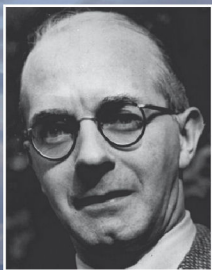


# Erik Chisholm



## Music for piano

Elegies : Peter Pan Suite  
Sonatina no. 4  
Suites nos 1, 2 & 3

## Volume 7

Murray McLachlan

## ERIK CHISHOLM - Music for piano, volume 7

### Elegies

- |    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 1. | No. 1: after <i>Dàn Liughair</i> ('A Collection of Highland Airs' no. 120)  | [0.53] |
| 2. | No. 2: after <i>Tha mo ghruaidhean air preasadh</i><br>( 'A Collection of Highland Airs' no. 7) (first version)     | [2.12] |
| 3. | No. 2 (second version)  | [1.50] |
| 4. | No. 3: after <i>Gur muldach tha mi 's mi gun mhacnus, gun mhanran</i><br>( 'A Collection of Highland Airs' no. 123) | [2.15] |
| 5. | No. 4: based on <i>Dàn Liughair</i>   | [1.47] |

### Peter Pan Suite

[9.59]

- |     |                    |        |
|-----|--------------------|--------|
| 6.  | I. Peter           | [2.17] |
| 7.  | II. Wendy          | [2.38] |
| 8.  | III. The Crocodile | [1.35] |
| 9.  | IV. Tinkerbell     | [1.18] |
| 10. | V. Captain Hook    | [2.11] |

### E Praeterita: Sonatina no. 4

- |     |                |        |
|-----|----------------|--------|
| 11. | First movement | [1.46] |
|-----|----------------|--------|

### Suite no. 1

[18.22]

- |     |                                      |        |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 12. | I. Caprice: <i>Waltz tempo</i>       | [3.02] |
| 13. | II. Feuillet d'album: <i>Andante</i> | [3.23] |
| 14. | III. <i>Scherzo</i>                  | [4.09] |
| 15. | IV. <i>Waltz</i>                     | [3.49] |
| 16. | V. <i>Moto perpetuo</i>              | [3.59] |

Suite no. 2

[23.21]

17.	I. Prelude: <i>Presto</i>	[5.09]
18.	II. Caprice: <i>Allegro scherzando</i>	[3.39]
19.	III. "Chopsticks" – <i>Theme</i>	[0.45]
20.	<i>Variation 1</i>	[0.38]
21.	<i>Variation 2</i>	[0.25]
22.	<i>Variation 3</i>	[0.48]
23.	<i>Variation 4</i>	[0.22]
24.	<i>Variation 5</i>	[0.31]
25.	<i>Variation 6</i>	[0.33]
26.	<i>Variation 7</i>	[0.42]
27.	<i>Variation 8</i>	[1.36]
28.	IV. Intermezzo: <i>Moderato sempre staccato</i>	[3.51]
29.	V. Finale: <i>Jig</i>	[4.22]

Suite no. 3

30.	<i>Ballet</i>	[6.08]
	Total playing time:	[68.45]

MURRAY McLACHLAN piano

## Erik Chisholm (1904-1965)

### Ave

This is to be the last in the series of the complete solo piano works of Erik Chisholm and, to a certain extent, represents a tying up of loose ends, to be listened to in the context of the whole series.<sup>1</sup> That is not to diminish the particular pleasures contained in the *Suites*, which were completed between June and August of 1923, when Chisholm was only nineteen; or in the unaffected childishness of the *Peter Pan Suite*. But these are all light pieces, and Chisholm's deeper thoughts are represented here only by the *Elegies* and the *Fourth Sonatina*, itself no more than a single, though very fine, movement.

However, even within these limitations, the virtuosity and originality of much of Chisholm's piano writing is very much in evidence, and this is perhaps the place to look back over the whole series. It is also the time to acknowledge the people who have made it possible, and this has been done at the end of the booklet notes.

Taking Erik Chisholm's piano music as a whole, there is one consistent element throughout, and that is his own outstanding pianism. It is most obviously in evidence in the great virtuosic pieces, such as the *Sonata in A – An Riobain Dearg* (Volume 1) and the *Nocturnes: Night Song of the Bards* (Volume 6), and not to forget the two piano concertos, soon to be issued on the Hyperion label. But it is also present in the very simplest pieces, such as the *Scottish Airs for Children* (Volume 1), or the appropriately titled *Cameos* (Volumes 4 and 5). Music with such variety of colour, texture and technique, but making no undue technical demands, can only have been composed by someone profoundly conversant with all aspects of piano playing.

Chisholm had, of course, lived and worked with the outstanding Russian pianist, Leff Pouishnoff, for many months (see Volume 3), and had given Scottish premières of such demanding works as the Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition* and the Bartók *Piano Concerto Number 1*. Right up until the Second World War, he was performing regularly for *The Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music*, which he had himself set up in 1930. For that memorable, and unparalleled

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<sup>1</sup> Unless current research work uncovers sufficient previously unknown material for an eighth volume – at present this appears very unlikely.

series, Chisholm performed Szymanowski to Szymanowski, and Schmitt to Schmitt, accompanied Hindemith in the latter's own works, played *secondo* to Casella, and discussed the techniques employed in Bartók's first two piano concertos with Bartók himself. Readers interested in following up the programming of the Active Society will find more information in the present writer's critical biography of Chisholm, *Erik Chisholm, Scottish Modernist 1904-1965* (Boydell & Brewer 2009).

While it is clear that Chisholm was always destined to be a composer, that does not mean that a career as a virtuoso was necessarily closed to him: but at some point, he must have decided, or at least accepted, that he was not going to pursue a solo career to the exclusion of anything else. When that was is not known. Perhaps it simply became a reality as other interests intervened. There were many other interests.

Although his academic training came late and seems to have been rather easy-going, many of the pieces in this series show that he took great interest in music of the past, both Scottish and European. The *Sonatinas*, based upon Renaissance lute music (Volumes 3, 4, 5 and 7), and the *Straloch* and *Dunedin Suites* (Volumes 1 and 6) based upon early Scottish lute music and dance forms, demonstrate a profound feeling for the idioms which inspire them.

Most significant of all, however, is the influence of the traditional music of the Scottish Highlands. It is specifically the Highlands that matter. The prevalence of pentatonic melody, the high incidence of complex decoration in both vocal and instrumental music, the wide-ranging nature of many of the vocal melodies, the characteristic energies of the dance forms – jig, reel and strathspey, and the influence of the bagpipe drone, all affected Chisholm's manner but, at the same time, were radically developed from his primary source – the Patrick MacDonald *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* of 1784. Not that MacDonald was his sole source. He consulted many others, including Alexander Campbell's *Albyn's Anthology* of 1816 and 1818, and a variety of sources for *piobaireachd* (*ceòl mòr*) which enabled him to explore that unique genre with a breadth of knowledge unmatched at the time by any classical musician. It was this genre which, more than any other, led him to develop his own virtuosic style of embellishment, while also frequently underpinning the structure of his music.

A parallel influence of the Highland music of Poland provoked Szymanowski to develop his own striking pianistic style, and there is some justice in the comparisons drawn between the two composers' piano works. It would be an interesting exercise to examine the extent of that parallelism with respect to the Scottish Highland and Polish Highland traditions. Scotland's connections with Poland were very extensive in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, both nations being

major players in the Baltic trade as well as sharing considerable involvement in the Swedish wars. Chisholm's sources, at least, were frequently rooted in that period. That is work for the future. This CD begins with the past.

## Elegies

**1** The first Elegy is based upon tune 120 in the Reverend Patrick MacDonald's *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* . . . published in 1784. This was a source for many of Chisholm's pieces, not only throughout this series, but in other works such as *The Forsaken Mermaid*. The title of the tune is *Dàn Liughair* and MacDonald describes it as "An ancient air". It was probably used for singing the lay associated with King Lir, one of the chief figures of Ossianic and Fenian legend, though texts surviving from MacDonald's time do not fit the metre. Chisholm takes this stark and powerful pentatonic melody, marks it *Lento maestoso* and *pesante*, and almost brandishes it in our faces. The prevalence of bare fifths and many octave doublings, and even its very brevity, are singularly uncompromising.

**2 and 3** *Tha mo ghruaidhean air preasadh – My cheeks are furrowed* (MacDonald 7) is the title of the tune which is at the heart of the second Elegy, of which two versions are given here. The translation of the title is as given in Patrick MacDonald, but is better understood as "my brow" or "my countenance" is furrowed. The repeated right hand chords are obsessive, and the hemi-demi-semiquaver runs indeed furrow the dark surface of the music. It is these runs which take initial precedence in the second version, but the two work together successfully as a single and extraordinary meditation. The original tune is itself of great interest, but what Chisholm develops from it is striking evidence of his uninhibited creativity.

**4** The third Elegy makes use of another MacDonald air (123) – *Gur muladach tha mi 's mi gun mhacnus, gun mhanran – Sad am I, without mirth or song*. Chisholm has set it in the form of a slow  $\frac{3}{4}$  march, and marked it *Lento* and *espressivo e lamentoso*. The strength of the central climax and its devolution into the resignation of the march are an appropriate development of the air. To be without song in the Highland tradition is almost to be beyond sorrow.

**5** The fourth Elegy seems to be derived from the same tune as the first, emphasising a four-note descending pentatonic phrase, and equally declamatory in its manner, with rapid rhetorical gestures, eventually subsiding like a storm at sea.

## Peter Pan Suite

This suite was composed in London in 1924, twenty years after J.M.Barrie's classic was first produced. Barrie was a fellow Scot, and his interest in the supernatural went deeper than the world of Victorian faery, touching on his own sense of lost childhood, and also on the darker side of fantasy, coupled with a good deal of irony and satire that is often overlooked. Many years later, in his modernist operas, Chisholm found scope for social comment of this nature, but at the age of twenty he was hardly ready for that and, instead, honours the world of childhood without any undertones. But if he does not quite capture the complexity of Barrie's work, he deftly avoids overstatement and sentimentality.

**6** The opening *Allegro Scherzando* represents Peter. His music is, of course, capricious and beguiling.

**7** To begin with, Wendy's music is sweet and gentle with its parallel intervals and impressionistic moments, but her tune is treated canonically and belies its initial simplicity.

**8** The Crocodile is to move *laboriously*, which only enhances the sinister nature of the music with its crawling oscillating semitones and its heavy-legged bass line.

**9** As for Tinker Bell, her high-pitched arpeggios sound out her name; but the centre of the movement is a brief sorrowful lullaby, marked *She sighs for Peter*. It might almost have been culled from the pages of the MacDonald collection.

**10** Captain Hook strides "roughly and quickly" across the deck, trying to recover his sense of "good form" while singing "till it roughly goes down and you go down to Davy Jones below" – as Chisholm has entered it on the score. The crocodile, fortunately, gets him in the end, as is proper for a public school boy who has gone to the bad.

## **11** Sonatina No.4

*E Praeterita* (From the Past) is a group of six sonatinas which Chisholm had completed in 1947. Nos. 1 and 2 are on Volume 3, No. 3 on Volume 4, and Nos. 5 and 6 on Volume 5.

No.4 originally had three movements, one of which is lost, and the placing of the other, *The Jew's Dance* (included as part of Sonatina no. 5 on Volume 5), is suspect. Both pieces were almost certainly found by Chisholm in Davison and Apel's *Historical Anthology of Music* first published in 1946. The reason for that certainty is that Chisholm's version of *The Jew's Dance* reproduces Davison and

Apel's quite extraordinary mis-transcription of the original lute piece. For these reasons, only the first movement is recorded here. It is based on a lute dance (a *Hoftanz* and *Hupf auff*) by Hans Neusiedler (1508-1563). The movement is a beauty, and as fresh as the day – but then so is its original. In truth, it would be fair to say that this is more of a transcription than an original composition. However, on the piano, Chisholm has the chance to have the melodic material swap hands, and is able to enrich the textures, which he does masterfully, and with no more abandon than is proper – and it would be a remarkable lutenist who could pluck his strings with the glorious rapidity that the piano offers us here.

## 12-16 Suite No.1

Clarity and wit are perhaps the most salient characteristics of these three Suites, with their largely two-part textures and frequent use of staccato. Occasionally prolix, there are nonetheless many passages which bring a sudden delight.

The “Caprice” [12] that opens the first Suite is in waltz tempo, but its centre is as capricious as Peter Pan. It is followed by a “Feuillet D’Album” (Leaf from an Album) [13] – a thoughtful *Andante* with a scurrying middle section, suggesting scattered thoughts or images on the page. The ensuing “Scherzo” [14] exploits rapid alternation of the hands – a technique masterfully handled by McEwen in his virtuosic piano piece *La Rosière*, composed a few years earlier. Chisholm’s style here is more conventional, but entertaining enough.

A “Waltz” follows [15], arranged from a “Suite” for *Flute, Clarinet, Violoncello, and Triangle*, again undistinguished in idiom, but reaching out well beyond salon music. A fleet, if loquacious “Moto Perpetuo” [16] concludes the Suite.

## 17-29 Suite No.2

Much of the second Suite was also arranged from the “Suite” for *Flute, Clarinet, Violoncello, and Triangle*. This certainly applies to the Caprice, the Intermezzo and the Finale. Such is the facility of the arrangement that one might have as readily supposed that the quartet would have been derived from the piano piece. In the piano score, occasional indications of which instruments were used would suggest that the piano pieces came first, for the entries otherwise serve no useful function.



The opening “Prelude” [17] is marked *Presto* and to be played “very lightly”. It is indeed playful, and ends with a nursery tune, similar to the opening of the Leopold Mozart Toy Symphony. In many ways its character is a clue to the nature of all three Suites. They toy with convention, but without doing more than raise an eyebrow now and again. That is their charm as well as their limitation.

The second movement [18] is an *Allegro Scherzando* “Caprice”, this time round, a more sober and lyrical affair of clean counterpoint, but with a central section of delicate and unpredictable interjections, and a rough valedictory gesture. “Chopsticks” [19] follows. Its relationship with Euphemia Allen’s original is vestigial, and it is followed by a series of initially easy-going variations [20-25]. A more assertive mood prevails in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> variations [26-27] and the opening makes a brief reappearance.

The fourth movement [28] is an “Intermezzo” *moderato sempre staccato*. It comes across more as an exercise in simple pianism than an inspired piece of music and, as with many of these movements, its sense of direction is far from clear, and some editing would have done it no injury. The jig tempo “Finale” [29] has its own quirky lyric fluency – but that is the main defect of these suites – despite their occasional mild harmonic subtleties and clarity of texture, they are too fluent, too easy, and are at their most effective in small doses.

### 30 Suite No.3

The *Suite No.3* consists solely of a “Ballet”, light-footed and full of quirky changes of pace and cross-rhythms which, nonetheless, are all contained within a steady  $\frac{3}{8}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$ . It has its own strange poetry of motion, and it is entertaining to imagine what kind of a dance might have been in Chisholm’s mind; certainly a teasing one, and surely feminine from start to finish.

We leave Chisholm’s piano music then, not with grand gestures, modernist assertions, Scottish determination or lyricism; but with unaffected, easy-going and undemanding pleasures: which says a great deal about the man that might otherwise be missed through exclusive concentration on his major works. Chisholm’s strengths lay in many fields. This one is full of spring flowers and, although its ground has been well tilled, it is as easy and pleasant to traverse as any musical meadow of its day.

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The young Erik Chisholm



*Erik Chisholm*

## Vale

At the conclusion of this major series of recordings, it is proper to make some acknowledgements.

First comes Morag Chisholm, the composer's eldest daughter, the person who set up the Erik Chisholm Trust with her own money, who, as Chairman, has guided it from its inception, and whose energies, support and enthusiasm have done so much to help restore Erik Chisholm's reputation as a composer to much wider recognition.

Then there is Murray McLachlan. Murray has championed this music from early days, familiarising himself with the variety of Chisholm's idiom as no-one else has done, applying an almost exhaustive repertoire of pianistic skills to the astonishing variety of colour and texture of Chisholm's palette. Murray has also had to acquire new skills in relation to the rich and complex embellishments derived by Chisholm from the classical music of the Highland bagpipes. This is not simply a matter of learning how to articulate a unique repertoire of so-called "grace notes" with the greatest of rapidity and incisiveness; it also requires an understanding of their complex role in the melodic and harmonic structures to which they are applied, and of which they are a fundamental element.

Such apparent complexities are often allied to stark simplicities. Chisholm makes frequent use of Scottish material, including tunes which, superficially, might seem so short and basic as to be mere fragments. But it is their very purity and simplicity which informs their great beauty, and which require the utmost respect, in many ways making the greatest of demands upon a pianist's sensitivities. To these, Murray McLachlan has proved himself profoundly sensitive.

The two recording companies involved in this series and represented in particular by Jim Pattison and Stephen Sutton, also deserve no small praise. They have taken on a venture of a kind that was necessarily speculative in its outcome, and the excellent reviews for CD after CD, reflect their commitment as well as that of McLachlan.

Kathryn Page as Music Producer and Editor, and Alasdair Pettinger as Information Manager at the Scottish Music Centre, have both been important contributors. Then there is Michael Tuffin, whose catalogue research and forthcoming catalogue *raisonnée* are truly remarkable; and Michael Jones, who has proof-read many of these works with a pianist's eye as well as with his general musicianship; Allan Stephenson who has typeset much of this music working from Chisholm's originals, which are a very mixed bag in terms of legibility; and Lesley Hart, Head Librarian of the Manuscripts & Archives Library at University of Cape Town, along with Julie Strauss, who is

the Subject Librarian at the South African College of Music, have been consistent and invaluable supporters for several years now.

Finally, it has been my privilege to write the liner notes for the entire series. It has been an education. For the past thirty years and more I have been researching, lecturing, publishing and broadcasting on all aspects of Scotland's music; but if there is one Scottish composer whose output has made me return again and again to material I thought familiar, and made me hear that music anew, that composer is Erik Chisholm. In another life, I am a poet, and I trust I will be forgiven this once for intruding the following, with Morag Chisholm's permission, by way of my own homage to the man whose varied genius has been so splendidly revealed in this outstanding series of recordings.

## ERIK CHISHOLM

You premiered Berlioz and Mozart;  
played beside Casella; page-turned for Bartók  
and entertained him in your home, the pair of you  
sharing pianistic skills and love of your traditions.  
You performed Szymanowski for the man himself,  
and rescued Walton when he lost the place  
in his own music; accompanied Paul Hindemith,  
and then played Schmitt to Schmitt.

But you were no outsider, for when you sat beside  
them,  
they sat with you, heard how you played, and  
learnt from you, both of your native music and of  
each other –  
for it was you, uniquely, who brought such men  
together.

Well, you and I have been together now  
for several years. As well we never met.  
You were so far ahead – besides, we would have  
fought,  
fighting the powers that be, that still  
obstruct our shared ideals.

Giving more to others than you ever gave yourself,  
you died too young and left your music  
lying for years in trunks. Such riches have emerged –  
those tiny perfect gems of Scottish airs,  
blue as the brightest waters of the lochs;  
and the ennobling echoes, as the piobaireachd  
sounds  
“savage and shrill”: necklaces of notes  
as sensual as the East; crowns of concertos;  
operas formed from forbidding myths  
and skulls of stark realities;  
and works whose craft is in their mysteries,  
dark and profound.

Your ashes have been scattered none knows where,  
but should there be existence after death, yours  
would be hunting  
through the wild star-scape of universal mind,  
chasing a restless muse, that you  
might embrace her loveliness once more,  
no matter what, if anything, she wore.

John Purser ©2010



**Murray McLachlan in the Baronial Hall, Chetham's School of Music**

## The Pianist

“Murray McLachlan is a pianist with a virtuoso technique and a sure sense of line. His timing and phrasing are impeccable, and his tone – full but unforced in the powerful passages, gentle and restrained in the more lyrical – is a perpetual delight” (BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE)

As a concert artist Murray McLachlan has received outstanding critical acclaim for intelligent and sensitive interpretations and superb technical ability. His prolific discography, much of it for Divine Art and Dunelm, has received long-standing international recognition and includes over thirty commercial recordings, including the complete sonatas of Beethoven and Prokofiev and many rarities.

McLachlan’s repertoire includes over 40 concertos and he has appeared as soloist with most of the leading UK orchestras. His recognition has been far-reaching, bringing many invitations to perform abroad. In recent seasons his engagements have included performances in the USA, Scandinavia, South Africa, Poland, Byelorussia and Norway. In 1997 he was awarded a knighthood by the Order of St John of Jerusalem in recognition of his services to music in Malta. In 2003 he performed the complete cycle of 32 Beethoven Sonatas to critical acclaim in Manchester, and in 2004 his Wigmore Hall Erik Chisholm Centenary Recital and subsequent national tour attracted superlatives in the national press.



His intense schedule continued in 2006 with a 'Shostakovich Centenary Recital tour', sponsored by the UK Shostakovich Society and including 15 concerts all over the UK. This included a return to the Wigmore Hall in September.

Murray McLachlan has given first performances of works by many composers, including Martin Butler, Ronald Stevenson, Charles Camilleri, Michael Parkin and even Beethoven! Recordings of contemporary music have won numerous accolades, including full star ratings, as well as 'rosette' and 'key recording' status in the latest Penguin Guide to CDs, and 'Disc of the month' and 'Record of the month' *MusicWeb* and *The Glasgow Herald*. He is Head of keyboard at Chetham's School of Music and tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, as well as Artistic Director both of the Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists, an event which attracts outstanding musicians annually from all over the world, and the Manchester International Concerto Competition for Young Pianists, which began in 2007.

His website can be found at [www.murraymclachlan.co.uk](http://www.murraymclachlan.co.uk)

### **The Erik Chisholm Trust**

The Erik Chisholm Trust, a registered charity, was established in 2001 to promote Chisholm's music and to achieve recognition of his contribution to the musical culture of Great Britain. It has supported the making of this recording – and others – as well as other "live" events in 2004, the Centenary Year.

For more information and continuing news, visit [www.erikchisholm.com](http://www.erikchisholm.com)

**Other recordings by Murray McLachlan from the Divine Art group**  
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Diversions ddv24148	<b>Aspirations: music by Marcus Blunt</b>
Divine Art dda21371	<b>Ronald Stevenson Piano Music (3CD)</b>





Murray McLachlan gives a masterclass with Solborg Valdimarsdottir at the fourth Chetham's International Summer School in 2004

The music on this CD was recorded in the Whiteley Hall, Chetham's School of Music, Manchester, by kind permission of the Director of Music.

Elegies, Sonatina no. 4: May 30, 2006; Suites nos 1 and 3: December 18, 2006

Peter Pan Suite: December 19, 2006; Suite no. 2: December 20, 2006

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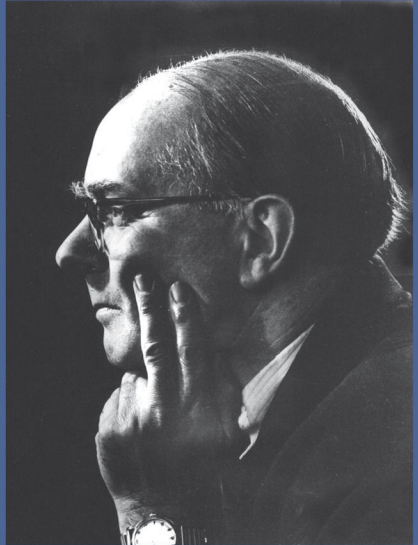
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Erik Chisholm



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