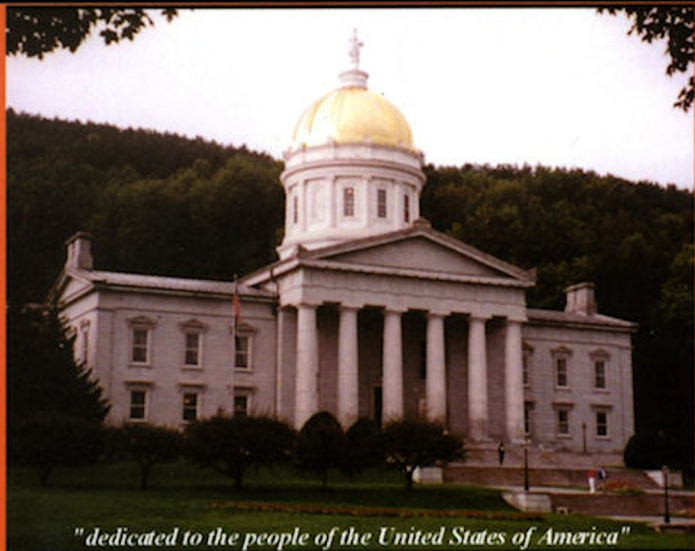


# *Arthur Bliss*

## *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*

*Trevor Barnard*

*Philharmonia Orchestra - Sir Malcolm Sargent*



*"dedicated to the people of the United States of America"*

**SIR ARTHUR BLISS (1891-1975)**  
***Concerto for Piano and Orchestra***

<b>❶</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> movement	Allegro con brio	16.40
<b>❷</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> movement	Adagietto	09.25
<b>❸</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> movement	Andante maestoso - molto vivo	11.37
<b>TOTAL PLAYING TIME (inc. pauses)</b>			<b>37.56</b>

***Trevor Barnard (piano),  
The Philharmonia Orchestra  
conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent***

*Music published by Novello & Co. Ltd.*

*Original EMI matrix nos.: 2YEA 713/4*

© **EMI Records Ltd. 1962**

*Digitally remastered – this version* © **Divine Art Ltd. 2000**

## ARTHUR BLISS (1891-1975)

The years following World War I were turbulent and exciting both politically and artistically; the crumbling of Victorian social values; the development of the jazz and popular dance culture; the growing movement for equal rights and womens' emancipation; the impact of radio and telephone on communications; the world (or at least America and Europe) was a place of invention, experiment, social rebellion and there was a kind of fervour in the arrival of new and radical schools in the visual and aural arts.

In "art" music specifically, the emergence of composers such as Ravel and Stravinsky, to name but two, demonstrated the existence of a vibrant, radical and forward-looking European musical culture, which was constantly seeking new directions and compositional styles. Indeed the impetus for the new and avant-garde became so strong that the work of many artists and composers who preferred to express their genius in more traditional forms was quite often swept underfoot, only to be rediscovered more recently.

In those heady days of the flapper and the Charleston, before the dark clouds of

Depression and then the Second World War brought despair and tragedy to many countries, London was an important international centre where new music was regularly performed. It was an ideal location for a young composer to savour the latest musical fare, to be exposed to diverse influences and to develop his own style. Here it was, in that energetic setting full of possibilities, that the young Arthur Bliss set down his roots after returning from wartime service.

In his early years, Bliss wrote a number of works which did not find their way into his official compositions list. The first work to be so honoured was *Madame Noy*, written in 1918 and first performed two years later. Written for soprano solo and small chamber ensemble, it was quickly followed by *Rout* for similar forces (plus baritone) in which the soloists vocalise "Ah" throughout, and by *Conversations* for string trio and wind.

These early works were experimental in the manner of the time and Bliss was thought by some to being at the vanguard of a new modernist movement in composition. However it was not long before Bliss had taken stock of his abilities and inspirations and established himself as a major mainstream figure in British music; his style

individual, bold and extrovert but firmly rooted in the grand romantic tradition of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

So it was that following those delicate and witty compositions, more substantial works for larger forces appeared, in particular *A Colour Symphony* (1922), *Introduction and Allegro* (1926) and *Music for Strings* (1935), which helped to establish Bliss's position of eminence. His ever-present inventiveness, within the general context of romanticism, was well-suited to the dramatic forms, and Bliss proved his ability in this arena in the oratorio *Morning Heroes* (1930), the film music to H G Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* and perhaps most of all the ballet *Checkmate*, a work strongly characteristic of the composer's style and perhaps the one by which he is still best known.

By now 46 years old, Bliss had developed a mature style which was capable of adapting to the various forms which he chose to employ – from songs and chamber music, through to orchestral scores, ballet, opera and film. In 1938 he received a commission from the British Council to write a work for the World's Fair to be held in New York. The result was the *Pianoforte Concerto*, a work with affinities to *Checkmate* but with a sublime distinction of its own. The première took place on June

10, 1939 in the Carnegie Hall, with Solomon as soloist partnered by the New York Philharmonic under Sir Adrian Boult. Perhaps because of the commission, the work is dedicated "to the people of the United States of America"; a fine gesture at a significant and troubled time, and a reflection also of the work's outgoing, bold and assured style.

Bliss was appointed Director of Music at the BBC during World War II. Knighted in 1950, he became Master of the Queen's Music in 1953, an honour which he held until his death 22 years later.

THE CONCERTO is in traditional three-movement form, very much in the grand romantic heritage previously epitomised by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Liszt, and demanding of a high level of virtuosity from the soloist. The music, highly and richly textured, has several climaxes of high drama and intensity, even in the relatively calm central movement.

That this is a composition of great depth and stature is announced immediately at the start of the opening movement, marked *Allegro con Brio* where a vivid orchestral scale, rising to a full chord, is followed by surging double octaves from the piano, which radiate out into

grand designs and then usher in the first main subject. That tune, announced by the orchestra, strides upwards in three big steps, with a subsequent decorative turn downwards, before rising still further.

The second subject, introduced by violins and flutes, in contrast stretches down just more than an octave – a motif which re-occurs throughout the concerto. Trumpets and trombones then appear in a bright fanfare, which also plays an important part in the movement's development, whereas the fourth subject, a fairly quiet tune for strings, does not re-appear until the recapitulation. The piano part incorporates and supports these elements in a fascinating and intriguing fashion, bring all together in the final cadenza and leaving the orchestra to end the movement with the fanfare.

The middle movement (*Adagietto*) begins in an atmosphere of calm and contemplation, the piano declaring a simple rising scale followed by a concise two-bar phrase. The main theme begins with that downward swoop of just over an octave which was prominent in the first movement, and which is joined in due course by a significant short phrase, very distinctive and memorable – a triplet then a duplet, repeated, and followed by a succession of sighing cadences. Having

been somewhat energised by this theme, the movement subsides once again into calm with another quiet melody.

A sustained trombone chord underlays a dramatic spreading pattern for bass strings at the beginning of the last movement introduction for which the marking is *Andante Maestoso*. The heavy pace quickens substantially and the main movement begins with the piano declaring a rondo theme with a galloping rhythm which propels the music forward almost relentlessly, interrupted only by a brief interlude in which the calmer music of the introduction re-appears. Eventually however the pace settles, and the broad note patterns of the bass strings which opened the movement emerge as a fine spacious melody, which sustains the work until its conclusion.

## TREVOR BARNARD

British born Australian pianist, Trevor Barnard studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London at a very young age and then took several years of private tuition with Herbert Fryer, a student of Busoni. At the age of sixteen he was awarded the ARCM Diploma in Piano, and later won a full scholarship to the Royal College of Music, London.

Between 1967 and 1972 Trevor Barnard lived in the USA, where he was a faculty member of the New England Conservatory in Boston and Pianist-in-Residence to Boston University Radio. He undertook many concert and TV engagements in Boston and New York City. He moved to Melbourne in 1972 and now lectures full-time in the Faculty of Music at The University of Melbourne.

As a concert artist Trevor Barnard has appeared with several of the top British orchestras. In Australia he has toured and broadcast frequently.

His discography began with the Bliss Piano Concerto re-issued on this CD (originally issued on His Master's Voice), and a "best seller" solo album for the World Record Club **AN INTRODUCTION TO PIANO MUSIC**. American composer Richard St. Clair, and Australian composers Geoffrey Allen, Michael Bertram and Felix Werder, have written works especially for him. The Felix Werder work is featured on Trevor's recording of J.S. Bach transcriptions and modern Australian piano music, (*Divine Art 2-5005*). Also for Divine Art Trevor recorded the Bliss Piano Sonata (somewhat of a companion to the Concerto) and the 24 Preludes of Busoni (*Divine Art 2-5011*).

Trevor Barnard has published two books - **PEDALLING AND OTHER REFLECTIONS ON PIANO TEACHING**, and, **A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF SOLO PIANO REPERTOIRE AT TERTIARY LEVEL**. He has also contributed a paper on basic pedalling techniques to the leading U.S. keyboard journal **CLAVIER**, and further papers are scheduled for publication.

Trevor is a regular reviewer for the **AUSTRALIAN MUSIC TEACHER** journal, an examiner for the Australian Music Examinations Board, and an adviser on the piano performance requirements for the Victorian Certificate of Education. He is also an experienced adjudicator, and, along with many eisteddfodau, has adjudicated the ABC Young Performers' and the Hephzibah Menuhin Memorial competitions on a number of occasions.

The recording used here was originally made by EMI Records Ltd in 1962, when the soloist was 24. Whilst the sound quality was excellent for its day, the recording included a large number of extraneous and unwanted noises. The master tape has been digitally re-mastered to a high degree by *Tonmeister* Leslie Craythorn after re-equalisation by Ralph Dagleish, and we now feel it presents this fine historic performance in the best

possible sound. The recording was highly acclaimed on its initial release in 1962; it was then included in EMI's set of Twentieth Century British Piano Concertos (HMV SLS5080). Reviewing this reissue in *Gramophone*, Robert Layton commented that Barnard "copes with the formidable piano part with sympathy and conviction". At that time (1977) grand romantic works like this were somewhat out of fashion; the inevitable reaction against the modernist and avant-garde has meant that such fine compositions are once again seen as masterpieces of their genre.

*Notes by Stephen Sutton*

*With acknowledgement to Scott Goddard who provided the notes for the original LP issue on which some of the above is based.*

*Cover photograph:*

The Vermont State Capitol,  
Montpelier, VT, USA.

© *Stephen Sutton*

WARNING: Copyright subsists in all recordings issued under this label. Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying, or re-recording thereof in any manner whatsoever will constitute an infringement of such copyright. In the United Kingdom, licences for the use of recordings for public performance may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd., 1, Upper James Street, London W1R 3HG.

## Also available by **Trevor Barnard:**

**Divine Art DDA 25005**  
**Bach transcriptions &**  
**Modern Australian piano music**

**Divine Art DDA 25011**  
**Bliss: Piano Sonata**  
**Busoni: 24 Preludes**

**Divine Art DDA 25017**  
**'Blue Wrens' - new piano music**  
**from Australia**

**Diversions DDV 24125**  
**'A Piano Odyssey'**

DIVINE ART  
RECORDINGS  
GROUP

[www.divineartrecords.com](http://www.divineartrecords.com)

ddv 24106



LC 12899



**Sir Arthur Bliss**

© © 2000 Divine Art Ltd.