which only parts of the Overture (including a partial piano reduction) and one aria survive. It was also from this time that he began a series of piano sonatas 'in the style of late Beethoven', unknown in number as most were later destroyed. The final three from 1941–42 in, respectively, A major (RC22), B flat (RC23) and F major (RC24) were retained, fully formed sonata works in four, four and three movements apiece.

Another outcome from his Guildhall studies was a move into teaching – at the time a still unregulated profession – at small private institutions around London. Truscott enjoyed teaching, imparting his passion and knowledge to others while encouraging their talent. He would earn his living primarily through teaching music until his retirement as Principal Lecturer at Huddersfield College (now University) in

⁶ Robert Orlando Morgan (1865–1956) was the composer of over 200 songs, cantatas and the comic opera *Two Merry Monarchs*. Some of his other pupils in his 64-year career at the Guildhall included Myra Hess, Benjamin Frankel and, briefly, Fred Astaire and Noel Coward.

⁷ Stuart Angus Morrison (1902–89), brother-in-law of the composer Constant Lambert (1905–51) – he was the soloist in the premiere of Lambert's *The Rio Grande* in 1928 – and teacher at the RCM for 46 years, whose other pupils variously included Colin Horsley (1920–2012), Julius Drake (b. 1959), Margaret Fingerhut (b. 1959) and Donald Swann (1923–94).

⁸ Frank Percival Probyn (or Probin; dates unknown, born before 1900, died after 1955), a distinguished horn-teacher (and -player in the Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras) whose other pupils included the composer Stephen Dodgson (1924–2013) and conductors Norman Del Mar (1919–94), Edward Downes (1924–2009) and Timothy Reynish (b. 1938).

1979. But after only two years his budding career as a teacher was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Exempted from active service because of his club foot (even though it had been corrected), he had nonetheless to do essential war work – for the Royal Mail – almost constantly on night shift. He resumed teaching only in 1948. There were incidental benefits to teaching: in 1937 Truscott began a long-term relationship with a pupil, named Barbara Campbell in his autobiography. They became engaged, but the relationship foundered in 1944 when Barbara declared herself unable to convert from her Presbyterian faith to Roman Catholicism (Truscott had converted a decade earlier). In 1948, having resumed teaching in Blackheath, London, he met and married violin student Margaret Madge.

Truscott's period of study with Howells at the Royal College was even more productive than that with Morgan at the Guildhall, galvanising Truscott into starting a symphony in A minor, dedicated to Howells (rc27; 1943), which miscarried after nineteen pages, two string quartets – in B flat, also dedicated to Howells (rc30; 1943–44), and C minor (rc31; 1945) – which were completed, some piano pieces, an *Elegy* for string orchestra (rc28; 1944), and two numbered piano sonatas. The First Sonata in D flat major (rc32) was composed in June 1945 and marked a major step forward in Truscott's compositional thinking, no longer reliant on older composer-models such as Beethoven or Franz Schmidt. Sonata No. 1 is a large-scale four-movement sonata of abstract design, avowedly more Classical in format, though harmonically more modern in tone and broadly in line with other British music of the time. Running just short of half an hour, Truscott here moved well beyond his previous multi-movement piano works, the first Sonatina (rc25; 1942–43) and a complex and intriguing group of seven Pieces or Preludes (rc26; 1943), four numbered movements with a prelude, a *Lento* movement and central, incomplete Fugue.

Truscott premiered the First Sonata in 1947 at a recital in the Guildhall School, mounted by the short-lived Exploratory Concert Society. This group was founded by Truscott with two fellow-pupils of Howells, Robert Simpson⁹ and Harry Newstone,¹⁰ who were joined by Donald Mitchell.¹¹ By this time he

⁹ Robert Simpson (1921–97), the finest British symphonist of his generation, with eleven to his credit, also composed fifteen string quartets, concertos and orchestral works. He was a BBC music producer for 30 years (1950–80) and the author of books on Beethoven, Bruckner and Nielsen, as well as the controversial *The Proms and Natural Justice* (Tocatta Press, London, 1981). Simpson composed his Piano Sonata (1946) and *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* (1948) for Truscott, who duly premiered them at Exploratory Concert Society events in 1947 and 1949. Truscott had previously dedicated his C minor String Quartet to Simpson.

¹⁰ Harry Newstone (1921–2006), distinguished conductor: secretary of the Exploratory Concerts Society and in 1951 the dedicatee of Truscott's unfinished Symphony in E minor (which runs to 60 pages of full score).

¹¹ Donald Mitchell (b. 1925), eminent British writer on music and authority on the music of Britten and Mahler. With Hans Keller (1919–85), Mitchell edited the hugely influential contemporary music periodical *Music Survey*, which flourished between 1947 and 1952. Truscott was the journal's most prolific contributor after the co-editors, Hans Keller (1919–85) and Mitchell. He commented on

had finished his Second Piano Sonata in C major (RC36), begun in 1945, in five large movements running to over 52 minutes in length – his largest completed composition. He premiered it at St Martin’s School of Art in March 1948 at a later Exploratory Concert Society recital. His music at this time was in a period of expansion, as is shown by other pieces completed in the mid-to-late 1940s, including his First and Second Sonatas for violin and piano (1946–49).

In April 1948 Truscott completed his Third Piano Sonata, in G sharp minor (RC43; begun in October 1947), the only one to be published in his lifetime.¹² This elegant three-movement work has a slightly more lyrical cast than its predecessor, or indeed the succeeding No. 4 in E flat major (RC45), which followed on immediately (completed the following year). Both are shorter works, running to 21 and 26 minutes in duration respectively, and form part of a large complex of sonatas and suites for piano from the late 1940s, which spilled over into the following decade. Some have not survived, such as an unnumbered, six-movement Suite in B minor (RC47) and a sonata in E minor (RC49) but one of two distinct attempts at a piano sonata in E flat major developed into the quirky No. 4, which the composer described as

in every respect a personal (and, therefore, contemporary) view of a Classical sonata with Romantic overtones (whatever they may be – I have never come to a satisfactory conclusion about the meaning of the word ‘Romantic’ as applied to music.¹³

It has three short movements followed by a massive finale. Truscott completed two other important piano scores during 1949–50, a Suite subtitled *Twelve Bagatelles* in 1949 (RC48), followed by an unnumbered sonata based on the story of the Passion which, during the composition process (it was completed in January 1950) became the short score of the Symphony in E major (RC50).

The performance history of these works set the standard for much of Truscott’s music from this point. With the demise of the Exploratory Concert Society, the composer-pianist no longer had a platform to present his works, with the consequence that many remain unperformed in public: the one and only rendering of Sonata No. 3 was given by Peter Jacobs at St John’s, Clerkenwell, in 1981 for a recording by Altarus Records.¹⁴ By contrast, the unrecorded No. 4 was premiered in public by Donna Amato at a

a wide range of topics including brief notices on recordings, music publications and concerts. This activity led on to stronger ties to the BBC – Robert Simpson being by 1950 a music producer there, as would Keller be – as well as enabling Truscott to write on matters musical for a wide range of music publications over the next four decades.

¹² By Lynwood Music, Stourbridge, 1987.

¹³ In a note Truscott provided for the world premiere of the Fourth Sonata, by Donna Amato, on 24 October 1989 at the British Music Information Centre in London.

¹⁴ Coupled with Sonatas Nos. 7 and 11, released in 1984 on stereo LP only, AIR-2-9008.

75th-birthday concert in London in October 1989. The *Twelve Bagatelles* reached a wider audience when Truscott premiered them in a BBC broadcast in February 1954, the first time any of his music went out on air.

By the time of that broadcast, Truscott had started his **Fifth Sonata in B minor** (RC62), the earliest work featured on this recording. It was begun in August 1951 after Truscott learned of the death of the Russian composer-pianist Nikolai Medtner (1880–1951). He had first encountered Medtner's music – which like his own is dominated by works for the piano – in the 1930s and immediately became an admirer. News of Medtner's passing inspired Truscott into starting a sonata *in memoriam* but, not for the first or last time in his career, he decided the time was not right to proceed and set the work to one side; it would not be completed until March 1955. The years 1951–54 were a fallow period generally for Truscott the composer, the compositional haul of these years amounting to two sets of songs and the still-incomplete Fifth Sonata. There were other matters taking his attention at the time: the resumption of his teaching career was now in full swing; he was married with a growing family and writing for various journals. He had also struck up from the late 1940s a friendship with the composer Havergal Brian, whose music Truscott introduced to Simpson at the BBC, initiating the revival of interest in Brian's music which continues to this day.

Once the right time occurred, early in 1955, Truscott took the Fifth Sonata up again 'as though I had stopped the day before',¹⁵ and the whole four-movement sonata, lasting around half-an-hour, was duly completed, with no further interruptions, in a matter of weeks. There are no obvious quotations from Medtner's music, nor even really any attempt to emulate his musical manner; rather, it is a sonata written in a 'high manner', to honour the memory of an older colleague. The opening movement, *Moderato, con anima* [28], opens calmly with a short, rising theme in which the interval of a fourth is prominent, immediately extended at higher volume. Its continuation, *tranquillo*, introduces related ideas and transposed variants, before a crescendo leads into the second-subject group in F sharp minor, *forte*, with a rising theme – the first of no fewer than six – characterised by dotted rhythms over a rippling semiquaver accompaniment in the left hand. The other five themes are presented in varying textures, alternating *piano* and *forte*; the third is marked *marcato*, the fifth deploys triplets. The *legato* final theme of this second-subject group is a complex reworking of the opening theme and switches back to triplets to initiate the development, which takes the form of a *fugato* primarily in which the opening theme assumes more and more importance until the main climax. The development concludes with what Truscott described as 'a long harmonic swaying passage' – a masterly example of understatement – before melting

¹⁵ Quoted from Truscott's notes to the Altarus recording of Sonata No. 5, AIR-2-9002.

into the recapitulation. Unusually, the recapitulation begins with the first theme of the second subject (a precedent for which was set as far back as Clementi, as Truscott was well aware), fairly straightforwardly in the original F sharp minor, but quickly varied as this section combines elements of the first and second subjects. Finally, the coda is introduced with a new figure of descending semitones, deriving from the final *legato* theme of the second-subject group (which will recur transformed in the final two movements), at first described by quaver and crotchet pairs in the right hand before they run together over rippling semiquavers in a crescendo that finally expands the intervals in a thunderous close.

The second movement, *Poco allegretto* [29], moves off in a restrained fashion in F sharp major forming an intermezzo or 'a sort of scherzo', as Truscott commented on the occasion of its single previous performance, a recording at St John's, Clerkenwell, in September 1981 (it, too, has still to be played in public). The main theme is presented right at the outset, a sprightly chordal theme with dotted rhythms in the right hand rooted on C sharp, over an ostinato *il basso sempre staccato* in the left which hints at darker things as this subtle movement progresses. The contrasting second theme *legato sempre* is in B flat, starting out *piano* but quickly reaching a *fortissimo* climax, its undulating profile – taken over from the first subject – developing into a more massive chordal sequence, the ostinato picking up pace as a run of semiquavers. After a brief pause, the ostinato shifts to the right hand with a new variant over the top. The dotted rhythms return and are melded together into a climax, after which a *diminuendo* leads, *senza pausa*, into the 'trio'. (In his notes to this movement Truscott refers to this passage as the 'Trio' but it is not marked as such in the score.) There is no change in pace, although the time signature changes (from the preceding 3/4) to 5/8, the right-hand main theme marked *cantabile* over a five-note variant of the ostinato. As the music picks up pace, the 'scherzo' section returns, starting with the second theme *pianissimo*, and follows the same basic trajectory as before. The *Poco allargando* coda opens quietly but a crescendo leads to a huge climax before falling back to a hushed conclusion with a recall of the ostinato of the 'Trio'.

The third movement, *Molto moderato (quasi Adagio)* [30], is a grave and serene passacaglia in B flat major, opening *quieto* in 11/4 on a ground bass in even crotchets that falls from B flat to C and back again. The main theme, *espressivo ma sotto voce*, grows out of an initial B flat, intervals dividing like cells and proliferating through the right hand in more complex developments, reaching the first of several climaxes with two bars of trills in the upper reaches starting on G flat and descending stepwise to B double flat, unexpectedly yet logically sidestepping the tonic. At this same point, the ground bass starts to divide, the smooth even scales initially disturbed by splitting alternate notes into separate octaves but eventually metamorphosing into two versions running at different speeds. This process accompanies the usual development and variation of the upper theme – which incidentally includes the descending semitones

from the first-movement *legato* theme from the second-subject group – and is accompanied by a series of climaxes and sometimes sudden abatements. After the last of these, the brief coda subsides from *forte*, *subito* to *pianissimo* as the main theme and the ground bass finally unify in a common rhythm, leading *attacca il finale* into the concluding *Moderato, con moto e pesante*, in 3/4 time [31]. The moderate pace is contradicted in the original score (which is written in ink throughout), by a metronome marking of crotchet = c. 144 added in biro, presumably after 1958 when he started teaching at Huddersfield Technical College.¹⁶ The descending semitones from the first movement are a core element of the finale material, present from the very opening bar. It acts as an enabling motif throughout the course of this unbroken span of music, a factor in each major event, particularly the appearance of the second subject which dominates the latter stages of the finale and closes it in a grand, sublimated development.

The Fifth Sonata had to wait 26 years for its first performance, but it was scrutinised, alongside the Seventh in C major (RC65), by Havergal Brian¹⁷ who commented on both works in a letter to Truscott of 25 February 1958. Brian's remarks offer a fascinating insight into his critical and compositional faculties, although a touch contradictory at one point. His comments on No. 5 are worth considering in full:

These Sonatas of yours somehow remind me of Bach and Brahms [...], a healthy sign. The music is after my own heart, impulsive and unhesitatingly fluid. I offer no criticism for – 'It is easier to be critical than to be exact'.¹⁸ I admire the smooth skill of the inverted melodies ... You seem most attached to the C major. I have spent some time on the B minor with its thunderous first movement. Do you think – at the foot of page 17 the passage to the Poco Allegretto is abrupt? I suggest interpolating a bar of rallentando to liberate the mind. Middle of page 23 – 3rd section (&c) reminds me of Brahms (& I think it is slow movement of No. 3). On page 28 Poco Allargando – does that bass figure lose effect by its repetition. I put a pencil suggestion and also on page 29. A four note figure is often made more emphatic by the elision of the first or fourth note. This movement is big stuff. Of the II–4. [i.e. the remaining three movements of the Fifth Sonata] I should mark it pp throughout like a closed swell on the organ and only gradually open the shutters to mf the middle of page 32 & closing to pp before entering the finale.

The passage referred to on 'page 17' is the close of the first movement, which clearly finishes at the foot of that page. The *Poco Allegretto* is the second movement which starts at the top of page 18 (and concludes

¹⁶ Where he had access to an unlimited supply of ball-point pens. Previously, his finished manuscripts had all been in ink (fountain pen or equivalent); from 1957 they are almost exclusively in biro.

¹⁷ The Seventh Sonata is dedicated to Brian.

¹⁸ A variant of a phrase in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and of one in an 1860 speech of Disraeli's.

with the *Poco Allargando* mentioned on pp. 28–29) so the suggestion of a *rallentando* here is very curious. As a master of the abrupt transition himself, it is odd that Brian should criticise Truscott for a lack of transition. In any event, Truscott did not implement the suggested changes, and there are no surviving pencilled emendations by Brian on the scores.

Having got back into sonata-writing harness, as it were, Truscott quickly embarked on No. 6, in E major, his second-longest (running to over 40 minutes), in four large movements in the second and fourth of which he reworked material from the discarded Suite in B minor from the late 1940s. It was completed in May 1956 and within two days he had embarked on its successor. The **Seventh Sonata in C major** (RC65) is as different as could be from No. 6 – a subtle, often jaunty single movement with a burlesque first theme and one of the shortest in his canon [1]. Writing for a rare concert outing of the piece – ironically, since it is his most-performed work – he described its genesis in the following terms:

My Seventh Sonata was composed in 14 days. I thought on starting it that the sonata would be a three- or four-movement affair as my others had been. It proved to be a natural one-movement work – nothing else was possible when this was finished. Although fairly short it has a large number of themes, four of them stemming from the same root: three rising notes of a scale. The initial developments of these take the music through F sharp minor, C sharp minor and B minor, amongst other keys. The development section proper follows, starting after a canon in the bass, with new material in F minor, and is episodic. All the principal themes are gradually returned as the music gathers pace until the coda when the first theme is heard in the bass on the dominant of C, demisemi-quavers gathering for a final precipitous scale down to a thundered low octave of C. A more decided ending there could not be.¹⁹

The note suggests a rather sectional construction, with themes existing partly in isolation but in truth the whole is a near-seamlessly designed and coherent work, the themes – whether stemming from the same root or not – inter-related elements of much larger entities. The four themes that stem from the ‘three rising notes of a scale’ (collectively forming the exposition) are such a case, forming a first-subject group. Although the opening theme (whose returns make prominent milestones throughout the sonata), marked *Moderato*, its ‘sequel’ (to borrow Truscott’s term) and the other components of the group are used at times independently, there is ample precedent in the Classical and Romantic repertoire. The episodic development in F minor breaks out *Allegro* with several new themes, progressing in a not dissimilar process until the return of the first subject ‘sequel’ heralds the varied recapitulation, which includes the

¹⁹ In a note Truscott provided for the live performance, by Peter Jacobs, on 9 October 1989 at the British Music Information Centre in London. The note is a paraphrased version of that provided for the Altarus recording, AIR-2-9008.

main theme of the development. Tonally the recapitulation is just as fluid, with a notable, quiet *legato* passage in D flat major before the music hurtles back into depths for the grand, 'decided' close.

Truscott dedicated the sonata to Brian and played it through for him privately in late 1957 or early 1958. The dedicatee was mightily impressed, writing later to Truscott (in the same letter as the comments on Sonata No. 5):

I appreciate the dedication of the C major [...]. What I have written about the influential idioms & manipulation of your technique applies to this extension in one movement. It is a tour de force.

The first performance was given in a BBC broadcast in August 1969 by John Ogdon (along with the Tenth Sonata in E minor, RC84, of 1962). The first public performance was given by Peter Jacobs at the Royal College of Music in September 1981, just before he recorded it for Altarus Records. Jacobs repeated the work in October 1989 at the British Music Information Centre in the first of two concerts mounted to mark Truscott's 75th birthday, and Gretel Dowdeswell performed it in 2002 at the Deal Festival to mark the tenth anniversary of his death. The present recording marks the sixth performance of the sonata, currently the highest number for any Truscott work.

As the letter from Brian and Truscott's own comments hint, the composer was very proud of the Seventh Sonata and in many ways it represents the apex of this period in his career. But that summer he faced the second major interruption to his teaching career, following newly introduced legislation by the Conservative government of the day requiring all teachers in the public sector henceforward to possess a teaching qualification; teachers in private education were not affected. Truscott, like many others, had to leave his post (at a school in Sandwich, Kent, for which he had moved his family from London to nearby Deal) and take a year-long course at the short-lived Bretton Hall College in Yorkshire from 1956 to 1957.²⁰ After qualifying, Truscott went to what was then Huddersfield Technical College, which had had a teacher-training wing since 1947, and he remained on the teaching staff until his retirement in 1979.²¹ But this outwardly more settled situation went only so deep. His family remained in Deal, 214 miles away as the crow flies but over 300 to travel (taking 8–9 hours) in the days before motorways (attempts to relocate his family were thwarted by health concerns, and a proposal to sell his house to Havergal Brian came to

²⁰ Bretton Hall College was founded in 1949 and absorbed by the University of Leeds in 2001 before closing six years later.

²¹ Huddersfield Technical College was founded in 1825 as the Huddersfield Scientific and Mechanic Institute. From 1841 the home of the Young Men's Mental Improvement Society, it was renamed Huddersfield Technical College in 1896, before becoming Huddersfield College of Technology in 1958 and then Huddersfield Polytechnic in 1970. It acquired university status in 1992, the year of Truscott's death and thirteen years after his retirement as Principal Lecturer.

nothing after Brian finally settled in Shoreham, in Sussex). Although Truscott had lodgings in the town, it was generally known by at least some of the students that he frequently slept in his office, where all his working materials and many manuscripts were;²² other students would invite him over for supper from time-to-time to ensure that he ate properly.²³

Life in academia now provided Truscott opportunities to compose and occasionally perform, at end-of-term events and lunch-time recitals. The first works of consequence to appear from the Huddersfield years were a sequence of generally big-boned sonatas, the Eighth (rc75, 1958-60), Ninth (rc80, 1960) and Tenth (rc84, 1962) for piano, the compact, single-movement Third for violin and piano (rc76, 1959) and the First (rc77) of three Clarinet Sonatas (also 1959), this last being premiered unusually quickly by its dedicatee, Rodney Bass, accompanied by the composer at a lunchtime recital in Huddersfield in 1960. In Huddersfield Truscott tended to compose for other forces than his own either where asked or where he believed an opportunity lay. This impulse even included orchestral pieces, culminating, in 1966, with the full-orchestral **Suite in G major** (rc95).

But it proved to be a major disappointment for the composer. Having taken care to produce an engaging and attractive suite for a local youth orchestra whose conductor (Truscott never recorded precisely who it was) had specifically requested a work from him, having created the parts and delivered them as required – there was no commission – Truscott was startled to find that the orchestra rehearsed the piece once, then put it away and went on to other scores. There was no public performance: the work has been played only once, for a recording in 1993.²⁴ Unsurprisingly, although he had ideas for further orchestral pieces, none progressed beyond a few pages of score so the Suite in G became his last orchestral work and the only one scored for the standard complement of double woodwind, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, percussion and strings.

Truscott nonetheless realised the worth of his music and around this time arranged the Suite for piano. The score of this transcription (rc95a) is undated but likely to have been later in 1966, after the orchestral play-through. The work is in four movements, with no known programme. In its orchestral garb, the music contains many fleeting reminiscences to the styles of composers whom he esteemed, filtered through his own personal idiom. The opening *Tempo alla marcia, moderato* [24] is a case in point, a rather march-like prelude in G major with a hint of ceremonial about it, starting quietly with a repeated-note figure

²² Information given verbally to me by a former student, the late Bob Briggs (1954–2011) who studied composition with Truscott in 1971–73 and to whom Briggs 'owed almost everything musical in my life'.

²³ Information supplied by another former student at Huddersfield, although not directly of Truscott's, the critic and broadcaster Lynne Walker (1956–2011).

²⁴ By the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, conducted by Gary Brain, Marco Polo, 8.223674.

(returning in the finale). Its developments echo in places Nielsen, Sibelius, Tippett and Brian amongst others (later movements evoke Busoni, Hindemith and Franz Schmidt, to name three further composers dear to his heart), although not necessarily their piano music. The prelude finishes almost before it has properly got going and is succeeded by a *Fughetta* with a yearning main subject in C sharp minor [25]. As with the opening movement, this *Fughetta* is less than straightforward in design, an *Andante* that masks its artfulness by appearing to be artless. After rising to a brief climax with clashing chords of C sharp and E flat, it closes in subdued tone. The grave third movement, *Molto andante, calmo, quasi sarabande* [26], is the heart of the suite and built on a larger scale than the preceding movements. In a deceptively simple ternary structure, the music unfolds with a symphonic breadth and with frequent modulations away from and back to the main key of F sharp major. The *Allegro molto* finale [27] opens in D minor, alternating with the brighter major before both the tonality and march-like material from the first movement return for the grandiose peroration in a glowing and unambiguous G major.

In September 1966 Truscott composed his third and last clarinet sonata, in C sharp minor (RC96), although the finale is unfinished, and a Prelude and Fugue, also for clarinet and piano (RC97). His next completed composition was the *Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme* (RC100), set down in April 1967. Variation forms occur in several Truscott works, though rarely as discrete compositions.²⁵ The *Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme in B minor* (as a late worklist names it; the manuscript omits the key signature) are a typical product of his later years, pithy, compressed in design with no notes wasted. Musical development, as ever, is the primary concern but years of isolation as a creative force – despite working amidst a vibrant musical scene (soon to be home of the world-renowned Contemporary Music Festival, founded by a colleague at the Polytechnic, Richard Steinitz²⁶) – may have led him to look more inwardly. Nonetheless, the *Variations and Fugue* make an attractive and easily appreciated set.

The Theme [2], marked *Andante con moto*, opens *mezzo piano* in B minor in what amounts to a tiny, three-part invention (two parts – the theme uppermost – moving in broadly parallel motion in the right hand, the third in the left). Its defining fingerprints are the opening rising fourth, F sharp–B, and repeated B succeeded by a second fourth spelled out as a scale, A–B–C sharp–D and the opening interval reversed, B–F sharp. This line is then immediately varied as the eighth bars of the theme progress, rising to a climax in the sixth before closing *piano*. Variation I [3] is essentially a gentle rhythmic variation, a fourth line in

²⁵The other completed examples are *Six Variations on 'Once in Royal David's City'*, for children's chorus, solo violin, wind quintet and string orchestra (RC53) in 1950 premiered, with piano accompaniment by the composer, in Dulwich that year and *Variations on a Theme of Schubert* for clarinet choir (RC119; 1974).

²⁶Richard Steinitz, OBE (b. 1938), founded the Festival in 1978, the year before Truscott retired. No Truscott composition has ever been featured at the Festival.

the bass enriching the harmony. Variation II [4] ups the pace to *Allegro moderato*, a 3/4 time-signature replacing the common time of the Theme and a wholly different texture, cascading demisemiquavers in the right hand over the theme varied in bare octaves in the bass. The demisemiquavers persist, but now *pianissimo* and *Andante*, in the gentle Variation III [5], the theme – *piano* but still in the left hand – deprived of its octaves and early repeated note, and Variation IV, marked *Listesso tempo* [6], switches the lines between hands and adds octaves and bare fifths to the variant, spicing things up with foreign chords of E flat. The B minor tonality persists in Variation V, *Allegro molto* [7], a *forte* variation featuring rapid triplets over even quavers and, unusually, a full repeat of its eleven 2/8 bars. The *Poco adagio* sixth variation [8] shifts to 3/8, the varied theme once more in the uppermost part. The *Allegro* seventh variation [9] modulates to G sharp minor and rapid figurations in octaves in both hands, less headlong than in Variation 2, describing the most radical transformation yet, not least in texture. This carries on, *Listesso tempo*, into Variation 8 [10], for the left hand alone until the final bar. Variation IX [11] continues on in the same tempo but with a more varied rhythmic profile, as the torrent of notes alternates between the hands.

After a brief pause, the tenth variation, *Molto Andante* [12], opens what might be described as a slow movement (running through to Variation XVIII). It opens in C sharp minor with both hands in the bass clef, *molto legato*, with the rising fourth and repeated note (now at the fifth, G sharp–C sharp) spelled out as a triplet and held C sharp. The triplet motion is sustained until the modulation to F minor for the *leggiero* eleventh variation, *Un pochettino più mosso* [13]. Variation XII, *Poco più mosso* [14], is more assertive, with elements of the theme shared between treble and bass, the complementary rhythms of which lead seamlessly into the thirteenth variation (*Listesso tempo* once more) [15], the closest in texture to the opening Theme so far, though in 2/4 and modulating through flatter keys. Variation XIV is a quiet common time *Molto moderato* [16], flowing semiquavers over a spare-textured variation in the left hand. The transition to the *Più mosso* fifteenth variation [17] is heralded by triplets and a brief crescendo from *pianissimo* to *mezzo forte*. A brief *accelerando* leads into Variation XVI, a brief, vibrant *Allegro* [18] in 3/4 time and G minor. Variation XVII, *Andante con moto* [19], brings back the tonic B minor, *piano subito*, with a bar of common time before reverting to 3/4 in the most sophisticatedly contrapuntal variation so far. It is succeeded by the tiny eighteenth, *Molto andante* [20], six bars of static 4/4 quietude, acting like a prelude to the *Quasi Waltz* of Variation XIX [21]. The calm Variation XX [22] shifts to B major leading without break into the concluding Fugue, *Molto moderato* [23]. The five-bar first subject is introduced in the left hand in common time, transforming the opening fourth into a fifth, yet containing a fourth, C sharp–F sharp, in its span. The second and third statements move to the right hand, during which the time signature alters

to 3/2 and a calmly flowing line, the fourth returning to the bass in octaves. The main countersubject is easily distinguishable by its occasional trills and more volatile, angular character to the main subject and its statements and development bring a darker hue to the music. The Fugue proceeds with inexorable logic reaching a brief but grand *Molto allargando* close. This recording is its first performance.

Guy Rickards is a freelance writer on music and regular contributor to The Gramophone, Tempo, International Piano and Klassisk Musikkmagasin. The author of two biographical studies for Phaidon Press, Hindemith, Hartmann, Henze (1995) and Jean Sibelius (1997), he has also written frequently on the music of Latin America, Detlev Glanert and John McCabe, including three chapters in Ashgate's life-and-works study of McCabe, Landscapes of the Mind (2008). He was appointed Harold Truscott's musical executor by his widow early in 1993.

Ian Hobson, pianist and conductor, enjoys an international reputation both for his performances of the Romantic repertoire and of neglected piano music old and new, and for his assured conducting from both the piano and the podium, renewing interest in the music of such lesser-known masters as Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Hummel as well as being an effective advocate of works written expressly for him by contemporary composers, among them John Gardner, Benjamin Lees, David Liptak, Alan Ridout and Roberto Sierra.

As guest soloist, Ian Hobson has appeared with the world's major orchestras; those in the United States include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh and St Louis, the American Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico. Abroad, he has been heard with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Hallé Orchestra



in the UK and, the ORD-Vienna, Orchester der Beethovenhalle, Moscow Chopin Orchestra, Israeli Sinfonietta and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Wolverhampton in 1952 and one of the youngest-ever graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Ian Hobson subsequently pursued advanced studies at both Cambridge University and Yale University. He began his international career in 1981 when he won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, having previously earned silver medals at both the Arthur Rubinstein and Vienna-Beethoven competitions. Among his piano teachers were Sidney Harrison, Ward Davenny, Claude Frank and Menahem Pressler; as a conductor he studied with Otto Werner Mueller, Denis Russell Davies, Daniel Lewis and Gustav Meier, and he worked with Lorin Maazel in Cleveland and Leonard Bernstein at Tanglewood. A professor at the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Ian Hobson received the endowed chair of Swanlund Professor of Music in 2000 and is now the Swanlund Emeritus Professor. For the Michaelmas Term of 2011–12, he served as Visiting Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Ian Hobson is in increasing demand as a conductor, particularly for performances in which he doubles as a pianist. He made his debut in this capacity in 1996 with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and has since appeared with the English Chamber Orchestra, the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia (at Carnegie Hall), the Pomeranian Philharmonic and the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra of Israel, among others. He also performs extensively as pianist-conductor with Sinfonia da Camera, a group he formed in 1984 and which quickly gained international recognition through these recordings. The ensemble celebrated its 25th anniversary in May 2009 with the first performance of Moscheles' Piano Concerto No. 8, orchestrated by Ian Hobson from notes scrawled by the composer on an original piano score.

He is also active as an opera conductor, with a repertoire that encompasses works by Cimarosa and Pergolesi, Mozart and Beethoven, and Johann and Richard Strauss. In 1997 he conducted John Philip Sousa's comic opera *El Capitan* in a newly restored version with a stellar cast of young singers; the recording was issued the following year as one of the inaugural releases of the Zephyr label, which Ian Hobson founded. A fervent advocate of Enescu's music, he conducted the 2005 North American premiere of *Oedipe*, in a semi-staged version performed by Sinfonia da Camera on the 50th anniversary of the composer's death; a recording of the event was released by Albany Records in 2006.

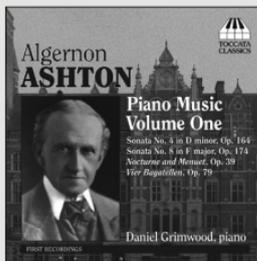
To date he has amassed a discography of some sixty releases, mostly on the Zephyr label, including the complete piano sonatas of Beethoven and Schumann, a complete edition of Brahms' piano variations for piano and the complete piano works by Chopin. In 2007, with the Sinfonia

Varsovia, he recorded Rachmaninov's four piano concertos and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* for the Zephyr label in the dual role of pianist and conductor – an achievement no other performer has matched. In addition, he has recorded more than twenty albums for the Arabesque label featuring the music of Clementi, Dussek and Weber, the complete piano sonatas of Hummel, the complete solo piano transcriptions of Rachmaninov, and *Hobson's Choice*, a collection of his favourite pieces exploring the multiple facets of virtuosity across the span of three centuries. Orchestral releases include works by Françaix, Milhaud and Saint-Saëns, as well as Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* and Walton's *Façade*, with the Sinfonia da Camera and William Warfield as narrator.

He has recorded a sixteen-volume collection of the complete works of Chopin, also for the Zephyr label, having marked the composer's 200th birthday with a series of ten solo concerts in New York. In addition to the large body of work for solo piano, this recording series features his performances as pianist and conductor, with the Sinfonia Varsovia, in all of the works for piano and orchestra, as well as his collaboration as pianist with other artists in Chopin's chamber music and songs. In this edition there is around three-quarters of an hour of music by Chopin that has never been recorded before, making Ian Hobson the first-ever artist to record Chopin's entire *œuvre*. With the violinist Sherban Lupu he is recording, as pianist and conductor, the complete works of Ernst for Toccata Classics. Another Toccata Classics cycle underway is a pioneering recording of the early orchestral works by Martinů (Volume One, on TOCC 0156, featured the *Prélude en forme de scherzo*, the orchestral movement H90, *Village Feast*, *Nocturne* and the *Little Dance Suite*).

In addition, Ian Hobson is a much sought-after judge for national and international competitions, and has been a member of numerous juries, among them the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (at the specific request of Van Cliburn), the Chopin Competition in Florida, Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, Schumann International Competition in Germany and Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Poland. In 2005, he served as Chairman of the Jury for the Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Kosciuzsko Competition in New York; in 2008, he served in the same capacity for the New York Piano Competition – to which, renamed New York International Piano Competition, he returned in 2010.

His website can be found at www.ianhobson.net.



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TOCC 0179



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TOCC 0166



TOCC 0256



TOCC 0181



TOCC 0139



TOCC 0204



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HAROLD TRUSCOTT Piano Music, Volume One

1 Piano Sonata No. 7
in C major, RC65 (1956)** 12:26

**Variations and Fugue
on an Original Theme, RC100 (1967)* 17:23**

2 Theme: *Andante con moto* 0:32
3 Variation I 0:32
4 Variation II: *Allegro moderato* 0:27
5 Variation III: *Andante* 0:40
6 Variation IV: *L'istesso tempo* 0:58
7 Variation V: *Allegro molto* 0:30
8 Variation VI: *Poco adagio* 0:32
9 Variation VII: *Allegro* 0:22
10 Variation VIII: *L'istesso tempo* 0:26
11 Variation IX 0:22
12 Variation X: *Molto Andante* 0:36
13 Variation XI: *Un pochettino più mosso* 0:33
14 Variation XII: *Poco più mosso* 0:35
15 Variation XIII: *L'istesso tempo* 0:34
16 Variation XIV: *Molto moderato* 0:53
17 Variation XV: *Più mosso* 0:33
18 Variation XVI: *Allegro* 0:19
19 Variation XVII: *Andante con moto* 0:31
20 Variation XVIII: *Molto andante* 0:24
21 Variation XIX: *Quasi Waltz* 0:19
22 Variation XX: *Calmo* 0:45
23 Fugue: *Molto moderato* 6:00

Suite in G major, RC95a (1966)* 11:44
24 I *Tempo alla marcia, moderato* 1:38
25 II *Fughetta: Andante* 2:22
26 III *Molto andante, calmo, quasi sarabande* 3:50
27 IV *Allegro molto* 3:54

**Piano Sonata No. 5 in B minor,
In memoriam Nikolai Medtner, RC62
(1951–55)** 33:29**
28 I *Moderato, con anima* 10:07
29 II *Poco allegretto* 8:31
30 III *Molto moderato (quasi adagio),
attacca* 8:02
31 IV *Moderato, con moto e pesante* 6:49

TT 75:02

Ian Hobson, piano

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