

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1386

1858 **HAYDN WOOD** 1959

Haydn Wood was born on the 25th March 1882 at Slaithwaite in the West Riding of Yorkshire, but in a sense his musical life began even before that. His parents ran the Lewisham Hotel there and the story goes that a few days earlier his father, Clement Wood, was so impressed by a performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, that he declared that the new baby (if a boy) would be named after the great composer. And so it turned out; the baby was christened Haydn. He is always known as Haydn Wood to distinguish him from other musical Woods, not least his brother, Harry, and in particular, Sir Henry.

In 1885 the Woods moved with their younger children to Douglas in the Isle of Man. HW, who showed great promise as a violinist, entered the Royal College of Music in 1897 to study violin with Fernández Arbós and composition with Charles Stanford; he played for both Joachim and Sarasate before completing his studies in Brussels under César Thomson. He then toured Britain and the British Commonwealth as a supporting artist, playing solos and obligato passages with the renowned Canadian soprano, Emma Albani. He only gave up this way of life in 1909, when he married Dorothy Court, a fellow student from the R.C.M. days.

Dorothy had had success as a soprano in Gilbert & Sullivan, but saw in her husband a talent for composition in the lighter styles. HW had already composed works in classical forms such as a piano concerto (and continued to do so), but these are not fully characteristic. The ballads and love songs he wrote for his wife to sing made his name and his fortune and some of them are recalled in this album, issued to mark 50 years since his death. Mr & Mrs Haydn Wood toured the variety theatres and music halls with his successes until she retired from singing in 1925. Meanwhile, that success made it possible for him to return to orchestral composition and accept engagements as a conductor of his own music. He also interested himself in the Performing Rights Society and continued to compose light, very well-written pieces in the agreeable English style which he, Eric Coates and others made their own. Dorothy died in 1958, by which time HW was himself becoming frail. He died in a London nursing home on 11th March 1959, just short of his 77th birthday.

1. A May-Day Overture: HW remained pleased with this piece (published in 1918) throughout his life. It is the first of his orchestral works which is fully characteristic and it is dedicated to his brother, Harry. It depicts a beautiful morning with celebrations of spring, new fertility and the coming of summer. HW recorded this piece twice and this is the second version. He had previously conducted it with Joseph Lewis's Orchestra for Sterno (catalogue number 5016: matrix S3693). Sterno was a label of the British Homophone company, active 1926-35. Joseph Lewis did make records, but was best known for his broadcast concerts. HW secures a lively performance in authentic small-orchestra style, but the sound

suffers from the music being squeezed onto one side of a 10-inch record (value for money was a Sterno selling point). For reasons of space it is omitted from this collection, but it is in most departments superseded by the present recording.

2. Mannin Veen - A Manx Tone Poem: The title (in the Manx language) is usually translated as 'Dear Isle of Man'. Although a Yorkshireman by birth, HW grew up in Douglas on the island and remained deeply attached to it throughout his life. The Isle of Man inspired several of his works based, in part, on Manx folk tunes with an admixture of hymns popular locally. The island itself has a Celtic flavour. It lies in the Irish Sea between Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England; it is rugged and surprisingly large, with glens and mountain scenery to charm the holidaymakers who flock there. Man is a Crown dependency enjoying a measure of self-government within Britain; when HW was young its industries were agriculture, fishing and mining, but today it is something of a tax haven. 'Mannin Veen' uses four Manx melodies and is dedicated to Joseph Lewis. It dates from 1932/3 and was therefore quite a new piece at the time of this recording. Shortly afterwards, the comedy *No Limit* starring George Formby was filmed on the island. The Lancashire star was never better and performed, it is said, all his own stunts in the thrill-packed story set at the time of the annual TT Races (a thoroughly dangerous event for powerful motorcycles held to this day on public roads). The film gives a splendid picture of the island as it was when HW was writing his Manx music.

3. Homage March: HW's contribution to the Silver Jubilee celebrations for King George V and Queen Mary in 1935 is an orchestral march in brisk ceremonial style after the model of Elgar's *Pomp & Circumstance* scores. Notice how he varies the way he presents his material to heighten its effectiveness, including a quotation of the National Anthem which for once avoids banality.

4. Concert Waltz (Joyousness): This is the finale of HW's somewhat unwieldy suite in six movements, *Moods*. It dates from 1932 and is dedicated to his sister, Adeline. 'Joyousness' long ago escaped from its suite to enjoy a life of its own; it is a quick waltz in the English manner.

5/6/7. Three Famous Pictures: This suite for orchestra was first published in 1923 and Columbia took it up soon afterwards. The primitive recording (by the acoustic process, soon to become obsolete) nevertheless gives a fair idea of the music, which was inspired by *The Village Wedding* and *The Doctor* (Luke Fildes, 1843-1927) and *The Laughing Cavalier* (Franz Hals, 1581-1666). After the success of *A May-Day Overture*, this suite seems less assured. HW gives us 'laughing music' of no great subtlety to illustrate *The Laughing Cavalier*, which was and is one of the most famous pictures ever painted. Luke Fildes RA was a distinguished nineteenth-century British artist who had great success with the paintings which inspired HW, although they are less well-known today. He was a master of composition, detail and draughtsmanship; *The Village Wedding* depicts a throng of villagers, unself-consciously dressed in their best as they escort the happy couple. Such is the animation and colour of the scene, the procession seems to move towards us even as we watch. *The Doctor* is animated, but in a different way. Weary, but concerned,

the old doctor still tends the sick child while in the shadows behind, the face of the child's father shows the strain of a long night and his wife weeps. However, the light of early dawn shows us the crisis is past and gives hope for the future. It will tell us what sort of painter Fildes was if I mention that he built a cottager's living-room in his studio to get the right 'look' for this work. It is not quite clear what the relationship should be between HW's music and Fildes's pictures; HW gives us a jig in the manner of Edward German for the wedding and a pensive meditation - perhaps the best music - for the scene with the sick child.

8. An Evening Song: Another piece from 1923, this is a tranquil song without words which makes its points succinctly and with charm. The recording was issued as a fourth side for the *Three Famous Pictures*.

9. The Horseguards, Whitehall: The Horseguards are mounted soldiers who guard the entrance (in Whitehall) to Horse Guards Parade, near Trafalgar Square in the heart of London. The Trooping of the Colour is one of the chief ceremonial occasions of the British Army and takes place here every year before the Queen. 'Horseguards' is No.3 in the 1946 suite, *London Landmarks*, which is one of several suites composed on London themes by HW (a Yorkshireman and adopted Manxman) at the suggestion, no doubt, of his publishers, following the vast and continuing success of Eric Coates's suites, *London* and *London Again*. Horses cannot march but guardsmen can and what better music to march to than this quick march by HW? It became very well known as the signature tune for nearly 40 years (from 1946) of the BBC's *Down Your Way* radio programme, in which a series of genial presenters toured the towns, villages and institutions of Britain, meeting the local celebrities and playing musical requests. Only the trio was used for the programme, of course. I still recall my surprise and delight when I tuned in to a broadcast by the conductor, Eric Robinson, and realised I was listening to the march in full at last. The recording here is conducted by Sidney Torch (1908-1990) and is characteristic of the polish and precision on which he insisted. He was a successful cinema organist who turned to conducting with even greater success, not to mention a sheaf of attractive, well-crafted compositions. This is one of the best recordings of light music ever made.

10. Montmartre: HW's *Paris Suite* is not, perhaps, very French - like Gershwin before him, he is really just a tourist - but 'Montmartre' (No.3 in the suite) is one of his very best marches. Its boulevardier elegance and jaunty trio tune, full of pompous brass, echo the world of the Parisian music-hall and would raise the dullest spirits. The suite dates from 1935; just four years later, Parisians would have much to be glum about. Debroy Somers (1890-1952) is best remembered as a dance-band leader, but he actually spent more of his time conducting in the theatre. This early recording of 'Montmartre' (slightly abridged) is cheerful and enthusiastic to the point of rowdiness, which suits the music very well.

11. The Quietest Things: The great Irish tenor, John McCormack (1884-1945), had his pick of songs for recording and chose this example of HW's later ballads (text, M. Wymer, 1933). He makes an exquisite thing of it.

12. Roving Fancies: Perhaps one of HW's slighter ideas, this is a 1942 composition which exists, like much of his music, in more than one format. As it is dedicated to Reginald Foort (1893-1980), however, the organ version takes pride of place. Reginald Foort was a popular cinema organist who broadcast frequently and toured the country with his Giant (but portable) Möller Concert Organ.

13. Love's Garden of Roses: There must be a place in this collection for one of HW's best-known songs (text, R. Rutherford, 1914), sung with sincerity and fervour in the grand manner. Enter Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, who married in 1938 and thereafter toured the world together almost to the date of Webster's death in 1984. His ardent tenor ideally complements her true soprano.

14/15/16/17/18. Works of Elgar transcribed for orchestra by HW: Interest in Elgar (1857-1934) revived in the year of his death and it appears that the publishers of four of his best-known songs commissioned HW to arrange them for orchestra as the movements of a little suite. It did not prove popular - there was some criticism that it failed to convey the sentiments and imagery of the original songs - but it can still be enjoyed as a tuneful and pleasant addition to Elgar's large output of light music. HW secures a spirited performance; it is a pity he was never asked to record similar arrangements of his own world-famous melodies. Notice that the songs are presented here as recorded and that 'Mina' (track 17, interpolated after 'Rondel') is an original orchestral work from Elgar himself, composed right at the end of his life. Mina was one of his pets; other conductors have found that a more relaxed tempo better suggests the character of a wistful little dog begging for a titbit. 'Mina' is dedicated to Fred Gaisberg (1873-1951), the long-serving recording manager at HMV who, of course, was keen to get a recording. The songs were republished as *A Suite of Four Edward Elgar Songs* by Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew and the score order of the songs is 'Rondel', 'Queen Mary's Song', 'The Shepherd's Song' and 'Like to the Damask Rose'.

19/20/21/22/23/24/25/26. My Friends, the Composers: Peggy Cochrane (1902-1988) was a trained musician who played the piano and violin. She enjoyed a long career as a popular personality in the world of light entertainment and appeared on stage, screen and radio, as illustrated here. She married the bandleader, Jack Payne, and could still be heard 'at the piano' in rather grand hotels until not so long ago. Her series, 'My Friends, the Composers', was broadcast in the spring of 1954 and offered interviews we should dearly like to hear again: Eric Coates, of course, Vivian Ellis, Noel Gay and several others, less well-known now, from the lighter side of music. Even Larry Adler brought his mouth organ along (he had recently had great success with his theme for that classic comedy of veteran cars, *Genevieve*). This episode has been abridged to remove a lengthy extract from *A May-Day Overture*, but is otherwise presented complete, together with the opening and closing announcements (which are delivered in the friendly, educated tones of a bygone age of broadcasting). All of HW's contributions are here; he and Peggy rehearsed at the Aeolian Hall and broadcast live at the allotted time on the old Home Service. HW sounds a little nervous, but he was still active in his profession

at that time. Nothing from the series remains in the BBC archives and this is a chance survival on two acetate 78s, cut by Levy's Sound Studios for an unknown client. Peggy plays her own signature tune and a selection of songs by HW which are still heard to this day and (of course) she includes his greatest success of all: 'Roses of Picardy'. Of special note is 'Serenade to Youth' from 1953, played here complete and as delightful a miniature as HW ever wrote.

27. Sérénade in A major, Op.7 (Pierné) Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937) was a conservative French composer who wrote much well-turned music with an individual, fin-de-siècle flavour which would appeal to anyone who enjoys Saint-Saëns, Franck or Fauré. This serenade, perhaps his best-known work, was a popular encore for many years; HW would have encountered it in Brussels, if not before. No other titles for Pathé or any other company by HW as a violinist are known.

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