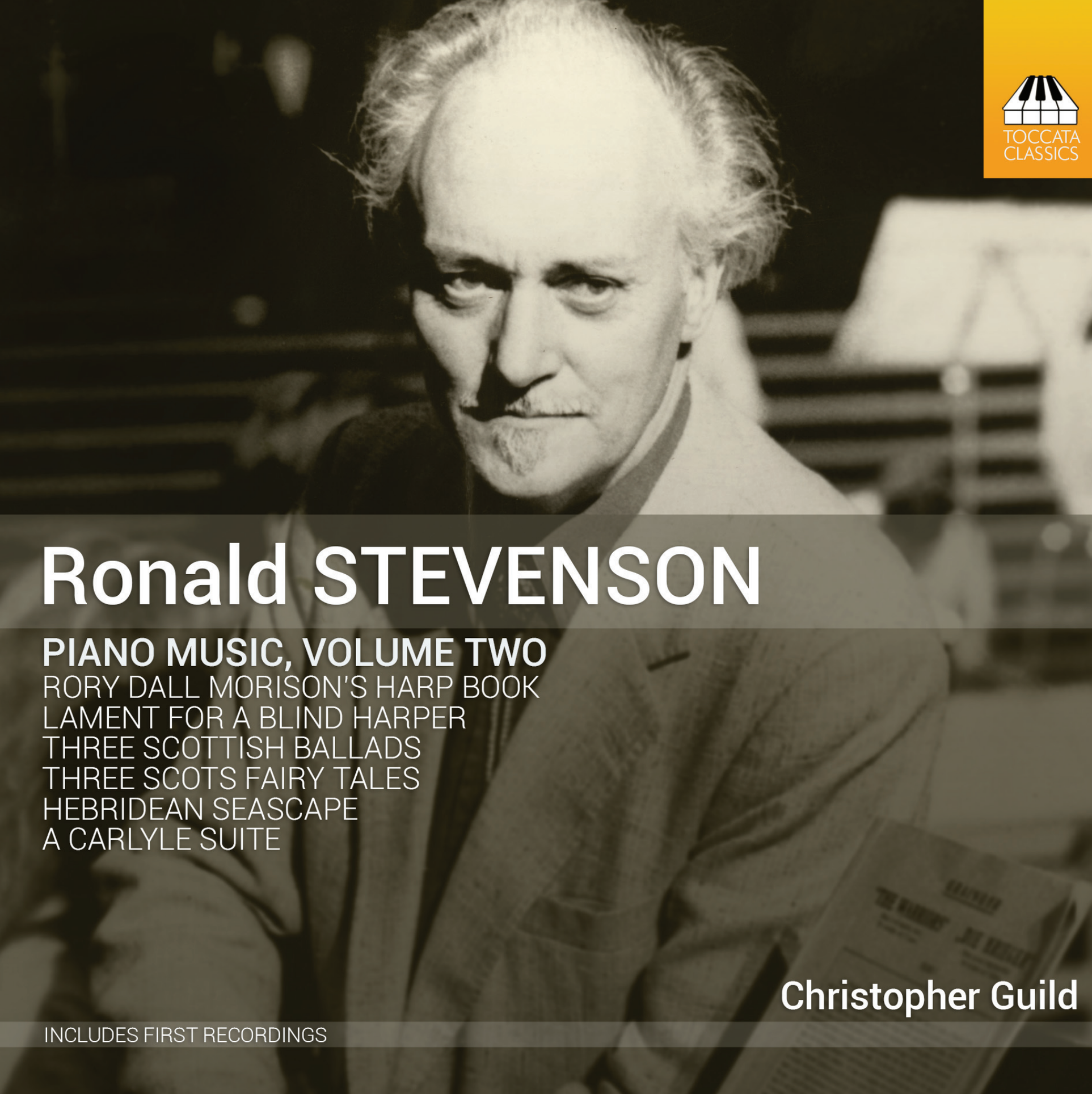

TOCCATA CLASSICS

Ronald STEVENSON

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

RORY DALL MORISON'S HARP BOOK
LAMENT FOR A BLIND HARPER
THREE SCOTTISH BALLADS
THREE SCOTS FAIRY TALES
HEBRIDEAN SEASCAPE
A CARLYLE SUITE

Christopher Guild

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

RONALD STEVENSON Piano Music, Volume Two

1		**Frank Merrick** transcr. **Ronald Stevenson** ***Hebridean Seascape*** (c.1935/1986)*	**13:05**
		Three Scots Fairy Tales (1967)*	**3:15**
2	No. 1	What the Fairy Piper Told Me	0:51
3	No. 2	What the Fairy Harper Told Me	1:48
4	No. 3	What the Fairy Fiddler Told Me	0:36
		A Carlyle Suite (1995)	**20:18**
5	I	Aubade (Morning Song) (Here is dawning / Another blue Day…)	1:40
6	II	Souvenir de Salon (Jane Welsh Carlyle listens to Chopin): Introduction – *Andante* – Prelude alla mazurka – Alla strathspey – *Andante* (Polish folk carol) – *Poco lento* (Souvenir of Scots psalm 'Martyrs') – Psalm and Mazurka combined – Postlude – Encore: *Valse à deux temps*	7:49
7	III	Variations on a theme by Frederick the Great: Theme (*andante alla breve*)	0:14
8		Var. 1: *Maestoso barocco*	0:29
9		Var. 2: *Allegro rococo*	0:45
10		Var. 3: *Allegro ardente, romantico*	0:48
11		Var. 4: *Modéré impressionistico*	1:01
12		Var. 5: *Rezitativ und Marsch*. Expressionist style	2:14
13		Var. 6: *Versuch einen jüngsten Klassizität. Calmo*	1:56
14	IV	Scherzino-Schottishe (Jane's wit)	1:34
15	V	Serenade	1:46

Rory Dall Morison's Harp Book (1978)*		**17:04**
16	No. 1 Oran do Iain Breac MacLeoid	0:54
17	No. 2 Feill Nan Crann	2:39
18	No. 3 A'Cheud Di-Luain d'r Ràithe	0:48
19	No. 4 Creach na Ciadaoin	1:58
20	No. 5 Oran do MhacLeoid Dhun Bheagan	1:03
21	No. 6 Fuath nam Fidhleirean	3:09
22	No. 7 Cumha Peathar Ruaridh	2:16
23	No. 8 Super Tiynearna Leoid	4:19
Three Scottish Ballads (1973)		**9:48**
24	No. 1 Lord Randal	3:06
25	No. 2 The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow	3:42
26	No. 3 Newhaven Fishwife's Cry	3:00
27	**Savourna Stevenson** transcr. **Ronald Stevenson** ***Lament for a Blind Harper*** (1986)*	**3:01**

TT **66:37**

Christopher Guild, piano

*FIRST RECORDINGS

RONALD STEVENSON: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by Christopher Guild

I think all great art aspires beyond nationalism,
as an exploration of occult regions of experience.
But I am convinced that people's culture cannot
get beyond nationalism until it has *realised* it.
Scotland hasn't.
Ronald Stevenson, 1968[1]

Ronald Stevenson is generally assumed to be a Scottish composer; in fact, he was born in Blackburn, in Lancashire. His father, though, was a Scot, a railway fireman from Greenock (in the Scottish west-central lowlands), and his mother was a Welsh mill-worker. He credited his father, an amateur tenor, as one of the central influences on his musical life; and song, making the piano itself 'sing', remained of vital importance to all his work. Percy Grainger soon became an important influence, too. Stevenson's first encounter with the music of Grainger was on the radio, aboard his grandfather's canal-boat (his grandfather was a bargee on the Leeds–Liverpool canal), around the age of six.[2] Grainger's music was to offer Stevenson the courage to pursue his instinct of embracing 'non-classical' music, and the musics of non-western cultures.

After winning a scholarship at the age of seventeen to study with the pianist Iso Elinson at the Royal Manchester College of Music, Stevenson heard the Fourth Piano Sonata of Arnold Bax, the dark Celtic colouring of which left a deep impression.[3] On completion of his studies, he was faced with a three-month spell of imprisonment

[1] Letter to Ateş Orga, dated 30 April 1968, quoted by him in 'The Piano Music', *Ronald Stevenson: The Man and his Music*, ed. Colin Scott-Sutherland, Toccata Press, London, 2005, p. 60.

[2] Teresa Balough (ed.), *Comrades in Art: The Correspondence of Ronald Stevenson and Percy Grainger*, Toccata Press, London, 2010, p. 213.

[3] Colin Scott-Sutherland, 'Ronald Stevenson: An Introduction', in *Ronald Stevenson: The Man and his Music*, *op. cit*., p. 23.

and forced labour for not signing up for military service (he was a pacifist); thereafter, and following a stint of school-teaching in County Durham, he and his wife Marjorie made for the Scottish Border village of West Linton, south of Edinburgh, where they were to settle.

Although it was during these next ten to twenty years that Stevenson found Scotland to be one of the profoundest influences on the direction of his life, he also found it culturally isolating. Scottish culture has never been prolific with composers of art-music. After Robert Carver (c. 1490–?1547) and a handful of eighteenth-century figures, there was a long silence until the emergence of such Late Romantics as Hamish MacCunn, Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, Learmont Drysdale and others. Erik Chisholm found some favour in 1930s Scotland, but after the Second World War Scottish composers tended to head further afield to pursue their artistic goals: Iain Hamilton and Thea Musgrave, who both emigrated to the United States, are examples, and Chisholm, too, moved to South Africa. Those who remained, such as Ronald Center,[4] scarcely stood a chance in a country described by the poet and polemicist Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve) as 'the most backward country in Europe, aesthetically speaking'.[5] Stevenson concurred: 'from my experience of living there, I am convinced that it is true. There is no feigned sophistication there, but rather a crude, healthy philistinism that hits you in the face. That is a challenge for me: at least it is honest'.[6]

Even so, Stevenson flourished. In Edinburgh, one of the numerous teaching positions he held was at Broughton High School, where the deputy head was a retired sea-captain, John Sinclair. Sinclair had a passion for Irish folksong, and possessed numerous volumes of such melodies. Stevenson spent many after-school hours with Sinclair playing through 'literally hundreds' of these songs and improvising harmonies.[7] This experience was formative in getting the songs, the Celtic sounds, into his fingers

[4] Aberdeenshire composer (1913–73) whose music is slowly beginning to emerge from obscurity. My recital of much of his piano music can be heard on Toccata Classics TOCC 0179.

[5] From the text of a lecture Stevenson gave on 6 March 1969 at the British Institute of Recorded Sound, later reprinted in the BIRS journal *Recorded Sounds* Nos. 42–43 (1971), p. 752.

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 752.

[7] Malcolm MacDonald, *Ronald Stevenson: A Musical Biography,* National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 34.

and ears, and for beginning to formulate his technique for recasting such music as part of a more complex aesthetic.

By the late 1950s Stevenson had embarked on the production of what was to become a large number of transcriptions of Scottish folk-music. He also learnt of Francis George Scott (1880–1958) through Hugh MacDiarmid, a close friend of Stevenson and a constant source of inspiration.

F. G. Scott hailed from the Scottish Border town of Hawick and went to school there before studying music at Edinburgh and Durham Universities. He later studied composition with the French composer Jean Roger-Ducasse, before taking up a post teaching music at Jordanhill Teacher Training College in Glasgow, which he held for more than 25 years. Scott today is not a widely known composer, but his reputation rests on his mastery of song. He wrote over 300 songs, all of which are fairly short, and often in Scots; they show a profound understanding of the human voice, and a sympathy for the natural rhythms of the Scots language.

Scott happened to have been Hugh MacDiarmid's schoolmaster in the Borders (MacDiarmid was born in Langholm, Dumfriesshire). Scott's finest accomplishment remains his third book of *Scottish Lyrics*, written in the 1920s and published in 1934.[8] The composer Khaikhosru Sorabji, a friend of MacDiarmid, maintained that this publication ranked alongside the best of Hugo Wolf.[9] It was, in Stevenson's view, the pinnacle of achievement to date in the assimilation of twentieth-century modernism into Scottish music:

> Powerfully individual language: rooted in Scottish speech-rhythm, folk song, fiddle music, Border ballads, pub songs and pibroch; influenced to some extent by Mussorgsky and Debussy [and] Schoenbergian free chromaticism and […] Bartók's dissonant and essentialised treatments of folk materials.[10]

[8] Scott wrote nearly 100 songs under the general title *Scottish Lyrics* between 1922 and 1949.

[9] Quoted by Stevenson in MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Thus, Scott was, for Stevenson, 'the kind of prophet of the kind of Scottish music he wished to create', and he was stimulated to follow his example.[11]

Scott and Stevenson brought Scottish music 'out of the kailyard'[12] and in to the realm of modern art-music. But Stevenson also cultivated a musical language of his own that was not rooted in the sounds of his adopted homeland, one that serves at times to bind together disparate styles and influences: not only the Scottish musical vernacular and a more 'learned' European style but those of wholly different cultures too. As Malcolm MacDonald wrote, Stevenson sought to meld Celtic folk-music with

> the best in European art-music, on a much more epic scale [than had hitherto been achieved], and seeking even beyond this to create a 'world music' that would unite all the different traditions, East and West, in a grand musical synthesis.[13]

Hand-in-hand with this coalescence of musical traditions goes the idea of 'friendship, actual or spiritual: the rendering of homage [being] one of his primary creative impulses'.[14] One finds the idea of homage throughout Stevenson's *œuvre*: in his transcriptions of other composers' works, his operatic and other fantasias, and his variations and elaborations on themes by other musicians – something like a quarter of his vast output takes the form of piano transcriptions of one kind or another. But this astonishing openness is also, more broadly, manifest in his settings of the folk-music of different cultures.

This album presents many settings of folk-melodies, both straightforward and more complex, and compositions of Stevenson's own which purposefully emulate the Scots musical vernacular. There is a generous number of works for children among his piano compositions – and he wrote skilfully for young people and amateur pianists. Many of these pieces seek to explore further avenues of musical development of another composer's idea: his best-known work, for example, the *Passacaglia on DSCH*, uses the D–E flat–C–B motif that was Shostakovich's musical signature; the *Peter Grimes Fantasy*

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[12] A favourite expression of Malcolm MacDonald's. A kailyard is a Scottish word for a kitchen-garden.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

has its point of departure in Benjamin Britten. The Stevenson compositions which are entirely original are less well known but, inspired by Busoni, whom he styled a *magister in absentia*, Stevenson drew no distinction between composition and transcription.[15] He saw no inconsistency in bringing together his own music and that based on existing sources: *A Carlyle Suite*, for example, encases music with its origins elsewhere.

Among Stevenson's many friends and colleagues was the composer-pianist Frank Merrick (1886–1981). Merrick studied piano under Theodor Leschetizky (himself the teacher of Sergei Rachmaninov, Benno Moiseiwitsch and Arthur Schnabel) under the sponsorship of Ignaz Jan Paderewski, the Polish pianist who also became prime minister of Poland. Merrick enjoyed a long career as a pianist, performing his last recital at the age of 92, and gave many important British premieres, such as Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 7. He was a keen exponent of the composers of his own time, particularly Bax and Ireland. He espoused unfashionable causes, such as women's suffrage and pacifism (something which he had in common with Stevenson), and was an advocate of Esperanto. Merrick is remembered as an outstanding teacher, and to this day the Royal College of Music, where he taught from 1929 until 1956,[16] awards a prize in the piano competition for contemporary music in his name. Merrick wrote two piano concertos, No. 2 in E minor dating from around 1935.[17] He suggested that Stevenson make a transcription of the slow movement.[18] Merrick gave his slow movement the title 'Seascape', which Stevenson modified to ***Hebridean Seascape*** 1, giving the first performance in the Purcell Room,

[15] Busoni: 'Ultimately, I have come to the conclusion that every notation is, in itself, the transcription of an abstract idea. The moment it's captured by the pen, the idea loses its original form. Before you even begin to write down the idea, you have to decide on a metre and a key. The form and the musical agency chosen by the composer determine the trajectory and the limits of the work' – *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, ed. Adam Harper, Precinct, London, 2012, p. 26.

[16] Merrick also held teaching positions at the Royal Manchester College of Music and Trinity College London.

[17] Sources vary as to the date of composition. Ronald Stevenson offers c. 1935 in his foreword to the published score of *Hebridean Seascape* (Roberton Publications, Aylesbury, 1988, p. 2), but the online forum Unsung Composers (http://www.unsungcomposers.com/forum/index.php?topic=966.0, accessed 19 November 2016) states 1936. An upload of the recording of the Second Piano Concerto on YouTube, with Merrick as the soloist, gives the date of composition as 1912 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-lcgF6KpV0, accessed 19 November 2016).

[18] Stevenson, *Hebridean Seascape, loc. cit.* Stevenson does not state the reason for Merrick's suggestion.

London, on 30 April 1986. It is a skilful reworking of a typically virtuosic part for the piano soloist in to a spacious orchestral soundscape.

Why a 'Hebridean' seascape? Stevenson points out[19] that the central section of the piece is a Skye fisherwoman's chant, which Merrick heard on a visit to Skye in the first decade of the twentieth century. Life for ordinary working people in rural Scotland, let alone island communities, was never easy, even after the advent of machinery. Farming and fishing, still the two main local industries throughout the highlands and islands around 1900, were deemed the jobs of men. Aside from waiting on shore for the men to come home, a woman's role in fishing included helping unload the boats and gutting the catch. It was a rare thing indeed to find a fisher*woman,* and she was generally frowned on. The Skye poet Aonghas MacNeacail (the partner of Stevenson's elder daughter, Gerda) told Stevenson about his own grandmother, Malcomina (Galina) Stewart, born in the 1870s, who was an active fisherwoman around the time Frank Merrick visited Skye. Stevenson conjectures, in the foreword to the score of *Hebridean Seascape*, that she may even have been the 'anonym who supplied the great, shouting tune'.

Soaring melodies abound in the piece, amidst the sounds of swelling and breaking waves. The cry of the kittiwake can also be heard, as a repeated semiquaver figure high in the piano: it appears midway and at the close of the piece. One passage, in the first half of the work, conveys an imitation of *pizzicato* strings which is marvellously realised by Stevenson through unpedalled broken octaves – one of countless examples of his ingenuity as a transcriber.

Stevenson's ***Three Scots Fairy Tales***, written in 1967, form part of his output of music for children. Although he never devoted himself to teaching after his time in South Africa in the way he did when he first moved to Scotland, the huge body of his 'teaching pieces' displays a keen interest in pedagogy.[20] The term might sound rather dismissive,

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] During the preparation of these notes Martin Anderson wrote to me that 'Marjorie Stevenson recently pointed out to me that there's a huge volume of music by Ronald that can never be documented – and my catalogue is already 78 pages long! [in *Ronald Stevenson: The Man and his Music, op. cit.*, pp. 375–459]. Apparently he would ask his students (often just local kids) what their favourite song was, and there and then he would write out a version of it to serve as the basis of their practice before the next week's lesson. He must have written hundreds, perhaps thousands, of paraphrases, little variation-sets and the like in this way – we'll never know how many' – e-mail dated 29 October 2016.

suggesting dry, musically uninspired studies focused on the mechanics of technique – but Stevenson never patronises his young learners. He uses many sophisticated musical devices, often far more advanced than one might expect in a 'children's' piece; there is no dumbing-down of musical intention so as to accommodate prentice techniques. Indeed, these *Three Scots Fairy Tales,* along with Stevenson's *A Wheen Tunes for Bairns tae Spiel* (1964),[21] remain among the only truly Scottish pieces for the pianist in his or her early stages at the keyboard.

'What the Fairy Piper Told Me' 2 is a pipe march, which turns (by way of a metric modulation) into a jig based on the wide falling and rising intervals of the march. The jig gives way to a rapid alternation between the march and jig, before ending quietly and slightly mysteriously.

'What the Fairy Harper Told Me' ('N.B. the fairy harper was really a clarsach player'[22]) 3 is a gentle lullaby-like piece which wouldn't sound out of place in Debussy's *Children's Corner*. As well as offering practice in sustaining a melodic line over broken chords (in the middle section), it helps cultivate a good *dolce* sound, as well as fluency in hand-crossing.

'What the Fairy Fiddler Told Me' 4 is, again, a jig, the most Bartókian piece of the set with variations in articulation, characterful off-beat accents and an infectious energy.

Like West Linton, Ecclefechan is a town in the Scottish Borders, although on the other side of the country, in Dumfriesshire. Its chief claim to literary fame is as the birthplace of Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish philosopher, writer, and historian. Dedicated to the pianist Sheena Nicoll, ***A Carlyle Suite*** was commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association to commemorate the bicentenary, in 1995, of Carlyle's birth. It pays tribute to Carlyle from different viewpoints, and not only ones which look directly to Carlyle himself. Here is Stevenson's own programme note,[23] interspersed with my own remarks:

[21] Recorded on Toccata Classics TOCC 0272.

[22] Stevenson's footnote in the score.

[23] Taken from the score as published by The Ronald Stevenson Society, Edinburgh, 2008. Curiously, the notes for movements 2 and 3 appear the opposite way round from how they appear in the score; I have corrected the order here.

I. Aubade [Morning Song] 5: 'So here has [*sic*: *recte* hath] been dawning / Another blue Day' (quoting a rare poem by Carlyle, *To-day*).

It is possible to hear this movement as the transcription of a setting for voice and piano. The melody line is characteristically song-like; indeed, the words of the poem fit exactly with Stevenson's melody.

II. An imaginary recital 6: Chopin plays for Jane Carlyle (which he did privately in their Chelsea home in 1848, to Jane's pleasure and admiration). This commemoration includes Polish Dances, an old Polish carol and an old Scots Psalm tune ('Martyrs').

The dialogue between Chopin and Jane Carlyle is made clear: the more singing lines, with allusions to *bel canto* style, the Mazurka and the presence of a *Valse Triste* are in Chopin's voice, and the allusions to Strathspeys and the use of the Scotch Snap rhythm are clearly that of Jane Carlyle. Much of the music assumes a recitative-like style. The carol mentioned above is *Lulajze Jezunin,* quoted in Chopin's Scherzo in B minor.

III. Variations – Study in historical styles on Frederick the Great's Theme [as used by Bach in *A Musical Offering*, 1747]: *Maestoso barocco – Allegro rococo – Allegro ardente, romantico – Modéré impressionistico* – Recitative and March – 12-note expressionist – *Calmo*: sketch for new classicality!

Listeners won't immediately appreciate Stevenson's humour when he pays homage to a composer, because much of it lies in the printed score. For example, Frederick the Great was famously a keen amateur flautist; Stevenson accordingly marks the Theme 7 '*p, quasi flauto*'.

'*Maestoso barocco*' 8 is written in a manner akin to the French Overture: Stevenson has retained the stately, dotted-rhythm feel of the traditional slow opening of such an Overture, although what is heard is a long note played on the strong beats of the bar, followed by a quick, scurrying gesture immediately before the next strong beat. The music increases in intensity before coming to an abrupt pause, leading to the next variation.

'In Rococo style' 9 pays homage to the seventeenth-century musical style sometimes thought of as a transitory phase between the highly ornate Baroque and the Classical periods. This variation features a stretched-out elaboration of the theme over a typically classical Alberti-bass accompaniment. Stevenson playfully inverts the texture halfway through the variation, giving the melody to the pianist's left hand and the accompaniment to the right: he also modulates the key up a semitone.

This variation flows seamlessly into 'In Romantic style' 10, where the broad triplet idea of the Rococo treatment is now transferred to the accompaniment. Rubato (flexibility in tempo) and expressively syncopated rhythms become features here, along with recurring swooning gestures ('*con morbidezza* (with tender mellowness)'[24]) in the melody.

'In Impressionist style' 11 sees Stevenson using the tonally ambiguous whole-tone scale, giving a sense of blurred openness to the sound. Here he clearly pays homage to Debussy, with an air of incorporeality: the pianist is instructed to play '*comme un piano sans les marteaux* (as if without hammers)', and the variation ends with '*La lumiere des etoiles a travers la brume* (Starlight through mist)'.[25] It is characteristic of Stevenson in such instances to annotate in the language of the composer to whom he is paying homage.

In stark contrast to the dreaminess of Variation 4, Variation 5, 'Expressionist style' 12, is a short essay in selected twentieth-century composition styles. After a rather unpredictable, arhythmic recitative introduction ('*Rezitativ als Zwölfetonreihe* (Recitative as a 12-note row)'), a 'brusque' march begins, and one can hear a dialogue taking place between the pianist's hands. An '*ombroso* (shadowy)'[26] section of low, rumbling broken-octave *tremolandi* heralds the end of the recitative. The 'Marsch' continues its extensive chromaticism alongside more quartal harmonies, redolent of, perhaps, Hindemith, with the theme presented in a suitably martial way. As in, for example, his *Heroic Song for*

[24] Stevenson's performance direction.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*

Hugh MacDiarmid,[27] Stevenson uses the overtone possibilities of the piano in a brief postlude to this variation: two *staccato* chords can be heard, with long gaps between them so as to allow the reverberation of the undampened piano strings to be heard. A quotation from 'In the Mist' by the German-Swiss poet Hermann Hesse at the foot of the 'Marsch' in the score is accompanied by a translation by Stevenson in to *Scotice* (Scots):

Im Nebel.	Haarscape.
Seltsam, im Nebel zu Wandern!	Fremd, tae gang i thon haarscape!
Einsam ist jeder Busch und Stein,	Yane aonar[28] is ilka buss an stane,
Kein Baum sieht den andern,	Nae tree keeks anither,
Jeder ist allein…	Ilk lane bides alone.

Busoni makes his influence felt in the final variation 13, entitled 'sketch for new classicality!' The music here is dark and searching in nature, and perhaps a touch lugubrious. It ends with a quote (harmonised in tonally ambiguous fourths) of the B–A–C–H motif, '*quasi organo*', followed by F–B (F–B flat: Busoni's initials) in the bass register.

IV. Jane Carlyle's wit: scherzo 14.

This 'Scherzino-Schottishe' (as the manuscript terms it) is written very much in the manner of a Scottish Strathspey, a dance-tune in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, not dissimilar to a hornpipe but certainly steadier and more stately.

V. Serenade: Here has been dawning / Another blue day 15

This final piece in the set is based on the opening movement, with a darker hue (it is now in a minor key). Both the Aubade and Serenade are, as Stevenson wrote, examples of

[27] Recorded on Ronald Stevenson: Piano Music, Volume One, TOCC 0272.
[28] *aonar*: Scots Gaelic, a hermit, a solitary.

> 'progressive tonality' (the term coined by Robert Simpson to describe a composition which begins in [any given key], progresses through different keys or tonal centres and ends in a tonality different from the opening one), found in the Symphonies of Carl Nielsen and of Robert Simpson and others[…].[29]

Marjorie Stevenson once told me during a phone conversation that in his prime Stevenson would 'fill a page of manuscript paper quicker than he would write a letter!' Stevenson's realisations – for clarsach or piano – of pieces from the harp book of the blind harper, Skye-born Rory Dall Morison (c. 1656–c. 1714), number eight in total and were each completed in a single day.

There were two seventeenth-century harpists (or clarsairs) known as Rory Dall: the Irish Ruaidhrí Dall Ó Catháin (late sixteenth century–c. 1650) lived slightly before Ruaidhri Dall Mac Mhuirich, also known as Rory Dall Morison (c. 1656–1714). Because of the similarity in name ('dall' means 'blind' in Gaelic) and proximity of lifetimes, there remains some doubt, across a variety of sources, as to which of the two wrote the tunes now found in Rory Dall Morison's Harp Book. For example, John Gunn is reported to have said that in about 1650 Rory Dall accompanied the Marquis of Huntly on a visit to Robertson of Lude, and 'Super Tiynearna Leoid' 23 was written in celebration of the occasion. But Rory Dall Morison wasn't born until around 1656, and so one can surmise that the composer was probably Ruaidhrí Dall Ó Catháin.[30] Ambiguity of this kind among the work of the two clarsairs appears to be common.

Morison was born to a wealthy farmer and poet on Skye, and was sent to school in Inverness to train as a church minister. Smallpox, and resulting blindness, put paid to those plans, and so he went to Ireland and studied music instead – chiefly, the traditions of the Celtic harp. Upon completion of his studies he became an itinerant musician and, meeting Ian Breac MacLeod, the chief of the MacLeods of Dunvegan (Skye) on a trip to Edinburgh in 1681, enjoyed several years' secure employment at the seat of the

[29] Stevenson, 'Bernhard Ziehn's contribution to the development of canon', in Bernhard Ziehn, *Canonic Studies*, ed. Ronald Stevenson, Kahn & Averill, London, 1976, p. 17.

[30] http://tunearch.org/wiki/Annotation:Lude%27s_Supper, accessed 19 November, 2016.

Dunvegan clan in the northwest of Skye. After the death of Ian Breac MacLeod in 1693, Rory Dall became an itinerant musician once again.

Rory Dall Morison's Harp Book[31] contains the following selection of tunes:

1. 'Oran do Iain Breac MacLeoid' (Song for John Macleod of Dunvegan); arr. Stevenson 14 March 1978 16
2. 'Feill Nan Crann' (Fair Harp Key, or Lament for the Lost Harp Key); arr. 14 March 1978 17
3. 'A'Cheud Di-Luain d'r Ràithe' (The First Monday of the Quarter, or Lonely Monday); arr. 15 March 1978 18
4. 'Creach na Ciadaoin' (Wednesday's Bereavement); arr. 15 March 1978 19
5. 'Oran do MhacLeoid Dhun Bheagan' (Song to MacLeod of Dunvegan); arr. 15 March 1978 20
6. 'Fuath nam Fidhleirean' (The Fiddler's Contempt, or Rory's Reply to the Fiddler); arr. 19 March 1978 21
7. 'Cumha Peathar Ruaridh' (Lament for Rory's Sister); arr. 21 March 1978 22
8. 'Super Tiynearna Leoid' (Lude's Supper); arr. 6 June 1977, rev. 21 March 1978 23.

Tunes were composed by musicians such as Rory Dall in honour of the clan chiefs whom they served ('Oran do Iain Breac MacLeoid' 16), events relating to their personal lives ('Cumha Peathar Ruaridh' 22), and specific occasions relating to their employment ('Super Tiynearna Leoid' 23). Humour and wit abound in the subject matter, and personal social commentary, too. In his compendious study, *Scotland's Music*,[32] the musicologist John Purser suggests that Rory Dall Morison's most entertaining song is 'Feill Nan Crann' 17. Rory Dall's treatment of a clarsair's painful loss is both 'tragic and hilarious':[33] the words of the song are translated as

> Alas, my tale is distressing, for me a pain and a loss, since a weight came on my mind and my equipment failed;

[31] The title is Stevenson's: the pieces themselves are scattered across a variety of sources.
[32] John Purser, *Scotland's Music*, Mainstream, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 156.
[33] *Ibid.*

> Since I lost my harp key I cannot find one like it anywhere, to be without it causes me much grief.[34]

Purser suggests the harp key 'is a phallic symbol […]. He has given this superb piece of ribaldry a tune of considerable beauty which serves only to heighten the humour'.[35] The tune as it appears in Stevenson's realisation is subject to a set of three variations before being reprised at the end.

'Fuath nam Fidhleirean' 21 makes reference to the rise of fiddlers in the Highlands, who often played music originally written for the bagpipes or the harp. Purser states that Rory Dall heard a fiddler playing harp music and remarked that 'if fiddling is music that's enough of it'.[36]

Stevenson approaches the arrangement of folk-tunes in a variety of ways. In *Rory Dall Morison's Harp Book*, there are many instances of straightforward harmonisations, as well as more contrapuntal arrangements where the tune is either heard in canon or has a freely composed bass line accompanying it. The textural and harmonic variety Stevenson can bring to a simple melody is always striking.

Towards the end of his life Stevenson himself told me that although he had written several 'multi-piece' works, none of them necessarily had to be played as a set – and he applied this statement even to the *Passacaglia on DSCH* which, though based on a single motif, is built in several large sections.[37] Even with this proviso, the ***Three Scottish Ballads*** hang together as a self-sufficient set of settings of Ballads from the Scottish Borders. In Stevenson's own words:

> There is nothing pretty or comfortable about Border ballads.
>
> *Lord Randal* 24 returns home blood-stained. His mother asks him why. He prevaricates: says he has killed his horse. The truth finally comes out: he has murdered his

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Stevenson gave practical weight to these words in 2010, when he orchestrated sections of the *Passacaglia on DSCH* as his *Sinfonia elegiaca*.

father. The climax is that the mother told him to commit this murder. The musical form is straightforward: verse – chorus. My version is dedicated to Ailie Munro, formerly of the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, who played me a tape she made of a folk singer's rendering, which I tried to capture on the piano.

The Dowie Dens (or *Dowie Humes*) *o' Yarrow* 25 means the mournful glens or ravines of Yarrow. Three jealous lords, after hard drinking, vow to murder the husband of the lady known as 'the Rose o' Yarrow'. A coward among the three lords stabs him in the back. His lady has dreamed a vision of this:

I dreamed a dream too since yestreen
That my lord and I was pu' in the heather green
Frae the dowse dens o' Yarrow

She twines her long golden hair round her hand and draws her man's corpse back home where he dies.

It is dedicated to my daughter Gerda who loves and sings this ballad.

The Newhaven Fishwife's Cry 26 is a Border ballad that travelled from Edinburgh. My version of it is dedicated (rather mischievously!) to my wife Marjorie.[38]

The unpublished ***Lament for a Blind Harper*** 27 is based on a melody composed by Savourna Stevenson, Ronald's renowned harpist daughter; in 1986 he recast it for piano left hand alone. Perhaps he imagined that the 'Blind Harper' might be Rory Dall Morison himself.

Scottish pianist **Christopher Guild** has established himself as a pianist with a keen interest in promoting music less heard, including that of the British Isles and especially his native Scotland. He has performed at some of the UK's leading venues, among them St James's, Piccadilly, the Wigmore Hall and St John's, Smith Square, and numerous recitals for music societies under the auspices of the Countess of Munster Musical Trust, as well as concerto appearances with conductors such as Siân

[38] From the foreword to the published score, The Ronald Stevenson Society, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 2.

Edwards. He has recorded for Champs Hill Records, with violinist Diana Galvydyte, and for Toccata Classics, both as a soloist and with the violist Elena Artamonova.

As a chamber and ensemble musician, Christopher appeared as a Park Lane Group Young Artist, at the Purcell Room and the Wigmore Hall. He was a finalist in the 2013 Parkhouse Award as part of the Galvydyte-Guild Duo, and in the same year made his debut at the Royal Greenwich International String Quartet Festival as a pianist with the Benyounes Quartet. He has worked on a number of projects with Judith Weir, Master of the Queen's Music, and featured in the British premiere of her ensemble work *Blue Green Hill* at the Wanamaker Playhouse in London in 2014. While still a student, Christopher was invited to work with numerous orchestras as an orchestral pianist; such engagements have included performing in the London Philharmonic in the European premiere of Philip Glass' *Icarus at the Edge of Time*.

Christopher is the co-founder and member of the Edison Ensemble (*www.edisonensemble.com*), a London-based contemporary-music group exploring the potential of electronics in concert music, which he runs with composer Piers Tattersall and cellist Miriam Wakeling. With the Edison Ensemble, he co-hosted live programmes for Resonance FM, in their monthly LSO SoundHub slot promoting upcoming composers. Other radio appearances have been numerous, and include a live performance on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*, a recorded performance from the Purcell Room of the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Born in Scotland in 1986, Christopher Guild studied piano and violin locally before entering St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, aged thirteen. He took top honours in the Moray Piano Competition in 2001 and remains the youngest winner to this day. He entered the Royal College of Music in 2005 as a Foundation Scholar and studied for six years with Andrew Ball, gaining a First Class BMus (Hons), and the MMus and Artist Diploma with Distinction. He went on to be the Richard Carne Junior Fellowship in Performance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2012–13. He now combines performing and recording with extensive teaching commitments: at Junior Trinity in London, where he teaches piano and classes in musicianship; and at the Godolphin School in Salisbury, where he is the full-time accompanist and teacher of academic music and piano.

His website can be found at www.christopherguild.co.uk.

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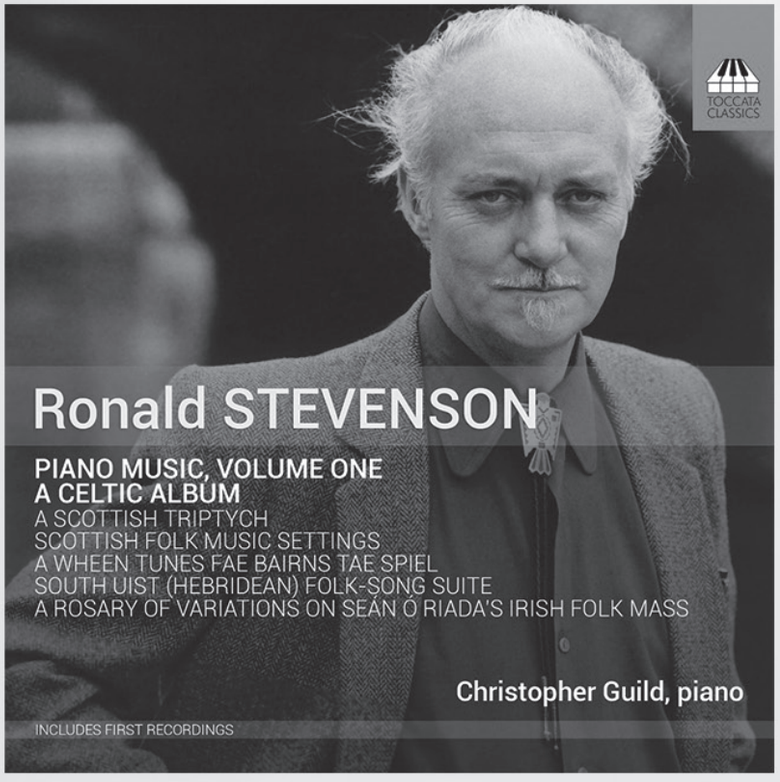

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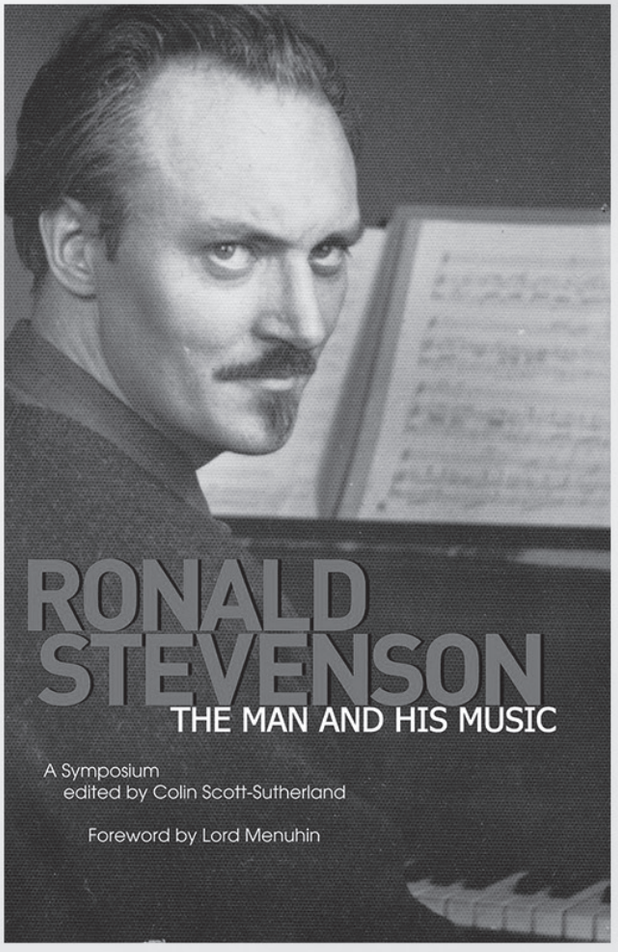

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