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ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3, OP. 455, 'AFTER BRUNO SCHULZ'

SYMPHONY NO. 18 IN F SHARP MINOR, OP. 438, NO. 3

Jonathan Powell, piano
Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra
David Hackbridge Johnson

ECHOES OF POLISH INSPIRATION AND ENGLISH LANDSCAPES

by David Hackbridge Johnson

The works heard here reflect two points of inspiration: the writings of a Polish-Jewish writer and artist and the work of two English landscape painters. Though not strictly programme music, the concerto enacts the drama of Bruno Schulz's life and work, and the symphony echoes emotional reactions to landscape as seen in paintings of Samuel Palmer and Ithell Colquhoun.

Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 455, 'After Bruno Schulz'

Bruno Schulz was a writer and artist who was born and died in Drohobycz.¹ Born in 1892, he was murdered in 1942. Several of his works were lost in the Second World War. In 2001 a mural by Schulz was discovered under layers of paint in the so-called 'Landau House'.² After work by Polish conservationists, parts of the mural were removed by representatives of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem. Controversy ensued between Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian interested parties.

The writing of a piano concerto inspired by Bruno Schulz was stimulated by learning of the opportunity to record some of my music with the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra in Olomouc. I was then faced with the question: what music do I have ready? Answer: none. There was a torso of a symphony that wanted limbs, and nothing else suitable. Then I looked at the map to discover where Olomouc lay within the Czech Republic and discovered its reasonable proximity to the border

¹ That was the Polish spelling current at the time. Strictly speaking, from 1939 the city was part of the Soviet Drohobych oblast. It is now in Ukraine and in Romanised form is spelt Drohobych.

² Felix Landau (1910–83) was a *Hauptscharführer* (death-squad leader) in Nazi-occupied Poland. As he liked Bruno Schulz's art, he provided him with protection and extra food, in exchange for which Schulz painted a set of murals in the bedroom of Landau's son. Another Nazi officer, Karl Günther, enjoyed the services of a Jewish dentist, whom Landau shot; in revenge, Günther then shot Schulz twice in the head as he walked back to the Drohobycz ghetto with his food ration, a loaf of bread.



Bruno Schulz, self-portrait c. 1933

with Poland, beyond which my dear friend Jonathan Powell commanded a view of the Tatra mountains as he practised Sorabji and other composers considered untouchable by most other pianists. There arose a distinct possibility of writing a piano concerto for him. A very quick phone call:

DHJ: How about....?

JP: Oh, I can hop over the mountains and be in Olomouc by lunchtime.

DHJ: OK, I will start.

Suddenly I had all the music I needed in my head – and it came from my long acquaintance with the works of Bruno Schulz. Why him? Books picked up twenty years ago without knowing anything about him led to captivation by his extraordinary imaginative world. My complete unawareness as to his growing importance in twentieth-century literature

lasted until I discussed him with my friend the poet Marius Kociejowski.³ The idea then arose that Marius and I might collaborate on an opera arising from an engagement with Schulz as man and artist. And I knew that Schulz was close to Jonathan and Irena Powell – they knew him in English and Polish from his books *Sklepy cynamonowe* (*Cinnamon Shops* in English but also translated as *The Street of Crocodiles*)⁴ and *Sanatorium Pod Klepsydrą* (*Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*).⁵

The concerto was finished in six days between 2 and 7 May 2025 – work had to proceed in haste as the session dates were already looming. A lot of music was already in my head from the stalled opera project and an earlier attempt to turn that into a violin concerto. Finally I'd completed a work inspired by Bruno Schulz. I had always wanted to evoke his world of dim passage-ways, dream-worlds, the halcyon summers of childhood, and combine it with the malicious intrusion of what was soon to eradicate Schulz and all he knew. As in the aborted opera and violin concerto, it is parade drums that sweep away the annihilated culture. I've put into the emotional tenor of the work not only my reading of Schulz but also Carol's⁶ murdered Lithuanian forebears and Majer Bogdanski's⁷ tragedy and survival. By making these emotive links I felt better able to inhabit in some way at least Schulz's final years as he struggled to write and paint against the appallingly oppressive backdrop of Nazi occupation. In this way the concerto owes many debts – to Schulz, to its dedicatees Jonathan Powell and Marius Kociejowski,

³ Our conversation can be found on the Toccata blog, at <https://toccataclassics.com/talking-about-bruno-schulz-with-marius-kociejowski/>.

⁴ Rój, Warsaw, 1933; English translation by Celina Wieniawska in *Cinnamon Shops and Other Stories*, Macgibbon & Kee, London, 1963; US title: *The Street of Crocodiles*, Walker & Company, New York, 1963.

⁵ Rój, Warsaw, 1937; transl. Celina Wieniawska, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979.

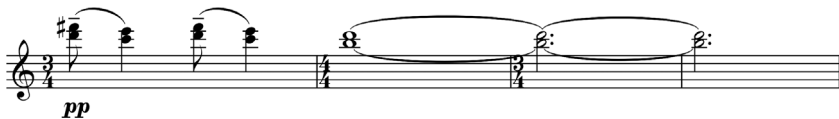
⁶ Carol Fine was my late first wife. I have photographs of her Lithuanian relatives who never made it out of that country before the Nazis invaded. They lived in Ukmergė and were most likely murdered in the Pivonija Forest outside the city in 1941.

⁷ Majer Bogdanski (1912–2005) was a friend of my grandmother, a keen amateur singer and violinist of classical music but more importantly, a living repository of Yiddish songs and poetry which he had learned in Łódź before the Second World War – the corpus of which he added to by means of his own poetry and compositions. Majer's spirit shone into my early years; he remained in love with life despite losing all his relatives in the Holocaust. During the war he had been in the Polish Army, was imprisoned by the Russians, lost his family (including his young wife) to the Nazis, and he ended up in a prison camp north of Archangelsk, before being let out when the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was violated by the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. He eventually made it to the East End of London.

to Carol and her lost family, and to Majer, who refused bitterness and despair. Originally the concerto was in two movements but after pondering on this structure I felt that the piece required some respite from these large-scale blocks. The result is the ‘Waltz-Phantom’ – a fairy-tale of shadowy dancers [2].

Each movement implies a pairing of contrasting ideas implicit in their titles. The music doesn’t ‘go with’ specific scenes in either of Schulz’s books. The dialectical opposition is a general one between the fecundity of the imaginative artist and the ways in which an oppressive regime seeks to destroy it – in a sense that ideology is the opposite of imagination. The first movement, ‘Fantasy-Scherzo’ [1], opens with a flourish of A major, as if opening a curtain to reveal a stage set of Schulz-like imaginings. The ornate piano part with its fast arpeggiation and trills evokes the colours of a dreamscape as shown in the now somewhat washed-out mural revealed behind layers of whitewash in the Landau House in Drohobycz. Early on, there occurs a motif played by flutes with violin harmonics which will become important as the work progresses (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1



There is a moment of stasis before a downward cascade from the soloist leads to Ex. 1 in full orchestral dress. What feels like a second subject in the key of F appears, and it becomes clear that a sonata-form structure is being set up. The character is lyrical, though immediately decorated by the piano. What might be the exposition of a sonata form ends with hushed chords – G major in the piano answered by the strings in C sharp minor. At the point where one would expect a development section to break out, there now occurs a scherzo marked *Presto e sgradevole* (‘Fast and nasty’). It features a chromatic tune on the upper wind and violins, and a theme in triads played by the soloist. The whole is cloaked in a raiment half-circus polka, half-military tattoo, as if the

intrusion of bellicose voices is somehow despicable and laughable at the same time – the intrusion of $\frac{5}{8}$ bars ensuring that any soldiers present stumble into one another.⁸ Little windows open onto innocent snatches of folksong only to be slammed shut. Bass drum and cymbals stoke the fires of destruction. As if in response to these garish voices, the piano has the first of four quasi-cadenzas. It begins in fury before dissipating via polka remnants heard at the start of the *Presto* section. A brief moment of sad reflection marked *Lento reminiscenza e languido* is shattered by the orchestra as it steam-rollers over all resistance. This act provokes an even more violent response from the pianist – the second quasi-cadenza – an outburst replete with overtones of Liszt’s *Après une lecture du Dante*. As if a page were being torn out of the score (something that could be done in a live performance), the piano is cut off and a gently pleading bassoon solo leads to a reprise of the second subject. After a climax featuring Ex. 1, the soloist heralds the coda by means of a melodic phrase first, just before the appearance of the second subject in its first iteration. The shimmering opening returns but now in A minor – its wide-eyed optimism tarnished.

The second movement, the aforementioned ‘Waltz-Phantom’ [2], evokes the world of the salon and that of folksong – the harmonic pattern used, I-V-V- I – that is, two bars based on the tonic chord, four on the dominant chord and two on the tonic chord once more, being typical of many folksongs of central Europe. The piano part is ornate in the manner of a jewelled music-box. The music is happily in D flat major until at its perfectly expected cadence a bed of string chords enters in the wrong key, which provides a static backdrop to a series of distortions of the waltz theme – like phantoms

⁸ Film buffs of the period encompassing the Second World War will be familiar with the parody *Schickelgruber doing the Lambeth Walk* by Charles A. Ridley, made in 1941. Ridley took footage from Leni Riefenstahl’s 1935 film *Triumph des Willens* (‘Triumph of the Will’) and by means of editing showed marching soldiers as comic grotesques goose-stepping to a popular song of the time, one which a Nazi commentator (thought to be Goebbels) had dismissed as ‘Jewish mischief and animalistic hopping’. Schickelgruber equals Schickelgruber, after Maria Schickelgruber who gave birth to Hitler’s father Alois illegitimately. In some prints of the film there are jumps in the rhythm due to deterioration of the celluloid – leading to less than the expected number of beats, as in my scherzo. But you laugh at the devil at your own peril; Ridley was put on Goebbels’ extermination list, to be actioned in the event of a successful invasion of Great Britain. Goebbels’ attack may have been part of what Penelope Fitzgerald, then a film critic but later a leading novelist, called, in an anonymous piece for *The Times Literary Supplement*, his edict against ‘intellectual wit’ (Hermione Lee, *Penelope Fitzgerald: A Life*, Vintage, London, 2014, p. 67).

revisiting a deserted ballroom. In spite of such rough treatment, enough of the waltz survives to initiate a reprise.

The third movement, 'March-Dreamscape' [3], brings back the ominous tread of an invading army. Bassoons and clarinet have the main theme (Ex. 2).

Ex. 2



The piano joins in on its repeat. The various segments of the theme are developed in the manner of variations. The violas then take up a variant, over deep tolling bells from the piano, which triggers a parade of ghostly figures, including distant fanfares from a trio of trumpets. A climax is reached with the horns calling out Ex. 1. The drums have not departed and tread stealthily until the third quasi-cadenza is heard – a ruminative exploration of Ex. 2 and material from the first movement. Bells are heard again, this time high-pitched and from afar – like an angelus shimmering through a hazy sky. But it is the piano that shatters this dreamscape – Ex. 2 appears in full battle-dress, and the tempo is now *Allegro vivace*. A grindingly dissonant climax is achieved, and the fourth quasi-cadenza spills out of it. But there is a lyrical tail to this beast of anger, with its mood echoed in a passage for strings alone which culminates in a hushed reiteration of Ex. 1. A *crescendo* leads to the opening of the magic curtain heard at the very start of the concerto. A major is restored as the key symbolising an internal world free of external repression. Piano trills are unleashed like waterfalls, until the music seems to stall. There now begins a series of *senza misura* passages that evoke the lost world of the Drohobycz ghetto by means of a syntax derived from Jewish folk-music in the Klezmer style. For as long as I can remember, I have been inspired by the playing of such

musicians as the violinist Abe Katzman (1868–1940) and clarinetist Naftule Brandwein (1884–1963), both born far from the America they later claimed as home, the former in Kishinev,⁹ the latter in Przemyślany.¹⁰ For this passage in my concerto – which is in the nature of memory capsule – I drew on the kind of structure that can be heard in the central slow improvised section on the 78rpm record *Erinerung fun Kishinev* recorded by Abe Katzman's Bessarabian Orchestra in 1927. Over a drone Katzman's violin keeps a decorated melody, followed by a trumpet in similarly ornate style. In my concerto a solo violin leads off *alla* Katzman, followed by a clarinet *alla* Brandwein, then they duet. In the background the pianist shimmers in imitation of a cimbalom, that representative instrument of another folk-music close to my heart, that of the Hungarian Roma.¹¹ The memory capsule is burst by the whole ensemble engaging in furious gestures combining fanfares (now blasting in the forefront), frantic pianism drawing on the rhetoric of the romantic concerto replete with cascading octaves, and the minatory baying of horns and trombones. A huge orchestral climax follows which recapitulates a passage in the first movement, with Ex. 1 very much in evidence. The violas alone paint a plaintive melody taken up by the violins and the solo piano. But there is to be no concluding solace. The percussion enters in quick-march tempo. Ex. 2 sounds bathetically over the mounting horror together with piano fragments. The orchestra rises to a scream of pain before a helter-skelter coda begins. The ending is in A minor – with a vicious chord like the gunshot that ended Bruno Schulz's life as he returned with his bread ration, only days before his planned escape from the ghetto. The concerto might have ended with the triumph of the individual against the crushing force of a rogue state, but – given a situation where political complacency is almost a form of appeasement – such an easy way out might seem too pat for the discomfort guaranteed by our present predicaments.

⁹ Then in the Bessarabia Governorate, Russian Empire. It is now called Chişinău, and is the capital of Moldova.

¹⁰ Then part of Austro-Hungarian Galicia but is now Peremyshliany in Ukraine. Thus continues a theme as seen in Schulz's birthplace: the cities remain as the states shift their borders.

¹¹ One of my very favourite violinists is the great Béla Berki, whose dapper appearance and genial smile cannot hide the deep wellsprings of emotion brought forth by his playing. Hear for yourself: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrTfOgTxSfQ> (accessed 20 February 2026).

Symphony No. 18 in F sharp minor, Op. 438, No. 3

Symphony No. 18 is one of three symphonies that make up my opus 438: No. 16 is in G sharp minor, and No. 17 is for brass band. They are grouped together because they were all conceived at roughly the same time. No. 18 carries with it no overt programmatic import but grew partly from reactions to some of my favourite painters. It is in four movements, but not in their normal configuration of fast–slow–scherzo–fast. Instead, two fast movements are bookended by slower, more meditative entities. As with the Piano Concerto No. 3, the Symphony sprouted an extra movement as I felt it was necessary to provide contrast between the melancholic opening movement and the fast and furious movement that is now placed third. Perhaps cognoscenti will know if there are other symphonies that follow this pattern. The one I had in mind, although it bears little stylistic relation to my own piece, is Mahler's Ninth Symphony, which certainly frames two inner movements with broader structures, although only the last of the four movements is a true slow movement. I have also used the idea of ending a symphonic work with an epilogue; here I follow Vaughan Williams and Bax.

If I were to make a suggestion of influences that have bled into the symphony, they would be more visual than musical. In this sense the symphony represents the latest example of music that I have written exploring not specific paintings but an overall feeling of landscape as painted by artists important to me. Two such orchestral works of this nature have preceded the current work: *Landscapes of Samuel Palmer*, Op. 428, No. 1, and *Landscapes of Ithell Colquhoun*, Op. 428, No. 2. The point of these pieces was not to produce a musical picture of individual paintings but to allow music to be imbued with a sense of their approach to light and colour. With Palmer I was inspired by the extraordinary series of intense landscapes, often of small scale, that he painted in the early part of his career when he was living in Shoreham, Kent. As part of a group influenced by the writing and art of William Blake called The Ancients, Palmer tapped a rich vein of creativity to produce paintings that together are usually referred to as his Visionary Period. Paintings like *The Magic Apple Tree*, with its saturated colours, create a sensation of shimmering mysticism, as if the heat of the sun has burned the image into the eyes of the beholder. Palmer's *Coming from Evening Church* presents, with closely

packed perspective, an entire paradigm of a certain type of English life tied inexorably to the rhythms of the land and of religious observance. Palmer presents no facile vision for merely nostalgic appeal – the way he lays on the paint emphasises the organic, the vegetal, and from the inevitable decay of such things arises an ingrained melancholy. In addition to her paintings, Ithell Colquhoun wrote two books about landscape: one based on her travels and life in Cornwall, *The Living Stones*,¹² the other drawing upon her travels around Ireland, *The Crying of the Wind*.¹³ Her feeling for hills, valleys and rocks as imbued with mystical import can be seen in her surreal landscapes, which combine the fecundity of nature with a freely expressed sensuality. A holiday taken in the Cotswolds during the composition of the symphony gave me a chance to visit the standing stones known as The Whispering Knights where I felt a distinct sense of a ritual space long abandoned but yet still somehow alive with the ancient peoples who once set their hopes on now-forgotten deities. Although I had given both painters their own orchestral piece, there remained distinct after-images – retinal memories that fed into the symphony. With their sense of landscape as something ever changing, growing, dying back and growing again, Palmer and Colquhoun have stimulated feelings of deep introspection for loved ones I have lost. These loved ones are sewn into the fabric of this symphony. It is fitting therefore that the symphony in its conclusion sounds a valedictory note. For the first time in many years, I have no other symphonies queuing up in my mind and begging to be written down. Other orchestral pieces, if they arise, will have to take on a different guise.

Such is the background to the symphony. The music proper proceeds with as tight a rein on structure and form as my previous works in the genre. Without preamble the first movement of the symphony, entitled *Preludium malinconico* [4], begins with a sweeping melody played by all the violins that covers almost the entire range of the instrument by starting on a high F sharp, plunging down as if to a valley floor, and rising again. This swooping down-and-up motion I once observed in the Quantocks as performed by a flock of sheep. The sheep managed their precipitous plunge into the abyss

¹² Peter Owen, London, 1957.

¹³ Peter Owen, London, 1955.

and subsequent rising to the hill on the other side as if in one complete arcing motion without pause – an extraordinarily dynamic pastoral. As this melody is important for the understanding of the symphony as a whole, it is worth quoting in its entirety (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3



After a passionate climax for the full orchestra a subsidiary idea appears on the flute which contains two characteristic ideas: the use of a turn figuration inverted from the fourth bar of Ex. 3 and a pair of falling sevenths, as if they are hands making a descending gesture of tenderness (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4



With these building blocks in mind, it is fairly easy to follow the course of the rest of the movement since all the material is derived from aspects of these two melodies. The recapitulation is far from standard in that Ex. 1 is continually developed. After a falling sequence replete with suspensions between the two violin sections, the home key of F sharp minor is finally reached, signalling a coda based on Ex. 4 heard in flute, piccolo and oboe. Having begun the movement in unison the violins now play in opposed rhythms, as if a hand were passing over the light and shade cast by a Venetian blind.

subject, first heard in the violas. When the scherzo material returns, it is subjected to further development as it drives towards an emphatic conclusion.

Ex. 6



Ex. 7



The last movement is an Epilogue marked *Propulsivo e drammatico ma non troppo*. Structurally the music is a constantly evolving dialogue between themes derived from Exx. 3 and 4, threaded together with a new theme (Ex. 8), the shape of which is determined by an array of rising sixths and thirds, first heard in the cellos at the outset.

Ex. 8



This figure holds the movement together in a series of continually evolving and overlapping variations. The ornamental turn and falling sevenths of Ex. 4 are clearly prominent. As in the first movement, there is a violent outburst culminating in a climax

with horns and xylophone to the fore. From the depths of this stark vision arises a bass clarinet that begins to reel out the characteristic shapes of Ex. 3. in inverted form. A distinctly ritual element occurs with piano, harp and percussion creating a processional tread over which Ex. 3 is heard at half-speed. A final climax in F sharp minor is heard with Ex. 3 now in its original form. The coda which follows has a sense of homecoming after a long journey, as a fragment of Ex. 3 is heard, first on a solo horn then on flute and oboe and finally on violins. Tuned percussion once more bring forward the ritual element, as if chiming at a communion service. For a moment the music is suspended in thin air, with nothing more than high violin harmonics and the hushed sound of cymbal and tam-tam. The final cadence which emphasises the Neapolitan sends the symphony into a dark space of memorial rather than a peace the certainty of which is in doubt.

With Jonathan Powell in Olomouc

On 27 December 2025, just over three months after the recording sessions for this album in Olomouc, Jonathan Powell passed away in Brighton. It is barely possible for his loved ones and the wider musical community to accommodate the shock of this event. For myself, I have lost a friend of more than twenty years' standing, a colleague in art and someone whose piano-playing inspired the concerto heard on this album. The piano part was crafted specifically for him with the knowledge of some of the composers he was most attracted to, especially Skryabin, Szymanowski and Sibelius. After the initial draft, we worked together to produce the piano part in its final version, with Jonathan suggesting subtle additions and variations, all of which I agreed to. Although the sessions have turned out to be the last time Jonathan's playing was captured in the recording studio, we had hoped to tour the concerto on the back of the release of the album. When I met Jonathan in Clapham, in south London, in November and then spoke with him in subsequent phone-calls – the last one only a few days before his death – we discussed this possibility, together with his other plans for concerts in 2026, including his upcoming concerts in Paris accompanying a violinist in the sonatas of Beethoven, and his plans to revive *English Country Tunes* by Michael Finnissy, a piece he had first played as a teenager.

In spite of his untimely death – he was 56 – and the grief that it has caused, I like to remember the day we spent before the recording sessions walking without maps or guide books around the beautiful city of Olomouc, with its historic centre of Hapsburg-era buildings. We wandered around the churches – Our Lady of the Snows, the great Cathedral of Saint Wenceslas and, a stone's throw from our hotel in Mahlerova, the Church of St Michael with its three domes representing the Trinity. We took in the Muzeum umění Olomouc, where we both agreed that Adolf Hölzel, of whom we hadn't heard, was an artist of the first rank. We wandered in and out of shops for food supplies and practised our Czech – his intermediate, mine rudimentary. And as we sat in one of the many cafés in the centre of town, we couldn't help wondering whether Gustav Mahler had sat here sipping coffee when he was in Olomouc briefly as conductor of the theatre in 1883, or whether in 1848 the young Emperor Franz Josef had passed through the main square in a gilded carriage, to the cheers of those on the terraces where we now sat.

The death of **Jonathan Powell** four days before the end of 2025 occasioned an outpouring of shock and grief around the musical world. What one friend on Facebook called his 'typically fearless programming' had made his recitals remarkable for the apparent ease and fluency with which he tackled some of the most fearsomely difficult pieces written for the piano. He made his London debut at the Purcell Room aged twenty, but devoted much of the following decade to composition (his works were performed by the Arditti Quartet, the London Sinfonietta and Nicolas Hodges) and musicology (his Ph.D. concerns the influence of Skryabin). He then undertook intensive study with Sulamita Aronovsky (previously, in his late teens, he had been guided by Denis Matthews), resulting in a shift in emphasis towards performance.



A series of CD recordings and international engagements followed. He was a passionate advocate of music from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially from Russia and eastern Europe, but was also a major proponent of contemporary music, having premiered works by Ambrosini, Dufourt, Finnissy and others. His repertoire also included much standard material (Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann). In 2009 he gave the first of his many performances of Skryabin's ten sonatas. During 2013 he toured Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* and Albéniz's *Iberia*, and 2015 featured numerous performances of Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata and Reger's Bach Variations. Other tours included the complete piano works of Xenakis, Liszt's Sonata, Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke*, Sorabji's *Opus completembalisticum* and Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues.

Solo recitals took him to the Festival Radio France Montpellier, the Elbphilharmonie (sold-out), the Raritäten der Klaviermusik am Schloss vor Husum, Vredenburg Muziekcentrum in Utrecht, across the USA, to Musica Sacra in Maastricht, the series Fundación BBVA in Bilbao and the Moscow Conservatoire. He broadcast for Radio France, Radio Netherlands, Radio Deutschland Kultur, the BBC and Czech Radio. He was a featured artist at the Jacqueline du Pré Building in Oxford, giving three annual concerts, as well as teaching and leading workshops for students. He also appeared at the Indian Summer in Levoča Festival (Slovakia) every year from its inception in 2007, as recitalist, chamber musician and soloist with orchestra. He gave master-classes in Katowice, Brno, Oxford, London, Denmark, Seattle and Darmstadt. In May 2020 he won the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritiken for his recording of Sorabji's *Sequentia cyclica*, a seven-CD set on Piano Classics. His other recordings include seven albums of Sorabji for Altarus, two volumes of the piano sonatas of John White on Convivium, eight albums for Toccata Classics (beginning with Alexander Goldenweiser, the teacher of his own teacher, Sulamita Aronovsky, and continuing with Jānis Medīņš, Egon Kornauth, Konstantin Eiges, Leonid Sabaneyev, Georgiy Conus, Grigory Krein and Martyn Harry). His other concerto recordings include Hans Winterberg for Capriccio and Franz Xaver Scharwenka for CPO.

An archive has been established at St Hilda's College, Oxford, where Jonathan Powell taught for many years, to preserve his legacy, not least to safeguard his compositions and promote their publication (his output has not yet been comprehensively catalogued, but there are at least eight piano sonatas), his non-commercial recordings, programmes and other documentary traces of this remarkable life.

David Hackbridge Johnson initially took violin lessons with Louis Rutland, piano lessons with Martin Wilson and singing lessons with Fabian Smith and Arthur Reckless, before becoming a jazz musician for fifteen years, in which capacity he appeared in festivals at Montreux, Glion and Hay-on-Wye. As a conductor and recitalist, he has specialised in performing neglected composers, among them Ina Boyle, Havergal Brian, Ruth Gipps and Joseph Holbrooke. Among his 500 or so compositions are eighteen symphonies, over a dozen tone-poems and concertos, and hundreds of songs and chamber pieces. His most recent commissions have been operatic: *Madeleine*, written for the 50th anniversary of Surrey Opera, and *Blaze of Glory!*, written for the 75th anniversary of Welsh National Opera. Currently in pre-production is a third opera, *Victim*, to a libretto by Jonathan Butcher. His poems and essays have appeared in *The Guardian*, *PN Review*, *Angel Exhaust*, *The Fortnightly Review*, and *Shearsman* magazine. He is involved in the publication of experimental poetry through The Loxham Press. He holds degrees from the Royal Academy of Music, Trinity College of Music, the University of Surrey and the University of Kingston. The last of these institutions awarded him a Ph.D. in 2016. In addition to four volumes of orchestral music on Toccata Classics, the Steinway label has issued an album of his piano music played by Lowell Liebermann. He is in his fourth season as conductor of Streatham St Bart's Chamber Orchestra.



The **Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra**, based in Olomouc, the historic capital of Moravia, is one of the leading, and oldest, symphony orchestras in the Czech Republic. Throughout its existence, it has been an irreplaceable centre of musical activities in the region.

The Moravian Philharmonic was founded immediately after the end of the Second World War, on 26 May 1945. During its development many important musicians, Czech and otherwise, played a role in its artistic formation, among them the conductors Otto Klemperer and Václav

Neumann, the violinists Josef Suk and Gidon Kremer and the cellist Pierre Fournier. Over the course of its existence, the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra has developed an extremely extensive and varied repertoire, focused mainly on the great composers of world music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although it also promotes contemporary Czech and international music, as evidenced by the performance of more than 250 new compositions. The orchestra is also known for its authentic interpretations of the classics of Czech music culture: Dvořák, Smetana, Janáček and Martinů.

The Moravian Philharmonic has a rich discography and performs at major international music festivals at home and abroad. Above all, it is a cultural institution that contributes substantially to the organisation of artistic and concert life in Olomouc and its region. It organises the Dvořák Olomouc festival and the International Organ Festival Olomouc. Its activities also include a range of educational activities for children and young people.

For Toccata Classics the Moravian Philharmonic has already recorded an album of orchestral music by the Anglo-French composer Steve Elcock: his Fourth Symphony, Viola Concerto and two shorter works (TOCC 0778).

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‘outstanding works of art. In parts of the Tenth and Thirteenth (composed respectively in 2013 and 2017) we encounter passages of great cumulative strength which no other living composer in my experience can approach. There are a number of subtle and refined passages in both Symphonies which these magnificently committed performances reveal as inevitable musical sequences. But the essential characteristic which runs throughout both works is a genuine creative spontaneity, carrying the listener forward at all times.’

—Robert Matthew-Walker, Classical Source



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Jonathan Powell in Olomouc

DAVID HACKBRIDGE JOHNSON *Orchestral Music, Volume Four*

Piano Concerto No. 3, 'After Bruno Schulz', Op. 455 (2025)

1	I Fantasy-Scherzo: <i>Moderato e misterioso</i>	31:24
2	II Waltz-Phantom: <i>Allegretto</i>	10:46
3	III March-Dreamscape: <i>Alla marcia</i>	4:22
		16:16

Symphony No. 18 in F sharp minor, Op. 438, No. 3 (2025)

4	I <i>Preludio malinconico: Sostenuto e molto cantabile</i>	38:02
5	II <i>Intermezzo mercuriale: Quasi presto</i>	12:16
6	III Scherzo-Fugue: <i>Allegro di molto e con malizia</i>	5:22
7	IV Epilogue: <i>Propulsivo e drammatico ma non troppo veloce</i>	8:28
		11:56

TT 69:27

Jonathan Powell, piano 1–3

Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra

David Hackbridge Johnson, conductor

FIRST RECORDINGS