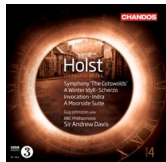


Gustav Holst - Orchestral Works Vol.4 (2018)

Written by bluesever

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1. *A Winter Idyll*, H 31 (1897) 9:30 *Moderato maestoso – Più mosso – Allegro vivace – Andante maestoso – Tempo I – Con larghezza e ritenuto poco a poco al fine – Andante – Largo* *Symphony 'The Cotswolds', Op. 8, H 47 (1899 – 1900) 23:42 in F • en fa for Orchestra Edited by Rodney Newton and Douglas Bostock* 2. *I Allegro con brio* 3:21 3. *II Elegy in memoriam William Morris. Molto adagio – Agitato – Più mosso – Più mosso – A tempo – Agitato – A tempo* 8:24 4. *III Scherzo. Presto – Allegretto – Presto – Poco meno mosso – Allegretto – Presto* 5:30 5. *IV Finale. Allegro moderato – Meno mosso – A tempo* 6:15 6. *Invocation, Op. 19 No. 2, H 75 (1911) 7:44 ('A Song of the Evening') for Cello and Orchestra Senza misura – Moderato – Poco meno mosso – A tempo – Poco meno mosso – A tempo – Animato – Senza misura – Con larghezza – Senza misura – Adagio – Pochetissimo meno adagio – Animato – Più mosso – Adagio – Senza misura A Moorside Suite, H 173 (1928) 14:05 for Brass Band Arranged 1932 for String Orchestra by the Composer Edited for publication 1994 by Colin Matthews* 7. *1 Scherzo. Allegro – Trio – Scherzo da capo al fine* 3:12 8. *2 Nocturne. Adagio* 6:45 9. *3 March. Allegro – Con larghezza* 4:09 10. *Indra, Op. 13, H 66 (1903) 15:19 Symphonic Poem for Orchestra Allegro moderato – Poco meno mosso – Tempo I – Adagio – A tempo – Andante maestoso – Tempo I – Più mosso – Tempo I ma un poco lento – Più mosso – Vivace – Tempo I* 11. *Scherzo, H 192 (1933 – 34) 5:52 Allegro – Allegretto – Andante – Allegro – Vivace* Guy Johnston - cello BBC Philharmonic Yuri Torchinsky - leader Sir Andrew Davis - conductor

Sir Andrew Davis returns to his exploration of Holst's orchestral works with the brilliant BBC Philharmonic, a series initiated almost ten years ago by the late Richard Hickox, then taken over by another expert in British repertoire.

This selection of orchestral works by Holst provides a remarkable overview of his career, ranging from such early works as *A Winter Idyll* – composed in 1897 when he was still studying at the Royal College of Music – to the *Scherzo* of a symphony on which he was working towards the end of his life. None of the music recorded here was published in his lifetime, and

the Scherzo – rarely heard though it is – is the only work to have entered the repertoire. ‘A Moorside Suite’, originally written for brass band, is featured here in the composer's rarely heard arrangement for strings.

The young British cellist and Classical BRIT winner Guy Johnston is the soloist in Invocation, one of Holst's most significant works, calling for a subtle balance of virtuosity and expressive qualities. ---chandos.net

Sir Andrew Davis is of one of the greatest conductors of British music in our time, and Chandos is a label that specializes in British repertoire. This alone should make this new recording of Gustav Holst's orchestral works by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra indispensable. But it is also a significant milestone because it includes an exceptionally idiomatic performance of Holst's early Symphony in F "The Cotswolds", so convincing that it should at last give this piece the recognition it is due. This disc is valuable too because the programme is cohesive, linking Holst's very early works with later pieces that hint at Holst's wider interests which gave his work a distinct personality. This disc is also part of Chandos's long standing series of Holst orchestral works conducted by Andrew Davis, which further adds to its authority. Altogether, a release that's leagues ahead of the market.

Completed in July 1900 and premiered by the Carl Rosa Orchestra in which Holst played, the Cotswolds Symphony (op8 H47) was not a success. It would have been unreasonable to expect more from a composer who was barely 25, but there is much more to it than has been revealed in recordings made over the years. Perhaps the secret is to understand it in the context of the composer and his place in British music. Davis, like Sir Adrian Boult before him, has an understanding of the full span of Holst's music. The opening Allegro con brio is free-flowing and confident, evoking Elgar, a composer with whom Davis is so closely associated. Hence the idiomatic punchiness, and crispness of attack. This introduces the famous second movement, the Elegy in memoriam William Morris. A tentative, but probing introduction evolves gradually, with suggestions of the more sophisticated Egon Heath. It rises steadily to a crescendo that is dignified, yet deeply felt. The agitato section surges, like a march, punctuated by brass and percussion. The main theme flares up again, before discreetly receding. The title "Cotswolds" is something of a misnomer, suggesting touristy images of cottages, chintz and cream teas. But to Holst, an idealist and a thinker, William Morris was a radical with proto-socialist sympathies. The Arts and Crafts movement predicated on the idea of craftsmen working for themselves, not dependent on commercial capitalism. This affects interpretation and performance. Fortunately, Davis understands who Morris was and what he

meant to Holst. No false sentimentality here but deep conviction, much closer to the spirit of the piece. Thus the sudden change of mood in the Scherzo, and the return of the confidence in the Allegro now expanded in much fuller-throated orchestration in the Finale. Holst's music marches forwards : it's not looking back. Good use of brass and warm-sounding horns, like wind in the sails, propelling the music onwards.

The Cotswolds Symphony ends on similarly upbeat form as A Winter Idyll (H31 1897) begins. Again, Andrew Davis's understanding of the idiom makes a difference. Winter here is an almost demonic force of Nature, sweeping all before it, craggy peaks and soaring vistas. The main theme (trumpets and brass) repeats and string lines swell, as if propelled by the elements, turning on sudden, capricious points. One could detect the influence of Nordic saga - Wagner, Grieg or even a hint of Sibelius, nine years Holst's senior.

Davis makes the point further with Holst's Indra (op 13, H66 1903), a large scale tone poem inspired by Sanskrit literature. Like so many of his contemporaries all over Europe, "orientalism" fascinated because it opened up new opportunities of tonal colour and form. Indra breaks new ground, giving Holst a chance to explore a consciousness outside the western mainstream. For all its lushness, Indra tells a violent story. In the Rig Veda, the god Indra (male) battles a dragon who has seized the rain clouds, throwing the land into drought, its people into ruin. The brass fanfares are militant, suggesting perhaps the cosmic forces being brought to bear. Like A Winter Idyll, Indra is a saga. Davis emphasizes the structure and colour - wonderful trumpet calls, dissolving into finer textures, balancing the warrior with the mystic, bringing out the spirituality in the piece.

Davis's recognition of the spirituality in Holst shapes his approach to Invocation (Op 19 no 2 H75, 1911) for cello (Guy Johnstone) and orchestra. Subtitled "A Song of the Evening" , the piece begins and ends *sensu misura*, allowing the soloist to float the line, so the piece moves freely through many smaller incarnations. Johnstone's tone is rich and sensual, evoking allusions to exotic, non-western concepts of sensuality. The obvious connection here is Holst's Lyric Movement for viola and orchestra, but there are links, too, to Holst's other mystical works, including Venus in The Planets, and indeed to works by other composers of the period, such as Szymanowski, whom Holst may not have known but who shared his aesthetic.

A Moorside Suite (H173, 1928), heard here in Holst's 1932 arrangement for string orchestra, was originally conceived for brass band. The first section is boisterous, but the second, a Nocturne, is more mystical than most repertoire for brass band. Although it's an interlude before the final March (*con larghezza*), it is a beautiful miniature, the solo violin line at once fragile and assured. The Scherzo (H192, 1933-4) is a worthwhile conclusion to this collection, connecting

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the early Holst of the Cotswolds Symphony with Holst shortly before his unexpected death, when he was working on what might have been his only other orchestral symphony. Though it lasts but six minutes, it's inventive and covers a lot of material.

---classical-iconoclast.blogspot.com

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