



# William WORDSWORTH

## ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

JUBILATION: A FESTIVITY FOR ORCHESTRA, OP. 78

CONFLUENCE: SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS, OP. 100

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Liepāja Symphony Orchestra  
John Gibbons

# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

by Paul Conway

Before I actually write a note of a new composition, I have generally been thinking about it at the back of my mind for a matter of weeks, if not months; trying to get clear the general ground-plan of the work, the number of movements there are to be, the keys they will be in and pass through, and the general mood of the various sections, so that each part gains in effectiveness by its relation to all the rest. I often have in my mind at the same time a vague mass of half-formed verbal and musical ideas, and it may be thought that the musical ideas spring from the verbal or literary ones, but personally I believe that the fundamental source of all thought is beyond or behind words; that if one is writing music, one must [...] think in music. [...] It is this musical logic which is so important in composition, and so it is always my aim to let musical logic have precedence over any verbal or pictorial ideas that may have sprung from the general underlying idea of the composition.<sup>1</sup>

This lucid articulation of his creative practice by the composer William Wordsworth (1908–88) underlines his unshakable belief that musical sounds must be capable of being understood without reference to anything outside the composition. He viewed the act of writing music as a process of clarification, from the half-formed initial ideas down to the last indications of phrasing and expression, with the ultimate goal of ‘an independent, self-contained and self-explanatory work of art.’<sup>2</sup>

William Brocklesby<sup>3</sup> Wordsworth, a great-great-grandson of Christopher Wordsworth, brother of the great Romantic poet, was born in London on 17 December

<sup>1</sup> William Wordsworth, ‘Thinking in Music’ (undated manuscript held in the Wordsworth archives at the Scottish Music Centre, Glasgow).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> His mother’s maiden name.

1908. Since he was considered too delicate a child to attend school, most of his non-musical education came from his father, a Church of England parson. His interest in music became all-consuming when he was about twelve years of age. At this time, he was receiving piano lessons from a Miss Sterry, a member of the Religious Arts Society, which used to meet at the Wordsworths' home in Hindhead, Surrey. She suggested he might enhance his musical training by studying with the composer George Oldroyd, who was choirmaster and organist at St Michael's, Croydon. Thus he became a chorister at St Michael's and, between 1921 and 1931, studied harmony, counterpoint, singing and three instruments (viola, piano and organ) with Oldroyd. At the end of this period, his first acknowledged piece, *Three Hymn Preludes* for organ, Op. 1 (1932), was published.

In 1934 he was invited to become a pupil of Sir Donald Tovey in Edinburgh. His three years of study with the composer, teacher and musicologist were a result of sending his *Phantasy Sonata* for violin and piano, Op. 3 (1933), to this eminent figure, who, impressed by the talent displayed in the score by a young unknown, immediately consented to take him on as a student. From Tovey, he acquired a respect for and command of traditional genres, though his approach to these forms was always deeply personal. Wordsworth wrote of his inspiring tutor: 'One felt one knew for the first time what words like "genius" and "greatness" really meant, when one had been in his company'.<sup>4</sup> Much later, with characteristic hesitation, he was to dedicate his Symphony No. 2 'To the memory of Donald Tovey, whose understanding love of music has been an abiding inspiration.'

After leaving Edinburgh without taking a degree at the University, and being of independent means, he was able to follow his instincts and devote himself entirely to composition, producing his first large-scale works in the late 1930s. Pacifism was an essential part of his character,<sup>5</sup> and for several years before the outbreak of the Second World War, he was associated with the Peace Pledge Union, acting as secretary of the

<sup>4</sup> W. B. Wordsworth, 'Tovey's Teaching', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> He wrote to the editor of *The Times* on 7 September 1939, pleading for a strategy of refusing unconditionally to bomb any but the most strictly military objectives, and in the last years of his life he urged the cancellation of Trident and Cruise missiles as a matter of policy (letter to *The Scotsman* dated 17 May 1986).

Hindhead Fellowship of Reconciliation Group. During this time, he knew the pacifist writers Max Plowman (1883–1941) and John Middleton Murry (1889–1957) very well and counted among his friends Nellie ‘Kay’ Gill, a professional violinist and musical patron who organised chamber concerts in her house next door to the Wordsworths. He always maintained that his long friendship with her much strengthened his development both as a composer and as a pacifist, and she may also have been something of a surrogate mother figure to him, his own mother having died when he was sixteen. It was inevitable that he should take his stand as a conscientious objector, and when war came, he was consigned to work on the land,<sup>6</sup> music giving way to agriculture as the primary claim on his time.

Nevertheless, after the day’s farm-work was done, he still took an opportunity to write music at night. In fact, the compositions dating from this period, such as the First and Second String Quartets, Opp. 16 and 20, and First Symphony, Op. 23, were his earliest works to attract critical attention, his breakthrough coming when his String Quartet No. 1 won the Clements Memorial Prize in 1941. His vocal music from this time met with less success: *The Houseless Dead*, Op. 14 (1939), a setting of D. H. Lawrence for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra, remains unperformed, and his largest work, the oratorio *Dies Domini*, Op. 18, for three soloists, chorus and large orchestra, written between 1942 and 1944 and praised by Vaughan Williams, is also still awaiting its first performance (it was rejected by the BBC for broadcast on the Third Programme and Home Service in 1960<sup>7</sup>). While working in Hampshire, he met Frieda Robson, also an ardent pacifist, and in 1945 they were married. After the war, he became even more prolific, and many of his earlier works were published for the first time. The next fifteen years or so were his most productive in terms of performances and recognition.

He served on the Executive Committee of the Composers’ Guild of Great Britain for five years, from 1955, and was elected Chairman four years later. Arising from his work with the Guild, in the spring of 1961, along with Thea Musgrave, he undertook a

<sup>6</sup> At Cheescombe Farm, near Lyme Regis. The name of the farm subsequently appeared in the title of a 1945 piano suite, Op. 27.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter dated 21 September 1960 from Harry Croft-Jackson, Chief Assistant, Music Programme Organisation, BBC, to William Wordsworth; ref. 38/M/HC-J (held in the Wordsworth archives at the Scottish Music Centre, Glasgow).

fortnight's tour of the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Union of Soviet Composers of Moscow, where he met, among other composers, Shostakovich and Khachaturian. He gave a speech during the tour, which began in a characteristically self-deprecating tone:

I believe I share with your most famous composer, Shostakovich, one characteristic – an extreme distaste for speaking in public. For an occasion such as this, I could wish that the floor would open and I could disappear. I could wish also that the resemblance between me and Shostakovich did not end there, but I cannot be so arrogant as to pretend that my compositions are on a level with his!

In 1961 he moved, with his family, from Hindhead to the Scottish Highlands, to live at Kinraig in Inverness-shire. The view from his study window across the top of the pines to the mountains above Glen Feshie was a rich source of inspiration to him. During a 'Composer's Portrait' broadcast by the BBC in July 1967, he confessed:

I have always had joy in the grander aspects of Nature – mountains, storms, spacious views, and in the ever-changing colours of the Scottish Highlands. I cannot say if there has been any change in my style of writing since we came to live in Scotland, but I would like to think that it is becoming clearer and less complicated, more direct in its expression. In fact, all the things it should not be, if one wants to be successful in the present musical fashions.

In 1965 Wordsworth was appointed Regional Representative of the Composers' Guild for Scotland and (with Robert Crawford, his predecessor in that office) was largely responsible for the formation of a Scottish Branch of the Guild in 1966, of which he was Chairman until 1970. He hosted weekends at his house for members of the Scottish Branch such as Robert Crawford, Shaun Dillon, David Dorward, John Maxwell Geddes and Thomas Wilson, who became a good friend and later recalled with warmth his visits to Wordsworth's home, 'full of musicians talking shop under Bill's benign eye'.<sup>8</sup> As well as providing an opportunity for dealing with the business matters of the Guild, the weekends were very social affairs, involving walking, sightseeing, fishing and

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Wilson, 'Convictions in Music: Obituary of William Wordsworth', *The Guardian*, 12 March 1988, p. 39.

wine-making, as well as offering a chance to listen enthusiastically to tapes of one another's music and discuss it constructively in a supportive environment.

Apart from music, which was the focus of his life, Wordsworth enjoyed reading, especially poetry, and among his works may be numbered many settings of poems, by such writers as Walter de la Mare, William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins. His hobbies included gardening, golf, beekeeping, fishing, chess and woodwork. He regarded himself as a 'handyman', making and putting up his own shelves and constructing a transistor radio with the aid of a soldering iron. He also made model steam-engines in his workshop, equipped with a lathe. Gadgets were a particular passion and one of his treasured possessions in later life was an electronic chess set.

Two deep sorrows darkened his last decades. In 1971, his elder son, Tim, was killed at the age of 23, in a motor accident near Pitlochry on his way back to London. Though the composer was devastated, he initially suffered in silence. His grief eventually found expression in two works. The first, *Adonais*, for mixed voices, Op. 97 (1974), is an imposing setting of words taken from Shelley's long poem written in memory of Keats and a moving evocation of the transience of life. The second, Symphony No. 6, *Elegiaca*, for mezzo-soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, Op. 102 (1977), is dedicated simply 'In memory, Tim'. This work also sets words from Shelley's 'Adonais', as well as John Donne's 'Meditation XVII' and Edna St Vincent Millais' 'Dirge without Music'; regrettably, it is still awaiting a first performance. The second blow came in 1982, when his wife died. According to one of his closest friends, the Rev. Campbell M. Maclean, 'Bill was lost. Lovely, fresh, engaging Frieda spoke for him, managed him, decided for him. Without her, he became a bundle of untidy clothes, a vagrant in search of dependency'.<sup>9</sup> In the same year as her death, Wordsworth wrote a work for string quartet, later rescored for string orchestra, which he called *Elegy for Frieda*, an eloquent love-song of enraptured, fond recollection and cherished intimacy. Ill health dogged his final years and his creativity all but dried up before his death in Kingussie on 10 March 1988, aged 79.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. Campbell M. Maclean, 'William Wordsworth (1908-88)', *Music Current*, No. 1 (September 1988), p. 3.

William Wordsworth's large and varied output embraces many forms, including orchestral, chamber and instrumental music, songs and music for radio. He was attracted to traditional forms of music, including sonatas and concertos, and his cycles of eight symphonies and six string quartets lie at the very heart of his considerable output. His scores are consummately well-crafted and draw their inspiration from the wellsprings of the mainstream rather than any shallow side-channels. Both in inspiration and in content, his music displays a rugged individuality mirroring his physical environment, and an integrity that isolated him from the influence of the latest musical trends. He was, however, a man of his time, and if the music demanded it, he would unhesitatingly include quarter-tones and electronic tape, for example, in his works. There are no sensational tricks, no compromises to fashion; and his is generally a quieter, more contemplative voice than that of his contemporaries. Various influences, such as Sibelius, Bartók, Nielsen and, to a lesser extent, Bax and Vaughan Williams, may be detected fleetingly in some of his writing, but he went his own way and the best of his music, of which there is a significant amount, is passionate, tough, direct and sincere.

***Jubilation: A Festivity for Orchestra, Op. 78*** [9], was written between July and September 1965. It is scored for two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes (second doubling cor anglais), two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, timpani, percussion (side-drum, bass-drum, cymbals, triangle, xylophone), celesta, harp and strings.

As suggested by the title, it is a convivial, good-humoured piece, in which clarity and vitality are the order of the day. In the slow introduction, side-drum rolls herald a stately, fanfare-like idea introduced by the trombones and marked *Pomposo, quasi Maestoso*, the imperious qualities of which are alleviated by crisp, Scotch-snap rhythms. At the start of the main *Allegro* section, the first violins give out a lively melody, clearly related to the opening trombone flourishes. An expressive, lyrical theme is first heard on oboe, followed by an ear-catching sequence of rich string chords. The rest of the piece consists of a light-hearted but characteristically rigorous working out of these principal subjects, variously scored and sometimes presented in combination. Encountered along the way are fugal episodes and what sounds like mordant, but fleeting, send-ups of avant-garde

writing; a consciously 'progressive' style of composition never appealed to Wordsworth, who believed that 'artists who are always trying to write the "Music of the Future" are doomed very soon to belong to the Limbo of the Past'.<sup>10</sup> In the closing bars the march-like trombone statement that opened the piece recurs in its original guise, this time without its *pomposo* marking, and brings this diverting piece to an ebullient conclusion.

Written between November and December 1970, *A Spring Festival Overture*, **Op. 90** [1], was commissioned to celebrate the twentieth birthday of the Pitlochry Festival Theatre.<sup>11</sup> It was first performed at the Pitlochry Festival by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by James Loughran on 23 May 1971. Modest-sized orchestral forces are required: double woodwind (second flute doubling piccolo), four horns, three trombones, timpani, percussion (triangle, side-drum, tam-tam), harp and strings.

The musical material was intended by the composer to represent the feeling of burgeoning new life in springtime. Marked *Adagio, non troppo*, the slow and hushed opening section is full of expectation. It represents the first stirrings of spring as it struggles to break free from the icy grip of winter. More playful material is suggested by the oboe before a change to a faster pulse signals the arrival of the main section, an exuberant *Allegro* that develops several musical ideas foreshadowed in the introduction. A brief return to the slower tempo of the opening, with distant cuckoo calls on the clarinet, is swept away by the final flourish. In his programme note for the first performance, Wordsworth wrote that 'it is my hope and intention that the style of the work is sufficiently lyrical to hold no problems for the ordinary music-lover'.

*Confluence: Symphonic Variations*, **Op. 100** (1976) [10], was commissioned by the Governors of the Eden Court Theatre in Inverness for performance by the Scottish National Orchestra and Sir Alexander Gibson at the opening of the theatre on 15 April 1976. It is scored for a substantial orchestra, consisting of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three

<sup>10</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Modern Trends in Musical Development' (manuscript, dated August 1946, held in the Wordsworth archives at the Scottish Music Centre, Glasgow).

<sup>11</sup> In 1968 Wordsworth had supplied songs for a production of George Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre.

trumpets, two tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (side-drum, bass-drum, tam-tam, cymbals, triangle, xylophone), harp, celesta, piano and strings.

As so often in Wordsworth's taut and closely argued scores, the opening section sets out the main material upon which the rest of the work is based. In this case, the beginning of the expository section is played from a recording, with the live orchestra taking over as the cor anglais takes up the principal motif. Marked *Allegro risoluto*, the following portion of the piece is brisk and purposeful. More moderately paced passages throw a contrasting light on the main figure, unlocking its song-like potential. A march-like episode fades into a beautifully scored slow section featuring a deeply expressive violin solo, subsequently taken up by clarinet and then, most enchantingly, by flute, delicately accompanied by harp and celesta and a thrumming *pizzicato tremolo* in the lower strings, overtly referencing the magical effect at the start of the cadenza in the finale of Elgar's Violin Concerto.<sup>12</sup> A fugal passage in the strings gradually builds up momentum and the work finishes on an imposing climax with the primary subject to the fore.

Wordsworth had a life-long interest in astronomy, and a fascination with cosmology. His son, Jonathan, remembers looking through his father's brass telescope at the moon and other stars in the heavens on cold winter nights: 'the telescope was generally unwieldy and difficult to focus, but still to focus on the craters of the moon in crisp detail was always a pleasure'.<sup>13</sup> The BBC astronomy programme, *The Sky at Night*, presented by Patrick Moore, was always a favourite of Wordsworth, who watched avidly every month, however late it might be shown. He was interested in science in general, and also watched the BBC science programme *Tomorrow's World*, as well as fantasy series such as *Quatermass and the Pit* and the long-running serial *Doctor Who*. This interest in astronomy was allied to his reading and discussion on spiritual and philosophical matters and he was widely read, enjoying poetry and particularly Shakespeare, as well as authors such as Jacob Bronowski, who wrote *The Ascent of Man*. He was not, however,

<sup>12</sup> In a footnote in the score, Wordsworth cites Elgar's Concerto as a model of the technique he requires from the violists and cellists at this point.

<sup>13</sup> E-mail from Jonathan Wordsworth to the author, 21 October 2021.

a reader of science fiction. He was a regular attender at church, both in Surrey and then in the Highlands, reflecting perhaps his descent from four previous generations of Anglican clergymen, though 'his beliefs were personal, in a quietly thoughtful rather than a dogmatic evangelical form'.<sup>14</sup> He would surely have been very proud to know that his grandson is now Professor of Environmental and Planetary Science at Harvard University.<sup>15</sup>

**Symphony No. 7, *Cosmos*, Op. 107** (1980) [2], is a musical expression of Wordsworth's deep interest in the origin and nature of the universe. Premiered by the Scottish National Orchestra, conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson, at the Eden Court Theatre, Inverness on 26 September 1981, it was commissioned by the Theatre Trust to celebrate the renewal of its sound system. Shortly after this commission, the BBC showed a television documentary about Albert Einstein, and two quotations from the great theoretical physicist helped to shape the work and suggested its title:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom the emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.<sup>16</sup>

What really interests me is whether God had any choice in the creation of the world.<sup>17</sup>

Large forces are required: two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes (second doubling cor anglais), two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, two trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (side-drum, bass-drum, tam-tam, cymbals, gong, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, tubular bells), harp, celesta, piano and strings, as well as (originally) a prepared tape.

The symphony is cast in a single, closely argued movement, which divides into sections. A slow introduction, marked *Allegro largamente* [2], opens with the sound

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> <https://eps.harvard.edu/people/robin-wordsworth>.

<sup>16</sup> Albert Einstein, 'Credo' in Henry Goddard Leach (ed.), *Living Philosophies: A Series of Intimate Credos*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1931, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted by Einstein's assistant Ernst Straus in Carl Seelig, *Helle Zeit - Dunkle Zeit: In memoriam Albert Einstein*, Europa Verlag, Zurich/Stuttgart/Vienna, 1956, p. 72.

of the pre-recorded material, heard quietly. Wordsworth had decided this important element of the work, the material for which consists of two slowly repeated chords for strings, would feature in the piece when he began work on it in early 1980.<sup>18</sup> The orchestra then enters with the two main musical themes: the first begins in the bass, moving slowly in fourths and fifths, and the second consists of a contrasting, four-note theme in adjacent notes. Both ideas form the basic material for the rest of the work, which unfolds, passacaglia-like, in a series of continuous variations of these themes. A climax, marked *Poco stringendo*, is reached with the sixth of these variants of the main material [3] before a brisk *Allegro con brio* section begins [4]. A second appearance of the pre-recorded material, this time sounding as loudly as possible [5] prepares the listener for the arrival of the *Sostenuto* middle section [6], which consists of a slow, extended development and elaboration of the main themes. The music builds to a second major climax, marked *Largamente* [7]. Another appearance of the recording [8] heralds the quiet coda and it is heard once again for the last time, very quietly, just before the last bars.

In *Cosmos*, Wordsworth's inventive approach to scoring is given full rein. No iteration of the main material ever uses the same instrumental combination. There are eloquent solo lines for flute, cor anglais, trumpet, horn and, notably, towards the end of the piece, the tuba, an instrument also liberated by Havergal Brian in his symphonic writing. Wordsworth's imaginative use of harp and celesta conveys a feeling of weightlessness and the varied writing for strings is also worthy of note, including some challenging, vertiginous lines for the first violins. The steady rhythmic pulse of seven beats in a bar serves to create and sustain a sense of disorientation and dislocation.

Although the musical narrative can be summarised as exposition–development–coda, both the first and second main sections follow roughly the same course: in each case, a subtle increase in tempo, together with the emergence of a slow *crescendo*, signals the start of a build-up towards an important climactic point. In this way, the piece might also be heard as a statement and counterstatement, followed by a coda, a formal device used by Bruckner in the first movement of his Ninth Symphony in 1893.

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<sup>18</sup> For the first performance, the material for the pre-recorded tape was set down by Adrian Shepherd and the strings of Cantilena and played through loudspeakers.

Wordsworth's Seventh Symphony taps a rich vein of mysticism in British music that features prominently in the music of Gustav Holst but can also be heard in a symphonic context in, for example, the profoundly enigmatic opening of Edmund Rubbra's Fourth (1941) and the hushed, sphinx-like final movement of Vaughan Williams' Sixth (1947).<sup>19</sup> The title, *Cosmos*, aptly conveys the unhurried grandeur of the work and the awesome inevitability of its unfaltering progress. Wordsworth's profound concern for thematic, rhythmic and harmonic integration in all his output arguably finds its ideal expression in this powerful, elliptical and compelling piece.

It is to be hoped that this series will renew interest in the music of a composer whose body of work is still a largely untapped resource.<sup>20</sup> His scores must be performed to give them life. In his own words, 'Music is what you hear. It is not a set of dots and lines on a piece of paper; it does not exist until the written symbols are translated into an aural experience which matches that imagined by the composer in the first place.'<sup>21</sup>

Wordsworth's personality has been described as one of 'quietude and restraint',<sup>22</sup> and yet he had no false modesty regarding his compositions and was fully aware of what he perceived to be their lasting value. When his friend, the Rev. Campbell M. Maclean, asked him how he could write 'yet another symphony when it may never be played, or if played, only once?', he answered, unequivocally for the only time in Maclean's experience, 'I know it is good and I know it will last'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stanley Bayliss, writing in *The Chesterian* (Vol. 24, No. 162, 1950, p. 88) detected a 'ghostly atmosphere' in all the music he had heard by Wordsworth.

<sup>20</sup> Volume One (Toccat Classics TOCC 0480), released in 2018, contains the *Divertimento* in D (1954), *Variations on a Scottish Theme* (1962) and Symphonies Nos. 4 and 8, *Pax Hominibus* (1953 and 1986); Volume Two (TOCC 0526), released in 2019, contains the Piano Concerto in D minor, *Three Pastoral Sketches* and the Violin Concerto in A major; and Volume Three (TOCC 0600) presents the Cello Concerto and Symphony No. 5.

<sup>21</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Music in the Dark', *The Times*, 6 March 1961, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Scott Goddard, sleeve-note to Discurio Record DC001, issued in 1964.

<sup>23</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 3.

**John Gibbons** has conducted most of the major British orchestras, including the BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, City of Birmingham, Bournemouth, BBC Concert, Ulster and, most regularly, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has recorded Skalkottas with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the string concertos of Arthur Benjamin with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Dutton Epoch), Mozart piano concertos with Idil Biret and the London Mozart Players, and Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, including a completion of the Finale by Nors Josephson, with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra (on Danacord). For Toccata Classics he has recorded the three volumes of the orchestral music of the Anglo-Scottish composer William Wordsworth that preceded this release, with the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies on TOCC 0480, the Violin and Piano Concertos on TOCC 0526 and the Cello Concerto and Fifth Symphony on TOCC 0600; they were followed by the first recording of Malcolm Arnold's *Grand Concerto Gastronomique for Eater, Waiter, Food and Large Orchestra*, Op. 76, and a view of the Ninth Symphony, Op. 128, radically different from those that had preceded it (TOCC 0613).



John Gibbons has been Principal Conductor of Worthing Symphony Orchestra – the professional orchestra of West Sussex – for over twenty years and, in addition to their regular concert season, they have appeared at the annual Malcolm Arnold Festival in Northampton. Renowned for his adventurous programming, he has given many world premieres of neglected works, among them the *Third Orchestral Set* by Charles Ives, the Violin Concerto by Robert Still and both the Second Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto by William Alwyn. He recorded Laura Rossi's film score *The Battle of Ancre* (Pinewood Studios) and conducted the BBC Concert Orchestra in her score to *The Battle of the Somme* at the live screening in the Royal Festival Hall to commemorate the centenary of the ending of this battle.

Overseas work includes Walton's First Symphony with the George Enescu Philharmonic in Romania, concerts with the Macedonian Philharmonic, the Çukurova Symphony in Turkey, the

Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, and performances of Malcolm Arnold's Fourth Symphony in Latvia and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony* in Worms, Germany.

He studied music at Queens' College, Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, winning numerous awards as conductor, pianist and accompanist. He assisted John Eliot Gardiner on the 'Leonore' project – semi-staged concert performances with the Monteverdi Choir of Beethoven's *Leonore*, the first version of *Fidelio*, in Europe and New York, including the BBC Proms – and the Monteverdi Choir recording of music by Percy Grainger on Philips; he was also Leonard Slatkin's second conductor for a performance of Ives' Fourth Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

He has conducted numerous opera productions at Opera Holland Park, with particular emphasis on Verdi, Puccini and the *verismo* composers, including Mascagni's *Iris* and Cilèa's *Adriana Lecouvreur*. He conducted *La bohème* for the Spier Festival in South Africa, toured *Hansel and Gretel* around Ireland with Opera Northern Ireland and Opera Theatre Company and conducted a number of productions for English Touring Opera. His orchestral reductions include Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* for Opera St Louis, Missouri, and Karl Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*.

A renowned communicator with audiences, John Gibbons is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, vice-chairman of the British Music Society and choral director at Clifton Cathedral. His own music has been performed in various abbeys and cathedrals, as well as on the South Bank, London. In June 2019 he was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to music in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

The **Liepāja Symphony Orchestra** – formerly also known as The Amber Sound Orchestra – is the oldest symphonic ensemble in the Baltic states: it was founded in 1881 by Hanss Hohapfel, who also served as its conductor. The orchestral strength in those early days was 37 musicians, joined in the summers by guest players from Germany and Poland. With time, both the structure and professionalism of the Orchestra grew, as did its standing in the eyes of the general public.

After the Second World War the LSO recommenced its activities in 1947, under the wings of the Liepāja Music School, and was conducted for the next forty years by the director of the School, Valdis Vikmanis. A new chapter in the life of the Orchestra began at the end of 1986, when it was granted the status of a professional symphony orchestra, becoming only the second in Latvia. That formal recognition was made possible by the efforts of two conductors, Laimonis Trubs (who worked with the LSO from 1986 to 1996) and Jekabs Ozolins (active with the LSO from 1987 to 2008).

The first artistic director of the LSO, as well as its first chief conductor, was the Leningrad-born Mikhail Orehov, who took the ensemble to a higher standard of professionalism during his years there (1988–91). Another important period for the LSO was 1992 to 2009, when Imants Resnis was artistic director and chief conductor. He expanded the range of activities considerably: in addition to regular concerts in Riga, Liepāja and other Latvian cities, the Orchestra also went on frequent tours abroad, playing in Germany, Great Britain, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden and elsewhere. During this period a number of important recordings was made, some of them during live appearances on Latvian radio and television.

In the early days of the LSO Valdis Vikmanis began a series of summer concerts which always sold out, and so, in 2010, the festival 'Liepāja Summer' was launched, to renew that tradition of a century before. As well as orchestral performances (some of them in the open air), the festival includes sacred and chamber music.

The Liepāja Symphony Orchestra holds a special place in the cultural life of Latvia. It received the highest national music award, the 'Great Music Award', in 2006, as well as the Latvian Recordings Award in the years 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2010 the Liepāja Symphony Amber Sound Orchestra was granted the status of national orchestra. The current chief conductor, the Lithuanian Gintaras Rinkevičius, made his debut with the LSO in 2017.

This is the sixteenth of a series of recordings for Toccata Classics. The first featured Paul Mann conducting the orchestral music of the Norwegian composer Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the next three brought Volumes One, Two and Three of the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299). The fifth release featured music by the German composer Josef Schelb (TOCC 0426), conducted again by Paul Mann, and the sixth presented the Symphonies Nos. 17 and 18 of the Finnish composer Fridrich Bruk (TOCC 0455), conducted by Māris Kupčs. John Gibbons then conducted the LSO in the first three of a series of William Wordsworth recordings, in programmes including the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies (TOCC 0480), Violin and Piano Concertos (TOCC 0526) and the Cello Concerto and Fifth Symphony (TOCC 0600), and then Māris Kupčs returned to the orchestra to conduct an album featuring Fridrich Bruk's Symphonies Nos. 19 and 21 (TOCC 0453). Paul Mann's further work with the LSO has produced four more albums: tone-poems and the Symphony No. 15 – itself inspired by the Liepāja coast – by the English composer David Hackbridge Johnson (TOCC 0456), the Violin and Trumpet Concertos, *Dances under the Northern Sky* and the *Concerto Grosso* by Arnold Griller (TOCC 0590), a programme of music by Derek B. Scott (TOCC 0589) and another of works by the late-Romantic Swiss composer Richard Flury (TOCC 0601).



Recorded on 4–5 February (Symphony No. 7) and 16–18 June 2021 in the Great Amber Concert Hall, Liepāja, Latvia  
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## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH Orchestral Music, Volume Four

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① <b><i>A Spring Festival Overture, Op. 90</i></b> (1970)	<b>8:13</b>
<b>Symphony No. 7, <i>Cosmos</i>, Op. 107</b> (1980)	<b>24:48</b>
② <i>Allegro largamente</i> –	5:07
③ <i>Poco stringendo</i> –	1:13
④ <i>Allegro con brio</i> –	0:32
⑤ <i>Tempo I</i> –	1:56
⑥ <i>Sostenuto</i> –	9:30
⑦ <i>Largamente</i> –	2:27
⑧ <i>Tempo I</i> –	4:03
⑨ <b><i>Jubilation: A Festivity for Orchestra, Op. 78</i></b> (1965)	<b>11:33</b>
⑩ <b><i>Confluence: Symphonic Variations, Op. 100</i></b> (1976)	<b>14:45</b>

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra

TT 59:21

Līga Baltābola, violin ⑩

John Gibbons, conductor

FIRST RECORDINGS