

NAXOS

**Frank
BRIDGE**

The Sea

Enter Spring • Summer

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

James Judd



Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941)

Orchestral Music

Now generally remembered as the teacher of Benjamin Britten, who made his gratitude clear in his variations on a theme by his mentor, Frank Bridge has been largely neglected as a composer until recent years. Born in Brighton in 1879, he was a pupil of Stanford at the Royal College of Music in London, a conventional and restrictive training for a composer. His principal study, however, was the violin, which he had played from childhood, assisting his father, who conducted the Empire Theatre orchestra in Brighton. He established himself as a conductor and viola player, in the latter capacity replacing an indisposed member of the Joachim Quartet during the latter's 1906 visit to London. In a remarkably busy career he served as violist in the English String Quartet, an ensemble that reduced its public schedule after 1915, and undertook conducting engagements for the 1910-1911 Savoy Theatre opera season and for Covent Garden in 1913, also deputising for Henry Wood at the London Promenade Concerts, as occasion demanded. Further opportunities arose from his ability to master a score quickly, so that he won a reputation as a particularly reliable substitute for any otherwise indisposed conductor.

Bridge's early compositions included a quantity of chamber music. He won the Cobbett Prize for his 1907 *Phantasy Piano Trio*. In the first competition, in 1905, he had taken third place, after William Hurlstone and Haydn Wood, and there were two later works that followed for the awards offered by Cobbett. In the same period he wrote a quantity of songs and piano pieces. This stage of his career as a composer culminated in 1911 with the completion of the orchestral suite *The Sea*. This was followed in 1914 by a tone poem, *Summer*, and the following year *Two Poems of Richard Jefferies*. A pacifist, Bridge had inevitably been appalled by the atrocities of war, and these war-time compositions may be heard as an escape into a kinder world. In the 1920s his work underwent a change, moving with his *Piano Sonata*, completed in 1924, into

a new world that was much less English in character, reflecting in particular his interest in the music of Alban Berg, a composer with whom his own pupil Britten had planned to study. The patronage of Elisabeth Sprague Coolidge brought an interest in his work in the United States, where he conducted his own orchestral works and was able to take some delight in the performances of his chamber music. *Enter Spring*, completed in 1927, belongs to this later phase of Bridge's career, when his work seemed out of kilter with prevailing insular English musical conventions. Bridge died in 1941, in the second year of another war, leaving unfinished a symphony on which he was working.

Bridge wrote his *Two Poems* in 1915, drawing inspiration from the writings of Richard Jefferies on the life of the English countryside. The first of the two, scored for woodwind, horns, timpani, harp and strings, has a superscription from *The Open Air*, a book written in 1885: *Those thoughts and feelings which are not sharply defined, but have a haze of distance and beauty about them, are always dearest*. This aptly describes the gentle pastoralism of what follows. The oboe sets the mood, answered by the clarinet, muted strings continuing with a motif developed from this. The second poem includes brass and varied percussion in a lighter-hearted movement. The Jefferies superscription is taken from the 1883 *The Story of My Heart: How beautiful a delight to make the world joyous! The song should never be silent, the dance never still, the laugh should sound like water which runs for ever*. Piccolo and flutes, with the harp, burst in, introducing a movement of lively joy.

Scored for full orchestra, *Enter Spring*, completed in 1927, represents a later stage in Bridge's work. Sounds of the approach of spring are heard from the flute, a muted trumpet and then a solo violin. Short motifs appear, developed and interwoven in a complex texture. New elements are introduced, as the flute opens a calmer section, with bird song over harp arpeggios and string harmonics, before the robuster

representatives of spring return, leading to a moment of triumphant grandeur. This is interrupted by a gentle *Andante tranquillo*, with snatches of bird song. The music grows in intensity, as the progress of spring marches on, fading to move into a final section of reminiscence, with its own brief moment of tranquillity, before a solo bassoon leads the way forward, as the procession resumes.

Summer, written in the years 1914-15, breathes the shimmering country heat of the season, as it gradually unwinds, at first over a hushed and busy murmur of the strings, a figure later taken up by the woodwind, to reappear during the course of the movement, while fragmentary motifs are heard through the haze. Relatively lightly scored, the movement has something in common with the music in pastoral vein of some of Bridge's English contemporaries.

The orchestral suite *The Sea* is scored for full orchestra and was written in 1910 and 1911. It reflects some contemporary influences and won some success. In the first movement, *Seascape*, a sustained chord is

followed by the first theme from the violas, fragmentarily echoed by the oboe, before the violas return with a modified version of the same theme, now with a suggestion of the minor. This develops as the music swells to a climax, only to subside again into a clarinet melody, accompanied by the syncopation of the strings. Once again the waves mount to a further climax, a relaxation of intensity and the return of the main theme. The opening viola theme is heard from a solo clarinet before the music finally dies away. The woodwind provide a lively broken figure in the second movement, *Sea-foam*, before new material is introduced by the strings, with the flung spray and blown spume reflected in the woodwind. The movement suggests, in its conclusion, what is to follow in *Moonlight*, evoked in the instrumental textures in music that is developed, before the strains of the opening return. The *Storm* bursts out with some fury. A lull allows the cor anglais to lead to a final passage of triumphant optimism.

Keith Anderson

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra enjoys a high profile as the country's leading performance arts organisation. It gave its first public performance in March 1947 and its first (and current) Music Director, James Judd, was appointed in 1999. The orchestra attracts leading international conductors and soloists and gives over a hundred performances each year. These include seasons of major symphonic repertoire in seven centres, 'heartland and mainland' tours to smaller centres, and a wide range of 'special' programmes. It is involved in education programmes, performs family and schools concerts, accompanies major opera and ballet productions, and records for television, movies (including *Lord of the Rings*) and for Radio New Zealand. It commissions and performs New Zealand music and has a long recording history, which has seen it move into the world market and win international awards. The orchestra's profile has been considerably heightened recently with its acclaimed Naxos recordings of Lilburn's *Three Symphonies* (Naxos 8.555862) and Bernstein (Naxos 8.559100). The NZSO also administers the NZSO Chamber Orchestra which has its own concert series and the NZSO National Youth Orchestra.

James Judd

The Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, British-born conductor James Judd, stands at the forefront of a new period of artistic growth for his orchestra. In addition to embarking on a sizable series of recordings with the orchestra for Naxos he has brought the orchestra international acclaim through appearances with the New Zealand Symphony at the 2000 Summer Sydney Olympic Arts Festival as well as a specially televised Millennium Concert with Kiri Te Kanawa as soloist. A graduate of London's Trinity College of Music, James Judd came to international attention as the Assistant Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, a post he accepted at the invitation of Lorin Maazel. Four years later he returned to Europe after being appointed Associate Music Director of the European Community Youth Orchestra by Claudio Abbado, an ensemble with which he continues to serve as an honorary Artistic Director. Since that time he has appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and has conducted in the great concert halls of Europe, including the Salzburg Mozarteum and Vienna's Musikverein. He has also made guest appearances with such prestigious ensembles as the Vienna Symphony, Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, Prague Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Monte-Carlo Symphony Orchestra and the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg. As an opera conductor he has appeared with the English National Opera, conducting productions of *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, and *Le nozze di Figaro*, and at the Glyndebourne Opera Festival with Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. He continues to conduct all of the major British ensembles, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, and the English Chamber Orchestra. He was co-founder of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, which he has led on tours throughout the United States, the Far East and Europe. In North and South America James Judd is a frequent and much-admired guest conductor, having appeared with the orchestras of St Louis, Montreal, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Utah, Vancouver and Ottawa, and for some fourteen years served as Music Director of the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra. His many successful recordings include works by American and English composers for Naxos.



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Perhaps no other English composer of the first half of the twentieth century reveals a stylistic musical journey as varied as that of Frank Bridge. No less a magnificent seascape than Debussy's *La Mer* written six years earlier, *The Sea* belongs to Bridge's late Romantic period. After the war years 1914-18, however, his music became more intense and chromatic, displaying a kinship with Berg, Bartók and other European contemporaries. Seemingly out of kilter with prevailing English musical conventions, *Enter Spring*, completed in 1927, is the last and greatest of Bridge's tone poems.

Frank
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(1879-1941)

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|---|--------------------------------|--------------|
| ① | Enter Spring (Rhapsody) | 19:20 |
| ② | Summer (Tone Poem) | 9:40 |
| | Two Poems for Orchestra | 10:56 |
| ③ | I Andante moderato e semplice | 6:47 |
| ④ | II Allegro con brio | 4:09 |
| | The Sea (Suite) | 21:39 |
| ⑤ | No. 1 Seascape | 7:25 |
| ⑥ | No. 2 Sea-foam | 2:29 |
| ⑦ | No. 3 Moonlight | 6:08 |
| ⑧ | No. 4 Storm | 5:37 |

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • James Judd

This recording has been made at 24bit resolution

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