

# Stephen DODGSON

**CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE:  
COMPLETE MUSIC FOR CELLO AND PIANO**

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO

FIVE OCCASIONAL PIECES

FOUR ROMANTIC PIECES

Evva Mizerska, cello  
Emma Abbate, piano

# STEPHEN DODGSON: COMPLETE MUSIC FOR CELLO AND PIANO

by John Warrack

Stephen Dodgson was born in London on 17 March 1924 and, after wartime service in the Navy, had some composition lessons from Bernard Stevens, a careful and scrupulous teacher, before going to the Royal College of Music, where his principal study was the horn. He also studied composition with two widely contrasting teachers: R. O. Morris, whose masterly books on counterpoint derive from creative practice but who maintained a reserved attitude to student individuality, and the genial and much-loved Patrick Hadley, who was an enthusiastic encourager of young composers trying to find their own voice rather than a meticulous instructor. Possibly they complemented each other in the growth of Dodgson's talent; certainly it was a talent evident to his fellow-students, and there was no surprise when in 1948 he won the Cobbett Memorial Prize for a *Fantasy String Quartet*. W. W. Cobbett had founded this prize in 1905 to encourage the revival of the Elizabethan form of the 'fancy', in which several movements of a sonata were compressed into a single movement; and it may be that the idea left a lasting impression on Dodgson.

On leaving the Royal College, he also won a travelling scholarship to Italy, and on his return new works included a number of pieces for chamber ensembles, including two string trios (1951 and 1964), a piano quartet and *Capriccio and Finale*, a sextet for flute, clarinet, harp and string trio, written in 1952 for The Wigmore Ensemble. The 1960s and '70s also saw the growth of his interest in the guitar, for which (though not himself a player) he has written a corpus of music that makes him outstanding among composers for the instrument.

Dodgson's interest in the Baroque – doubtless encouraged by his marriage in 1959 to the harpsichordist and Couperin scholar Jane Clark – was naturally reflected in his music: his guitar works include four Partitas (1963–90), and his output for

harpichord features five sets of *Six Inventions* (written between 1955 and 1993) and the *Sonata-Divisions* (1982). There is also a generous quantity of orchestral music, not least nine *Essays*, composed between 1980 and 2009, and concertos for bass trombone (1985) and piano (1959) as well as a *Serenade* for solo viola and orchestra (1956). Paradoxically, he preferred smaller forces for his bigger thoughts: his four symphonies (1952, 1954, 1988, 1989) are written for strings or chamber orchestra, and there are no fewer than eighteen *concertante* works with chamber-orchestral or string accompaniment, among them five *Concerti da camera* (1963–79).

Dodgson also found considerable pleasure in writing vocal music. His catalogue boasts a generous quantity of solo and choral songs and cycles, both secular and sacred, and a number of larger-scale works, among them a *Te Deum* (1972) and *Magnificat* (1975), both requiring SATB soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra. He also wrote two chamber operas – *Margaret Catchpole: Two Worlds Apart* (1979) and *Nancy the Waterman* (2007) – and no fewer than eight children's operas.

But it is chiefly in the category of chamber music that the majority of Dodgson's roughly 250 works are to be found, not least because he was happy to compose for unusual combinations at the request of friends and other musical acquaintances. That did not involve a neglect of more traditional forms, as his series of nine string quartets (1984–2006) makes clear.<sup>1</sup>

Among the obituaries prompted by his death, aged 89, on 13 April 2013, was an assessment by the recorder-player John Turner, for whom Dodgson wrote a considerable amount of music:

Stylistically, his music is tonal, though often ambiguously so. Like that of Janáček, a composer he admired and whose compositional method of developing small cells finds its echo in his own works, the music rarely follows an obvious path. Performers find initially that the music is surprising and unexpected – puzzling even – and almost always very intricate [...].

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<sup>1</sup> The Piano Quintets Nos. 1 and 2 (1966, 1999) and String Quintet (1986) are scheduled for release on Toccata Classics TOCC 0357.

However, once the music reveals its secrets, it becomes intensely appealing. The influence of early music in his style manifests itself in numerous ways: not just in his choice of instrument, but also in a love of decoration and ornamentation, a fondness for virtuoso display, baroque-style figuration, a predilection for variation form (often on medieval or folk-tune themes), and the choice of early vocal texts.<sup>2</sup>

In *Gramophone* Guy Rickards felt that

His often angular melodies have a knack of registering in the memory and are beautifully laid out for the instruments. He had a more romantic side, with lilting themes as evidenced in miniatures such as *Echoes of Autumn* for viola and guitar [1998] or the *Intermezzo* for four guitars [1987]. His mature style was one of refinement, sitting somewhere between post-Romanticism and Neoclassicism but individual works often varied this blueprint, having quirky, even spectral sides to them.<sup>3</sup>

Dodgson's four works for cello and piano draw together his two principal passions: writing vocal – since the cello, after all, is the instrument most closely resembling the human voice – and chamber music. They thus present his chief concerns as a composer in a nutshell.

### **Sonata for Cello and Piano (1969)**

With the striking exception of the seven piano sonatas, written at fairly regular intervals throughout his career between 1959 and 2003, Dodgson was generally drawn to pre-Classical forms and so tended to avoid both the title 'sonata' and the use of Classical sonata form, with its basis of (generally) two themes going through the triple process of exposition, development and recapitulation. The Cello Sonata, which he wrote in 1969, is only partly an exception. It is also unusual in that its structure and technique suggest music for two equally partnered virtuosos, a pairing for which Weber, another composer with an equivocal attitude to sonata form, found it necessary to invent the

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian*, 15 April 2013.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/classical-music-news/obituary-stephen-dodgson-composer>, posted 17 April 2013, accessed 9 July 2016.

term *Duo Concertante* when he had a clarinet virtuoso and his own piano virtuosity to hand.

The first movement of Dodgson's Cello Sonata, marked *Con anima* [3], sets off with a vigorous dotted-note theme for the piano, immediately joined by huge *pizzicato* chords slashing across three octaves from the cello – a skilful strategy, since of course Dodgson has up his sleeve the reversal of roles here, with the vast chordal range of the piano and the effectiveness of the cello with held notes and vigorously bowed melodies. Indeed, this resource characterises much of the invention in a strong, energetic opening movement, which hardly requires that it be marked to be played with animation – although, of course, the sublime advantage of the cello over the piano, for melodies with long, warmly sustained notes, is not ignored. The two instruments are engagingly set in contrast and contest each with the other; in a happy touch, the two make their peace in the closing bars of the movement.

The slow movement, *Largo e sostenuto* [4], is freely melodic for the opening cello line, which is joined by very delicate piano flourishes and decorations that create an atmosphere owing something to the Bartókian night-music for which Dodgson has shown admiration in more than one work of his own (the slow movements of the Second and Third String Quartets are cases in point). The finale, marked *Allegretto con moto* [5], follows *attacca* from the slow movement. Here, for all the rhythmic contradictions that lend a frisson to the relationship between the instruments, there seems to be a closeness in the invention between the two until co-operation is abandoned for a competitive and exhilarating race for home.

### ***Five Occasional Pieces (1970)***

The combination of cello and piano obviously appealed to Dodgson, since in 1970, the year after the composition of the Cello Sonata he produced a set of *Five Occasional Pieces*, for which he later generated this programme note:

Written while the composition of the Sonata was still a fresh experience, these are intended to be definitely cello pieces with piano, as opposed to the essentially duo style of

the Sonata. This applies particularly to the last three movements, the *Alla Polka* making a light-hearted virtuoso conclusion.

The deepest movement is perhaps the *Dialogue*, with nervous irregular rhythms, tender moments and sudden explosions. At the tenderest moment of all, the principle motif grew spontaneously so close to the important muted trumpet/cor anglais phrase from the introduction to Debussy's *La Mer*, that I allowed it to state its whole outline. The *Aria* is an attempt to write a long developing line with sustained accompaniment, a much more difficult type of movement to write in 1970, it seems to me, than the nervous *Dialogue* type, or the ironic *Burlesca*.

These five pieces were written for Thomas Igloi, who gave the first performance at a 'Music in our Time' lunch-hour recital in October 1970. The pianist was Michael Freyhan.

The first piece, a Prelude [8], is something of a recitative – it is even marked 'quasi recit.' – before a long *cantabile* begins to dominate a wide-ranging, freely composed movement. The cello covers much ground in its melodic nature, making especial use of a figure of repeated notes, with the piano in dutiful attendance until towards the end. In the second, *Dialogue* [9], the debt to Debussy that Dodgson mentions is candidly recorded with an acknowledgement in the score: 'Hommage à CD'. After the vigorous *Burlesca* [10], comes the *Aria* [11] with the 'long developing line' that Dodgson mentions – not at all a common feature of his music. The final *Polka* [12] is a cheerful pastiche of dance-hall thumpings, unashamedly marked *Giocoso ma pesante* and perhaps even containing a hint that an over-enthusiastic dancer has trespassed onto his partner's toes.

### ***Two Romantic Pieces (Set A, 1996) and Two Romantic Pieces (Set B, 2008)***

The continued appeal of the combination of cello and piano for Dodgson is shown in the charming two pairs of self-styled *Romantic Pieces* he wrote in 1996 and 2008 and which he styled 'Set A' and 'Set B'. The first number of the first pair, *Capriccioso* [1], is Romantic in a perhaps unexpected manner, with surprise breaks in the playful emotion for more heartfelt or self-regarding passages, although it is the liveliness which prevails. The second of the Set A pieces, *Poco Lento* [2], allows each instrument to wear its heart on its sleeve, with the sympathetic accompaniment of its partner. The second pair – numbered

in the manuscript as ‘3’ and ‘4’, suggesting that Dodgson saw the *Romantic Pieces* as a four-movement suite – follows a brilliant *Vivace* scherzo [6] with a *Moderato flessibile* finale [7] that is built upon warm-hearted declarations answered by the impassioned melodies which had by now become part of Dodgson’s response to the sound of the cello.

*John Warrack was formerly a lecturer in music at Oxford University, and is the author of books on Weber and Tchaikovsky and a history of German opera, among much else.*

Described as a ‘rising star’ by *The Strad*, **Evva Mizerska** is a recitalist, chamber musician and teacher. Born in Poland, she graduated with high distinction from the cello class of Andrzej Zieliński and Piotr Hausenplas at the Frédéric Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw. Later she completed the PGDip and MMus courses at Trinity College of Music in London, where she studied with Richard Markson. She also received tuition from Yonty Solomon, Bernard Greenhouse, Raphael Sommer and Erling Blöndal Bengtsson.



Photo: Ula Wizniewicz

Evva has been awarded numerous prizes, including the first prize at the Seventh International Leoš Janáček Competition in Brno, the Vivian Joseph Cello Prize and the Leonard Smith Duo Prize in London, as well as scholarships and grants in the UK, Germany and the USA.

Evva currently lives in London where she is a cello lecturer at Morley College. She regularly gives recitals with pianist Emma Abbate. She is highly sought-after as a chamber musician and has performed in various prestigious London venues, including the Royal Festival Hall, Purcell Room, Conway Hall, the Fairfield Halls and Blackheath Halls as well as various other festivals and concert-halls across the UK, such as St George’s in Bristol, Cheltenham, Plymouth, Hexham Abbey and Chester. Abroad, she has appeared in recitals in Austria, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Poland.

Evva has a particular interest in Polish and contemporary music. She has commissioned works by contemporary Polish composers, performing them as part of her Junior Fellowship concert series at Trinity College of Music. With Emma Abbate she has also premiered works by the English composers Graham Coatman and Stephen Dodgson and the Canadian Piotr Grela Mozejko.

This album of Stephen Dodgson's music for cello and piano is Evva's third for Toccata Classics. The first two, with music by Krzysztof Meyer (recorded with Emma Abbate and Katarzyna Glensk on TOCC 0098) and Algernon Ashton (with Emma Abbate on TOCC 0063), received outstanding reviews in magazines such as *The Strand* and *International Record Review* in the UK, *Fanfare* in the USA and *Fonoforum* in Germany.

**Emma Abbate** – for the leading Italian magazine *Musica*, 'an amazingly talented pianist' – enjoys a demanding career as a piano accompanist and chamber musician, working with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation. She has performed in duo recitals for international festivals and concert societies in Ischia, Kosciierzyna, Lisbon, Naples, Salzburg and Sorrento, and at many prestigious British venues, such as the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, Royal Opera House and St John's, Smith Square, in London, St George's, Bristol, and the Aldeburgh Festival, in addition to broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Emma is currently releasing a series of albums devoted to twentieth-century Italian vocal chamber music, the most recent of which was the first recording of *Shakespeare Sonnets* for Resonus Classics, highly praised both by *International Record Review* and on BBC Radio 3's *CD Review*. Emma previously released *L'Infinito* for Urania Records: a musical journey through twentieth-century Italian songs with the mezzo-soprano Kamelia Kader. Her discography also includes first recordings of works for cello and piano by Krzysztof Meyer and Algernon Ashton with Evva Mizerska; the US magazine *Fanfare* chose their Meyer album as one of the five best releases of 2009.



Photo: Tomirry Photography

Future projects include the release of two recordings: the first of these will be Volume 1 of Mozart's complete duo keyboard sonatas with Julian Perkins on original instruments at Finchcocks Musical Museum for Resonus Classics; the second will be the first recording of Stephen Dodgson's Piano Quintets with the Tippett Quartet for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0357).

Based in London, Emma is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Following her graduation from the S. Pietro a Majella Conservatoire in Naples and an Advanced Diploma from the S. Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome, Emma studied in London with Yonty Solomon. She completed her studies with Geoffrey Pratley as a scholar at the Royal Academy of Music, whence she graduated with distinction. She was also awarded an Italian Literature and Culture degree *cum laude* from the Federico II University in Naples.

Her website can be found at [www.emmaabbate.com](http://www.emmaabbate.com).

Formed in 2003, the **Evva&Emma Duo** has given recitals in many European countries. Recent performances include appearances at the Salzburger Schlosskonzerte, Aldo Ciccolini Musical Association (Naples), Koscierzyzna Chamber Music Festival (Poland), Pump Room (Bath), Chester Summer Music Festival, Hexham Abbey Festival of Music and Arts and at various festivals and concert societies throughout the British Isles. Their discography includes first recordings of works by Krzysztof Meyer and Algernon Ashton, both on Toccata Classics. Contemporary music plays a central part in Evva and Emma's careers: they have performed various works written for them and have given several world premieres, among them pieces by Graham Coatman, Stephen Dodgson, Piotr Grelła Możejko and Weronika Ratusińska.





Recorded on 18–20 January 2016 in the Church of St John the Evangelist, Oxford  
Piano: Steinway Model D maintained by Joseph Taylor Pianos Ltd  
Recording engineers: Antoni Grzymała and Joanna Popowicz  
Producer: Antoni Grzymała

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*Emma Abbate and Evva Mizerska*

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## STEPHEN DODGSON Complete Music for Cello and Piano

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<b>Two Romantic Pieces (Set A)</b> (1996)	<b>11:46</b>
1 No. 1 <i>Capriccioso</i>	6:16
2 No. 2 <i>Poco lento</i>	5:30
<b>Sonata for Cello and Piano</b> (1969)	<b>23:33</b>
3 I <i>Con anima</i>	7:52
4 II <i>Largo e sostenuto</i> –	8:00
5 III <i>Allegretto con moto</i>	7:41
<b>Two Romantic Pieces (Set B)</b> (2008)	<b>11:33</b>
6 No. 1 <i>Vivace</i>	4:58
7 No. 2 <i>Moderato flessibile</i>	6:35
<b>Five Occasional Pieces</b> (1970)	<b>20:26</b>
8 No. 1 Prelude	3:17
9 No. 2 Dialogue	3:58
10 No. 3 <i>Alla burlesca</i>	3:26
11 No. 4 Aria	4:52
12 No. 5 <i>Alla polka</i>	4:53

**Evva Mizerska, cello**  
**Emma Abbate, piano**

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