



ELISABETH LUTYENS
PIANO WORKS
VOLUME 1

MARTIN JONES
PIANO

Elisabeth Lutyens (1906–1983)

Piano Works Volume 1

Martin Jones *piano*

About Martin Jones:

'You could hardly wish for a more sympathetic and scintillating soloist.'
Gramophone

'A British virtuoso with ideas and an enterprising repertoire.'
Financial Times

Seven Preludes for Piano, Op. 126

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Whose name was writ in water | [2:49] |
| 2. Night Winds | [4:19] |
| 3. Starlight | [1:14] |
| 4. Tenebrae | [1:41] |
| 5. Strange thunders from the potency of song | [2:32] |
| 6. Labyrinths | [3:33] |
| 7. The shifting of mighty winds that blow hither
and thither all the changing thoughts of man | [3:52] |

8. The Great Seas, Op. 132 * [17:25]

Five Impromptus, Op. 116 *

- | | |
|-------------------|--------|
| 9. Impromptu I | [3:20] |
| 10. Impromptu II | [1:35] |
| 11. Impromptu III | [2:17] |
| 12. Impromptu IV | [1:13] |
| 13. Impromptu V | [1:51] |

14. Plenum I, Op. 86 * [12:54]

15. La natura dell'Acqua, Op. 154 [6:54]

Total playing time [67:39]

** world premiere recordings*

Elisabeth Lutyens: Piano Works, Volume 1

Elisabeth Lutyens was born on 9 July 1906, daughter of the great architect Sir Edwin Lutyens and his aristocratic wife Lady Emily Bulwer-Lytton. By the time she was ten years old, Lutyens had decided that she wanted to be a composer and in 1922, in her mid-teens, she went to Paris to study at the École Normale de Musique, before embarking the following year on a trip to India with her mother. She was subsequently a student at the Royal College of Music where her teachers included the organist-composer Harold Darke. Her musical outlook was always an international one, and she was particularly drawn to the innovations of Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School. Even so, in an interview published in 1981, she told her pupil Robert Saxton that she felt 'part of European culture, but it was the Purcell Fantasias which started me off on the idea of serial music, rather than Schoenberg.'

After a short and unsuccessful marriage to the singer Ian Glennie, in 1940 she became the partner of Edward Clark (they married in 1942). Clark had been a Schoenberg pupil and from 1922 until 1952, he was much involved in the International Society for Contemporary Music. At the BBC in the early 1930s, Clark was responsible for

programming many important British premieres, and before resigning in 1936, he brought composers such as Schoenberg and Bartók to work with the BBC. His influence as an immensely knowledgeable promoter of European avant-garde music remained strong – and certainly had a lasting impact on Lutyens who began to flourish as a composer of daring individuality, writing music that was entirely unlike that of her British peers. One of her first pieces to attract serious notice was *Ô saisons, ô châteaux*, a cantata for soprano, strings, harp, mandolin and guitar (on a poem by Rimbaud), composed in 1946 and given its premiere at the Wigmore Hall in February 1947. It was her first major twelve-tone work, characterised by a mixture of Webern-like refinement and an ardour that refutes any charge of her serial music being dry or academic.

Naturally combative, never afraid of confrontation, and always happy to provoke controversy, it was Lutyens who coined the phrase 'cowpat music' (at a lecture given to the Dartington Summer School) to describe the works of Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bax, Finzi and others, grumbling about their 'folky-wolky melodies on the cor anglais.' But as well as standing proud as a vigorous and defiant proponent of uncompromisingly modernist music, Lutyens also needed to

earn a living. To that end, she began to compose film music. Her first venture was a 1948 spy film, *Penny and The Pownall Case* (featuring a young Christopher Lee), but her greatest successes came with scores for Hammer horror films such as *Never Take Sweets from a Stranger* (1960) and *Paranoiac* (1963), as well as *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* (made by Amicus Productions in 1965). She also wrote the music for the science-fiction film *The Earth Dies Screaming* (1964). Lutyens's own favourite among her film scores was another Amicus horror film, *The Skull* (1965). Its poster promised that 'When the skull strikes, you'll scream!' and Lutyens's music plays a significant part in ratcheting up the blood-curdling tension. While her film music isn't as radical as her concert works, it nevertheless brought challenging musical modernism into the cinema.

Quincunx, for soprano and baritone soloists with a large orchestra (including a quartet of Wagner tubas) was one of her outstanding concert works from the same period. Written in 1960 and first performed at the Cheltenham Festival on 12 July 1962, with BBC forces conducted by Norman Del Mar. Though it was recorded at the time, it is shocking to note that in spite of its enthusiastic reception at the premiere,

there was no live performance of *Quincunx* in London until 1999. Other important pieces were similarly neglected including *De amore*, a setting of Chaucer poems composed in 1957 but only given its first performance in 1973, at the Proms. *And Suddenly It's Evening* (1966) was more fortunate. Commissioned by the BBC and first performed in March 1967, it was given again at the Proms later the same year and repeated in 1974 and 1976. Lutyens's music was admired by William Glock, Controller of Music at the BBC from 1959 to 1972, but there were relatively few performances. One reason may have been Lutyens's personality – she was often belligerent and became increasingly embittered – but starting in the 1950s her importance was recognised by a number of younger composers. Though she was initially terrified of teaching composition, she needed the income. Among the first to study with her was Malcolm Williamson who was drawn to 'the one composer who, as the smoke of Dunkirk cleared away, was thinking in world terms: she had mentally crossed the Channel.' Richard Rodney Bennett soon followed, while others – though not her pupils – gravitated towards her, including Peter Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr. In later years, she taught Brian Elias, Alison Bauld and Robert Saxton.

Lutyens wrote for the piano throughout her career, but the music on the present disc all dates from the last decade of her life. As she told Robert Saxton in 1981, by this time she was resigned to composing 'for myself, for my friends and to pass the time'. **Plenum I, Op. 86** is the first of a set of four pieces for different instrumental combinations written between 1972 and 1974 (*Plenum II* is for oboe and thirteen instruments, *Plenum III* for string quartet and *Plenum IV* for organ duet). *Plenum I* is dated London, May 1972. The score has no bar lines and the music is punctuated by pauses and silences, as well as making occasional use of extended techniques such as plucking or stopping the strings by hand. In her chapter on 'Contemporary British Composers' in *Women and Music: A History*, Catherina Roma wrote that the freer notation 'marks a departure in Lutyens's piano compositions', adding that 'the tone rows stated in the first half of the piece are restated in retrograde from the work's central point, an example of the palindrome form Lutyens frequently uses.' *Plenum I* was first performed in 1972 by Katharina Wolpe. As Lutyens herself explained, the title is derived from the Latin 'Plenum' (fullness), 'implying Plenum Spatium – a space completely filled with matter ... In musical terms, silence filled, emptied, and refilled with sound.'

The **Five Impromptus, Op. 116**, were commissioned by Roger Woodward and composed in 1977. Woodward seems never to have played them, and the first performance only took place in 2018, given by Nicolas Hodges at the Wigmore Hall. Reviewing this concert, Andrew Clements in *The Guardian* wrote that the Impromptus were 'typically supple, gritty miniatures, notated without bar lines to emphasise their rhythmic freedom, and only occasionally touching down on solid tonal ground. The sequence perhaps traces the shape of a compressed sonata, with a discursive opening movement of accelerations and slowings-down, and a brief succession of quiet chords functioning as a central slow episode. But nothing is wasted and every gesture is pared down to its functional minimum.'

Lutyens wrote her **Seven Preludes, Op. 126**, in 1978. As she told Robert Saxton a few years earlier, 'I prefer French clarity. I dislike German expressionism particularly.' That preference for French lucidity finds an echo in the Preludes which owe something to the influence of Debussy. Commissioned by Jeremy Brown and first performed by him at the Wigmore Hall in September 1978, the Preludes have descriptive subtitles – placed at the end of each piece, like their Debussy model. But in the case of Lutyens's pieces, these subtitles are linked by references

to the poet John Keats. The first, '...whose name was writ in water', alludes to the inscription of Keats's grave in Rome, while two others are quotations of lines from Keats's 1816 poem *Sleep and Poetry*: 'Strange thunders from the potency of song' (No. 5) and 'The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow / Hither and thither all the changing thoughts / Of man' (No. 7). 'Tenebrae' is elegiac and 'Starlight' seems to glitter with Impressionistic piano colours, while 'Night Winds' and 'Labyrinths' are more purely descriptive, but the fifth prelude, 'Strange thunders', is notable for its aggressively sustained momentum and energy.

The composer Michael Finnissey wrote that Lutyens's piano writing 'is, above all, extremely sensual. That sensuality includes violence, darkness and pain as much as it does delicacy and fluidity.' It was Finnissey himself who gave the first performance of **The Great Seas, Op. 132**, on 18 December 1979 at the British Music Information Centre in London. The piano writing here has more freedom and expansiveness than in some of Lutyens's earlier piano pieces: the note rows were less closely tied to close-knit formal structures with the result that the music seems to have greater flexibility.

La Natura dell'Acqua, Op. 154, is Lutyens's

last work for piano, composed in 1981. One of its most remarkable features is the use of silence, and the refining of ideas down to their bare essentials. In *La Natura dell'Acqua*, silence is used as a carefully notated musical device: some silent bars are given their own time-signatures, or are marked to have an *accelerando* within them. As for Lutyens's overall aim in the piece, she likened it to paintings by artists at the end of their lives. She explained this to Mary Blume in an interview for the *International Herald Tribune*: 'If you look at five paintings Turner did of the same subject, the first is lush and naturalistic, the one he did late in life you can hardly see what it is. It's like late Cézanne. I've noticed that with old age – with certain exceptions – people know what to leave out. There is just the skeleton.' What Lutyens offers in this piece is a musical equivalent of this: in places the musical ideas themselves are stripped down to a single line in a work that seems to combine musical purity with a certain austerity.

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Martin Jones (piano)

Martin Jones was a chorister at Magdalene College School and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. He has been one of Britain's most highly regarded solo pianists since first coming to international attention in 1968 when he received the Dame Myra Hess Award. The same year he made his London debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and his New York debut at Carnegie Hall, and ever since has been in demand for recitals and concerto performances on both sides of the Atlantic.

He is a prolific recording artist and his many discs for Nimbus Records include the complete solo piano works of Mendelssohn, Brahms, Debussy, Grainger, Szymanowski (voted Best Instrumental Recording of 1996 by the Spanish magazine *CD Compact*) Stravinsky, Korngold and the sonatas of Alun Hoddinott. He has recorded several Spanish piano masters and Volume 2 of this series received the 2000 Classical Indie Award from the Association for Independent Music in the USA. The soundtrack of the film *Howards End* features Martin Jones performing Grainger's *Bridal Lullaby* and *Mock Morris*. He has also recorded Grainger's *Tribute to Foster* conducted by John Eliot Gardiner for Philips, Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw*

Concerto for ASV, a recital disc with horn player, David Pyatt, for Erato Disques, and Reger's Clarinet Sonatas with Anthony Pike. Four albums featuring Richard Rodney Bennett's piano music have been released on the Metronome label. Some recent Nimbus releases include Gershwin transcriptions by Earl Wild, Czerny Sonatas, major piano works by Hans Gal and the complete piano works of Guastavino, Ernesto Halffter, Joachim Nin, Reizenstein and most recently Alun Richardson.

Martin Jones has performed as concerto soloist with many of the leading British orchestras, as well as in the USA and Russia, and toured Canada as soloist with the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra. Performances include Shostakovich's Concerto No. 1 in Central and South America with the London Festival Orchestra, a regional tour playing Rachmaninov's *Paganini Rhapsody* and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Hallé Orchestra, the Britten Piano Concerto in St Petersburg, the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Scharwenka's Piano Concerto No. 1 in the USA, Brahms Concerto No. 1 with the Oman Symphony Orchestra, Mozart's K491 with the London Festival Orchestra, and Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

His performance repertoire, as well as encompassing most of the standard works for piano, also includes unusual concertos such as the Busoni Concerto, which he performed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Norman Del Mar. He has also championed the music of British composers and has performed concertos by Britten, Benjamin, Mathias, McCabe and Lambert. He gave the first performance of the revised version of Alun Hoddinott's Third Concerto at the 1974 BBC Promenade Concerts, and recorded Hoddinott's Second Concerto with Andrew Davis and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for Decca.

Martin Jones has given recitals throughout Great Britain, and as well as regular broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, he has given recitals for Brussels Radio, RTE in Dublin, DeutschlandRadio in Berlin and ABC in Australia. In the USA he has served as jury member on a number of international piano competitions, and performed in New York, Washington, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and California. In Los Angeles he gave a recital as part of the 1994 UK/LA Celebration of British Arts, which was broadcast live on KUSC Radio. He gave the world premiere of Ravelled Threads by American composer, Wendy Carlos in New York, and in 1996 he became the first major British artist to give a solo

recital in Ekaterinburg, Russia. Other recital appearances include the Adelaide Festival, a programme of Percy Grainger at the Eifeler Musiktage in Germany, and the complete Iberia of Albéniz at London's Southbank Centre.



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