

Ronald STEVENSON

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME EIGHT:
GREETINGS TO GRIEG, GARDINER AND THE GRAINGERS

Christopher Guild

STEVENSON AND GRAINGER – AN ONGOING CONVERSATION

by Christopher Guild

This album – the eighth instalment in this series of recordings of the piano music of Ronald Stevenson – continues the theme of Volumes Three and Seven¹ in its exploration of the work and influence of Percy Grainger (1882–1961). In this programme there are masterful transcriptions of important Grainger works, as well as original compositions inspired by Grainger's life and the people in it, and pieces where the lyrical, folksong-like idiom takes its starting-point from Grainger's particularly human outlook on music.

Stevenson's solo-piano transcription of *Northern March* [1] was written in 1985 and dedicated to Dr Kay Dreyfus, a leading authority on Grainger's music, in celebration of the publication of her edition of Grainger's letters.² In its original form it is the first of five pieces which make up Grainger's *Youthful Suite* for orchestra. The first parts of *Youthful Suite* were completed in 1898–99 and both the 'Eastern Intermezzo' and 'Norse Dirge' were fully scored around that time. However, the suite in its final form was not finished until 1945. Grainger was physically very active throughout his life, and it's easy to imagine how the first theme of *Northern March* may have come to him while hiking. The piece has a brisk, purposeful energy to it, though not without its more thoughtful moments before winding up to an ebullient ending. Although it has the essence of a northern European (Scottish?) folksong about it, all the musical material is original Grainger. One of Stevenson's alterations to his source comes very near the beginning where, instead of the short notes being grace notes played before the beat, they become semiquavers played *on* the beat. This

¹ Toccata Classics TOCC 0403 and 0748.

² *The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger, 1901–1914*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1985.

feature is more idiomatic of Scottish folk-music, being known as the Scots snap, and is both Stevenson's interpretation and his way of 'leaving his mark' on the music.

Den Bergtekne ('Taken into the Mountains')², commonly translated as 'The Mountain Thrall', is a work originally by Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) for baritone and strings with two horns, from 1878; Stevenson's transcription dates from 1990. It is a setting of the folk-ballad found in Magnus Brostrup Landstad's *Norske Folkeviser* ('Norwegian Folk Ballads').³ A story of temptation, deception and treachery, it tells of a man who is lured from his home and family by the troll daughter, never to return. The music begins with a tragic G minor chord, modulating into the dark home-key of E minor. To set the scene, the music of the first verse is played by the ensemble. The baritone soloist then enters. The protagonist wanders among the woods by the river, the troll-daughter 'beguiling' him on. He becomes more agitated by the 'elf-stones' looming over him, the tension shown by the melodic line querulously hovering above a *tremolando* accompaniment. After returning briefly to the opening music, Grieg changes gear and the music rushes forward, the troll-folk wildly dancing around in a frightening tumult. This energy subsides, the music returning to a reharmonised, re-orchestrated version of the first melody, a sense of exhaustion and dawning realisation that the protagonist, in being led astray by the troll-daughter, has lost his wits and cannot return home:

Fishes in the bonnie burnies O,
And herring seek the sea;
Many greet their kith and kin
And wot not who they be [...].
The squirrels in the tree,
All of them have their love so sweet.
Yet no mate I ere can meet [...].
The troll's daughter stole my wits;
To my home I never won [...].⁴

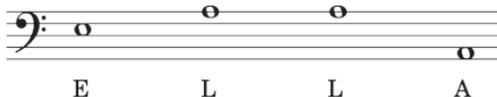
³ Chr. Tönbergs Forlag, Christiania, 1852–53.

⁴ Stevenson's translation, from his *Den Begtekne (Taken into the Mountains)*, The Ronald Stevenson Society, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 2.

The music ends in the tragic vein in which it began.

Norse Elegy for Ella Nygaard [3] was written in memory of the late wife of Percy Grainger's doctor and friend, Kaare K. Nygaard. Stevenson began writing this piece on 8 July 1976, the year of Ella Nygaard's death. Ateş Orga quotes from the fair copy of the manuscript: Stevenson completed this piece 'on the veranda of the Grainger House, White Plains, N.Y., June 15, 1979'.⁵ It is based on a four-note motif loosely derived from the letters of Ella Nygaard's name (Ex. 1). This motif underpins much of the piece as an *ostinato*, bleakly harmonised with open fourths and fifths. The notes in Ex. 1 form the top notes of the chords heard at the very opening.

Ex. 1



As well as using Ella Nygaard's name as musical material, Stevenson draws upon three other pieces of music. The first melodic material heard, a descending double harmonic minor figure, is reminiscent of the soloist's entry in Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 (1868). The brief middle section, set a semitone down from the home key of A minor, is based on the second main theme of the 'Norse Dirge', the third movement of Grainger's *Youthful Suite*. This theme is given typically Stevensonian treatment, with widely spaced chords and canonic writing being important features. The use of a theme from Mozart's Symphony No. 40, K550, is much more personal: Ella Nygaard died after a long illness, and Kaare would play this music to her in her final weeks. Elegiac strains of this theme can be heard throughout the piece.

Love at First Sight [5] is, in fact, by Ella Grainger, *née* Ström (1889–1979) – Percy's wife. Percy harmonised it and set it for chorus, and it was published in 1946. Stevenson set this version for piano in 1975, as a present for Ella on her 87th birthday the following spring. Its first performance was given by Stevenson at the Graingers' home in White

⁵ 'The Piano Music', *Ronald Stevenson: The Man and his Music*, ed. Colin Scott-Sutherland, Toccata Press, London, 2005, p. 79.

Plains, New York, in 1978. An easy version for voice and piano also exists, as does a simple piano version in C major [4].

Ronald Stevenson was of Scots-Welsh descent: Scottish through his father, Welsh through his mother. As a child in the 1860s, his maternal grandmother was a truck-pusher in the Welsh coal mines. Stevenson wrote a huge amount of music reflecting his awareness of his Celtic ancestry, and his *Cambrian Canto* [6], written ‘in memory of my Welsh Gran,’⁶ is no exception. It is the first of two *Cambrian Cantos* for pedal harp, written in 1965 and bearing the same familial dedication. Stevenson’s widow, Marjorie, pointed out to me how the melody resembles that of ‘David of the White Rock’ (‘Daffyd y Garreg Wen’) by the Welsh bard David Owen (1711–41), whose alias is the title of the song.

The version performed here is a later version Stevenson made for clarsach (the Celtic harp) in 1981. Both the pedal harp and clarsach versions sound well on the piano (the piano is, of course, a harp in a box where the strings are struck by hammers attached to keys), but the clarsach writing lends itself a little more easily to being played on the piano. In my opinion, the clarsach version resonates better on the piano, and, given how resonance and sonority lay at the centre of Ronald Stevenson’s own pianism, the decision to present this version here feels like the right one.

Eileen O’Malley’s Jig and Air (or The Pirate Queen’s Jig and Air) [7] is a short, quirky piece written in June 1975. Stevenson wrote it for Eileen O’Malley, a good friend from his teenage years in Blackburn. They met at the Blackburn Ballet Club, where Stevenson played for the dance classes. Eileen was the daughter of Ernest O’Malley, the one-time leader of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester. Unmarried her whole life, she would drive from her lifelong home of Blackburn to visit the Stevensons at their home in West Linton, in the Scottish borders. It was during these visits that Ronald was to learn the story of the Irish ‘pirate queen’, the fearsome Grace O’Malley (Irish: Gráinne Ní Mháille), born in the 1530s in County Mayo, west Ireland, the daughter of the O’Malley chieftain, Eoghan (Owen) ‘Dubhdara’ (black oak) O’Malley. Although she had a brother, she

⁶ Dedication on the score.

succeeded her father as chieftain. She is legendary in Irish folklore as a fearsome leader, and defender of her people at a time when the Tudors of England had reconquered, and begun to re-anglicise, the west of Ireland. The ‘pirate queen’ moniker comes from her piratical tactics at sea, to extract tolls from ships passing through her waters, and her plundering of distant lands (from Spain to the Outer Hebrides of Scotland) for cattle (at a time when a chieftain’s wealth was measured by head of cattle). When in 1593, during the Tudor conquest of Ireland, her son, Tiboid ne-Long Bourke, was captured by the naval commander Sir Richard Bingham and incarcerated at Athlone Castle, O’Malley undertook a treacherous journey to negotiate his release in an audience with Elizabeth I at Greenwich Palace – an event which defied social norms and which was without precedent.

Stevenson’s piece is short, in rounded binary form (the majority of the first section being repeated with an added coda). The theme of the jig is based on the name ‘Eileen Mary O’Malley’, using free-choice notes where a letter has no direct counterpart in pitch (for example, the letter ‘L’) or missing out a letter where doing so would provide a better musical result (Ex. 2). The Jig is a swashbuckling affair, which ends pugnaciously and yields to a slow, rather mysterious Air which uses the same theme, treated lyrically and with some intriguing choices of harmony.

Ex. 2

E (I) L E E (N)

M A R (Y)

(O) M A L L E (Y)

In 1950 Leopold Stokowski approached Grainger with the proposal that he feature some Grainger favourites in a new recording he was planning for the RCA Victor Red Seal label. Grainger obliged with new arrangements of several of his most popular pieces, including *Country Gardens*, *Molly on the Shore*, *Handel in the Strand* and others. He was recorded for a radio broadcast in which he spoke about *Country Gardens*:

I arranged this Morris Dance originally to be whistled by two whistlers with a few instruments accompanying them. That was in 1908. In 1918, when I was in the band of the 15th Coast Artillery Corps, I used to improvise on 'Country Gardens' at Liberty Loan Concerts. Finally in 1919, I had it published for the piano, and you have been afflicted with it ever since.⁷

Such barely concealed irritation at his own success is written into the 1950 'Stokowski' version. There are interruptions, 'gauche' melodic lines elbowing their way into the texture and some wilful wrong notes blowing raspberries at the Morris Dance tune on which the original version of the piece was based. Stevenson's virtuosic transcription [8] is undated but must have been written by 1990, which is when copyright was passed to the Percy Grainger Society.

Sneaky on Sixth Avenue (with apologies to *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*) [9] is a short rag-blue for piano written on 18 April 1987. Stevenson was visiting New York and had been asked by Don Gillespie, then Vice-President of the music-publishers C. F. Peters, to look after his cat, Sneaky. One day Ronald was alone in Gillespie's apartment and, after he and the cat had stared each other out for some time, he decided that Sneaky seemed rather sad to be separated from her master. He therefore resolved to write her a piece, and did so over the next couple of hours. Amusing 'Stevenson-isms' in the score include the instruction to play 'real sneaky', where the boogie-woogie style accompaniment begins. More importantly to the structure of the music, however, is that the first harmony heard in the upper part (Sneaky's theme being heard first in the bass) is an added sixth –

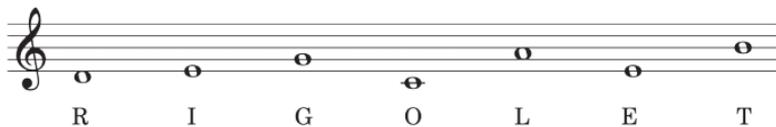
⁷ As noted in the booklet essay for Volume Seven in this series (p. 11), this quote is taken from an NBC broadcast, 'The Music of Percy Grainger' (date uncertain), which featured performances of various Grainger works by the Polyphonia Orchestra conducted by Bryan Fairfax. The recording was then used by BBC Television in a broadcast on 8 March 1970.

with tongue-in-cheek reference to the address of the apartment. This upper harmonic part is also written in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, referencing the same thing. It is metrically incompatible with the $\frac{4}{4}$ melody below, which is why the two parts sound unsynchronised. A *poco più mosso* middle section then introduces a gentle ragtime influence, before the final section reprises the opening in conjunction with the syncopation of the middle section. Listen for the occasional ‘meow’!

Ragmaster [10] is dedicated to two people: Barry Ould (now director of the music-publishers Bardic Edition and an authority on the music of Percy Grainger) and the aforementioned Don Gillespie ‘in celebration and commemoration’ of the American pianist and composer of ragtime, jazz and popular music, Eubie Blake (1887–1983). Stevenson wrote the first two sections in April 1980. It begins with an ‘ambling, shuffling’ theme in A flat major which segues deftly into a section in D major, ‘sung – big, bold and sweet’. The following section, which Stevenson wrote in February 1984, is a reprise of the opening theme, but in C minor. The music brightens when it modulates to C major, before a transition returns to an exact repeat of the first A flat major section.

Rigolet Rag [11] was written at Christmas 1973 for Stevenson’s friends Jim and Betty Blair, who lived in Stevenson’s home village of West Linton, in the Scottish borders, in a modern wooden house near the village green, named ‘Rigolet’, near to where Lyne Water runs, a tributary of the River Tweed that enters the North Sea at Berwick-upon-Tweed on the east Coast. Jim was an avid amateur home-recorder, regularly recording radio broadcasts onto tape. During the 1970s, when Ronald Stevenson was busy writing, presenting and producing various series for BBC Radio, Jim preserved these broadcasts for posterity, something of inestimable importance, since the BBC did not archive any of this material. *Rigolet Rag* was written in gratitude of such friendship. Like *Eileen O’Malley’s Jig and Air* and the *Norse Elegy for Ella Nygaard*, its jaunty theme is taken from those letters of the word ‘rigolet’ which can be easily translated into pitch (Ex. 3). Stevenson uses this melodic outline to create a rag which, in its cheerful outer sections, sounds like he’s poking fun at Scott Joplin’s *The Entertainer*. They are contrasted with more capricious and serious sections in turn, before reprising the opening theme to finish.

Ex. 3



Grainger began composing the tone-poem *The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart* (hereafter *The Power of Rome*) in 1918, completing it in 1943. It is a conflicted work, harmonically and rhythmically restless, and the fact that its period of composition overlapped two world wars is no accident. Grainger was a pacifist, and the music expressed his internal struggle with war and destruction across the world, or, in his own words:

A protest against the Roman Empire conception of life – a privileged few catered to by a host of slaves – which spread from Rome to France, from France to England, and from England to America.

The composition is the unfoldment [*sic*] of musical feelings started by thoughts of the agony of individual souls in conflict with the Powers-That-Be – as when the Early Christians found themselves at strife with the Power of Ancient Rome.⁸

The Power of Rome was originally scored for very large forces although, typically for Grainger, the scoring is fluid: he does call specifically for large military band, but leaves room for discretionary strings, harp, piano and tuned percussion (though he states ‘the more the better’ in the score). The work was commissioned by the League of Composers in 1948 to honour the 70th birthday of the eminent bandsman Edwin Franko Goldman (1878–1956). Famous for raising the esteem of band-music among musicians and audiences, Goldman also composed a notable body of band-music himself. He founded the Goldman Band of New York City, which functioned from 1918 to 2005, and the American Bandmasters’ Association, founded in 1929 and active to this day.

⁸ As quoted by Ronald Stevenson in the foreword of the unpublished score of his transcription, though he does not cite the original source.

As was common for Ronald Stevenson and Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) in their respective compositional processes, Grainger used to rework material from his own earlier composition. In fact, all the music heard from 8:33 is a slightly reworked version of the entirety of another tone-poem, *Dreamery*, begun in 1918–19 but not likewise completed until 1943 (Grainger retains the original structure, but alters the key in places). In turn, the theme for *Dreamery* is taken directly from ‘The Power of Love’, the first movement of Grainger’s *Danish Folksong Suite*, though the folksong on which it is based (‘Kjaerlighed’s Styrke’) is quoted neither in *Dreamery* nor in *The Power of Rome*. This theme is reworked by Grainger and introduced in a more concise form during the exposition of *The Power of Rome*, heard at 2:09 on this recording.

Stevenson’s transcription [12], written in October 1981 and November 1982, stays faithful to the original in its form, allowing for changes to the register of melodies and textural changes so that the music sings better on the piano. For example, the opening *tremolando* (repeated at the end) is originally scored as sustained chords on the organ, either electric or pipe organ. But with the organ, there is, depending on how the organist has set up the sound, some pitch-wobble, or modulation, which gives the impression of *vibrato*. Scoring it as *tremolando* on the piano better captures this shimmering effect, as well as giving an impression of the chords being sustained (rather than decaying, as per the natural trait of the piano).

After this ‘quietly flowing’, increasingly surging music of the opening, two descending, sobbing chordal phrases are heard, dubbed in the score ‘The Lonely Man’ theme (1:45). ‘The Power of Rome’ theme follows immediately, and is also given in two consecutive statements. This theme is taken directly from ‘The Power of Love’ music: here, the first four notes, an A flat major arpeggio, are reworked into a shorter phrase. Impassioned, surging music builds in feverish intensity before a descending chordal section with conspicuous offbeat *martellato* octave strikes, an elongation of the ‘Lonely Man’ music. It leads to the first peak of emotional intensity, a much-reinforced declamation of the ‘Power of Rome’ theme. The music then pushes forward, leading to another long descent into perhaps the most forceful short section of music, *martellato* triplets and quavers ringing out above low chords. The music then surges up to the huge climax of the piece,

again, the 'Power of Rome' theme. It simmers a little and reprises the music of near the opening. The following triplets and quavers in the tuned percussion in the orchestral version, insistent and seemingly relentless, dissolve into a brief but extraordinary passage cascading across much of the range of the piano, before this long section of the piece exhausts itself.

The following, final, section is the reworking of 'The Power of Love'. The 'Lonely Man' theme is heard and 'The Power of Rome' immediately after it – a reversal of the exposition. The wistful music which follows is fleetingly Vaughan Williams-like in its parallel harmonies and long phrasing, written here in G major (in *Dreamery* it is in B flat major). After an open-ended chord, the opening 'organ' music returns and segues almost imperceptibly into the breathtaking dissolution of the piece taken directly from 'The Power of Love'. Grainger's original is, in my opinion, a masterpiece and a huge surprise when one discovers it for the first time, and in Stevenson's transcription it is surely also a major contribution to solo-piano literature.

Late August 1984 saw Stevenson in the south of England for a number of recording and other musical projects. One of them was to perform at the launch party for Stephen Lloyd's biography of the English composer Henry Balfour Gardiner (1877–1950), held at the British Music Information Centre, London, on 31 August.⁹ *Gardineriana Rhapsody*, an incomplete composition by Percy Grainger based on themes of Balfour Gardiner [13], was realised for piano by Stevenson for him to perform at this event.

Balfour Gardiner and Percy Grainger met as students at the Frankfurt Hochschule in the 1890s, where, along with fellow composers Cyril Scott, Roger Quilter and Norman O'Neill, they formed what was to be a lifelong group of friends, all of them composition students of Iwan Knorr. The bond between Grainger and Balfour Gardiner became particularly strong, even after Grainger had taken American citizenship and, with his mother Rose, settled permanently in White Plains, New York, in April 1921.

Gardineriana Rhapsody is the title Stevenson gave to a sketch made by Grainger at White Plains between 14 January and 19 February 1947 for piano and small orchestra.

⁹ H. Balfour Gardiner, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

The piece was intended as a homage to Balfour Gardiner built on several of the elder composer's themes or complete pieces but was itself never completed.

Balfour Gardiner is known as the composer of such familiar works as *Evening Hymn*, a standard anthem of British cathedral choirs, and *Shepherd Fennel's Dance*, a musical number from an uncompleted opera (*The Three Strangers*, after the short story by Thomas Hardy). He was also a man of enormous generosity and encouragement to his fellow composers, British composers in particular, spending huge sums of money on promoting series of concerts before and after the First World War in London, ensuring the continued success of composers such as Gustav von Holst (as he was then still known),¹⁰ as well as his fellow composers in the 'Frankfurt Gang'. Such generosity came with self-deprecation, as he subsumed his musical ambitions in favour of the success of others. That want of self-assertion (normally an important asset in a composer) was felt in his own music: he would often begin a piece with impassioned enthusiasm which would wane as he neared the completion of the work; or, he would find a theme of his creation couldn't be worked through further, and so he would abandon it – or give it to other composers to do with it as they wished.

One such instance of the latter happened at some point between 1900 and 1904, when Balfour Gardiner gave Grainger a 'flowing melody' for him to treat as the inspiration took him. Over forty years later, without the manuscript to hand, Grainger recalled this theme and so began his 'sketch for completing H. Balfour Gardiner's unfinished *Flowing Melody*'. Indeed, this sharing of one composer's musical thoughts with another was an ideal of Grainger's: 'Later on I hope to publish my sketchbooks with free permission for anyone to use my themes, chords, ideas, etc. I should like to see every man tinkering with every other man's art – what kaleidoscopic, multitudinous results we should see!'¹¹

¹⁰ *The Planets* was premiered, by the Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult, in the Queen's Hall, London, on 29 September 1918, with the financial support of Balfour Gardiner.

¹¹ From a letter Grainger wrote in 1916 to the Scottish music-critic D. C. Parker (the author of *Percy Aldridge Grainger: A Study* (Schirmer, New York, 1918), the first monograph on Grainger's music) and cited by Stevenson atop the second page of handwritten score (labelled 'Sheet A', the first sheet of Stevenson's contribution).

Later in the manuscript, where he uses the title *Gardineriana Rhapsody* for the first time, Grainger suggests that the whole sketch should start with Balfour Gardiner's 'Shenadoah', the fourth in a set of five short piano pieces entitled *Shenadoah and Other Pieces*. They were written between November 1921 and July 1922 for William Gillies Whittaker, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne based conductor and musicologist, in gratitude for a performance, given in that city on 20 November 1921, of a number of Balfour Gardiner's unaccompanied choral works. These works, as Stephen Lloyd points out, pay homage to Whittaker's love of Northumberland through their obvious folk-music idioms and sparser texture.¹² Because *Gardineriana Rhapsody* exposes 'Shenadoah' more than once, the whole work is shot through with an essence of folksong.

After 'Shenadoah' is heard in its entirety, a short modulatory link by Stevenson leads to the 'Flowing Melody', heard exactly as Grainger scored it, with a thick accompanying texture underneath. At the point where a high *tremolando* enters, Stevenson rescors the texture for better pianistic effect, and continues until a sudden, but brief, change of character with the entry of another Balfour Gardiner piece, the first of the above-mentioned *Five Pieces*, 'Jesmond', a piece very much in Balfour Gardiner's English-country-dance style. Grainger's quotation of it is in A major (the original is in D major), and is abridged to about half its original length. A further two-bar link by Stevenson brings a reprise – shorter this time, and rescored – of 'Shenadoah'. Some free composition based on the Flowing Melody follows, taking the listener through a Lisztian, mandolin-like section which subsides to music more like a quiet chorale in texture. This music is gradually worked up into something much grander, cycling through a series of unrelated keys, until it breaks out suddenly into a triadic fanfare. Here, Stevenson sketches an example of how Grainger's writing (not wholly pianistic in its existing form) can be better adapted for better pianistic effect and easier playability, which I have fully realised and followed through on this recording. The piece comes to a raucous close with huge *glissandi* across the keyboard.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

Stevenson's *Gardineriana Rhapsody* was, to borrow a Graingerism, 'cooked up' on the very morning of that August 1984 recital and performed, by Stevenson's own admission, on no practice! In both his verbal introduction on the evening and his brief programme note at the foot of the final page of *Gardineriana Rhapsody*, he likens the process to the anecdote of Rossini being locked up on the day of the premiere of one of his operas so as to write the overture, with each finished page being thrown to waiting copyists.¹³

Gardineriana Rhapsody remains unpublished, largely because it is technically not a finished piece. I agree with Ronald Stevenson who is on record¹⁴ as suggesting (and I paraphrase slightly) that it is more like a written-out improvisation. The jury is out as to whether this piece should ever be refined and reworked further, or whether it should remain an unfinished document of Grainger's compositional process and Stevenson's interpretation as composer and transcriber. There is certainly scope for other pianists to re-adapt various sections and add or improvise their own material. Such incompleteness could therefore serve as a written-out demonstration of how to perform a piece in the 'Golden Age' style – the Golden Age of Pianism (generally from the time of Liszt and Thalberg through to the middle of the twentieth century) being one to which Ronald Stevenson belonged, an era in which performance, improvisation (in the form of links between pieces, for example) and composition were all as one. *Gardineriana Rhapsody*, in its current form, embodies all these aspects, and therefore is an expression of all Stevenson stood for artistically: one musician 'tinkering' with another musician's work, in an ongoing conversation across decades.

¹³ In what are reported as Rossini's own words, in response to a younger colleague who had asked when might be the best time to write an overture:

I wrote the overture to *La Gazza Ladra* on the very day of the first performance of the opera, in the wings of La Scala, where the manager had put me under the guard of four stage-hands who were ordered to throw down my music, sheet by sheet, to copyists who were waiting for it below. If I failed to produce the music, they had orders to throw me out of the window myself.

From an undated letter to an unknown recipient, quoted in Lodovico Settimo Silvestri, *Della vita e delle opere di Gioachino Rossini*, self-published, Milan, 1874, p. 64.

¹⁴ Bootleg recording of the launch party for Stephen Lloyd's biography of Henry Balfour Gardiner, 31 August 1984, as shared with me by Barry Ould via e-mail in 2025.

Christopher Guild has established a reputation for his work on the piano music of Scotland and the rest of the British Isles. Hailing from the Speyside region of Moray but long since resident in England, he has performed as soloist and chamber musician at some of the most prestigious concert venues in the UK, including the Wigmore Hall, St John's, Smith Square, the Purcell Room and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. After studies at St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, and as a Foundation Scholar with Andrew Ball at the Royal College of Music, London, his career was launched with invitations to tour the UK under the auspices of the Countess of Munster Musical Trust Recital Scheme, and to perform on the South Bank in London as a Park Lane Group Young Artist. While still a student, he performed as an orchestral keyboardist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia. He has worked with numerous composers in the creation of new works for piano and electronics, and co-founded the Edison Ensemble, a contemporary-music group based in London. After a year's tenure as the Richard Carne Junior Fellow in Performance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, he went on to become Head of Instrumental Music at the Godolphin School in Wiltshire. Based in the south of England, he is a visiting teacher at Dean Close School in Cheltenham, Solihull School in the West Midlands and the Gloucestershire Academy of Music. From 2015 to 2022 he was a teacher of Musicianship, Advanced Theory and Piano at Junior Trinity, the Saturday school of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. He lectured on Francis George Scott and Ronald Stevenson at the Musica Scotica Annual Conference in 2019, and has written articles on Scottish classical music for *iScot* magazine. This album is his thirteenth for Toccata Classics; he has recorded also for Champs Hill Records and Piano Classics. Writing in *International Record Review* the late Calum MacDonald was unstinting in his praise of *Ronald Center: Instrumental and Chamber Music, Volume One* (Toccata Classics TOCC 0179): 'The rhythmic vivacity and crispness of his delivery, the subtlety of his pedalling, the incisiveness of attack with never a hint of heaviness, and his range of keyboard colour are such that I'm sure the composer himself would have applauded.'



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Recorded on 2 April 2023 (*Norse Elegy, Love at First Sight, Cambrian Canto and Eileen O'Malley's Jig and Air*) and 1 July 2025 (all other works) at Wyastone Hall, Monmouthshire, UK

Piano: Steinway Model D (2011)

Technician: Philip Kennedy

Engineer and producer: Adaq Khan (www.adaqkhan.com) (*Norse Elegy, Love at First Sight, Cambrian Canto and Eileen O'Malley's Jig and Air*); Matthew Swan (www.matthewswan-aud.io) (other works)

Mastering: Adaq Khan

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RONALD STEVENSON Piano Music, Volume Eight

GRAINGER arr. STEVENSON

1 *Youthful Suite: Northern March* (1898–99, arr. 1985)* 8:16

GRIEG arr. STEVENSON

2 *Den Bergtekne* (1878, arr. 1990)* 7:04

STEVENSON

3 *Norse Elegy for Ella Nygaard* (1979) 11:03

ELLA GRAINGER arr. STEVENSON

Love at First Sight (publ. 1946, arr. 1975)*

4 Simple version 2:03

5 Concert version 2:29

STEVENSON

6 *Cambrian Canto* (1965, arr. 1981)* 2:52

7 *Eileen O'Malley's Jig and Air* (1975)* 2:27

GRAINGER arr. STEVENSON

8 *Country Gardens* ('Stokowski' version; 1908, arr. c. 1990)* 3:14

STEVENSON

9 *Sneaky on Sixth* (1987)* 3:29

10 *Ragmaster* (1980–84)* 2:31

11 *Rigolet Rag* (1973)* 2:09

GRAINGER arr. STEVENSON

12 *The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart* (1918–43, arr. 1981–82) 15:06

GRAINGER arr. STEVENSON

13 *Gardineriana Rhapsody* (1947, arr. 1984)* 11:45

TT 74:21

Christopher Guild, piano

*FIRST RECORDINGS