



**Kenneth
LEIGHTON**

**Complete Chamber
Works for Cello**

Elegy

Partita

Sonata

Alleluia Pascha Nostrum

Raphael Wallfisch, Cello • Raphael Terroni, Piano

Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988)

Complete Chamber Works for Cello

Kenneth Leighton wrote his first work for solo cello as a twenty year old student at The Queen's College, Oxford. Completed on New Year's Eve of 1949, the piece was a sonata in three movements in F minor and, while unfortunately not remaining intact, was the provenance of the earliest work on this recording, the *Elegy* for cello and piano, Op. 5. Following this early work for the instrument, Leighton was to continue to write for the cello on a regular basis, with a plethora of compositions that include the instrument in various guises: as a solo instrument, with the piano, in a concerto rôle, in various chamber permutations as well as, inevitably, within an orchestra. This particular collection focuses on the quite substantial contribution of solo works (including those with piano), that Leighton made to the repertoire of the cello.

Elegy for cello and piano, Op. 5

When Leighton penned the *Sonata in F minor* for cello and piano during December 1949, he was in the final year of a degree in Classics. In the autumn of 1947 he had gone up to The Queen's College as a Hastings Scholar following a grammar school education in his home town of Wakefield in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Despite his initially studying Classics, his musical achievements had been substantial up to this point: among other attainments, he had been awarded the Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music at the age of sixteen, two of his earliest works for piano had recently been published by the London firm of Alfred Lengnick, and he had recently been granted permission to study for the Oxford Bachelor of Music degree concurrently with his studies in Classics.

Leighton's tutor for music at Oxford was Bernard Rose, who was instrumental in introducing Leighton to such luminaries as Gerald Finzi, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Edmund Rubbra, as well as the cellist who first played the *Sonata in F minor*, Jeanne Fry. As far as is known the complete sonata – with the *Elegy* as the *Lento cantabile* middle movement – received only one public

performance on 4th March 1950 in the University Music School of the University of Cambridge. The *Sonata* (with Leighton accompanying at the piano) opened a mixed programme offered by members of the Oxford University Musical Club and Union.

Following a subsequent change of heart about the sonata as a whole, Leighton withdrew the work, retaining the middle movement as the *Elegy*, which was published in 1953, again by Alfred Lengnick. Some years later, following Leighton's death, the *Elegy* inspired his colleague at the University of Edinburgh, the composer Edward Harper to write an orchestral version of the *Elegy*, which was published by Oxford University Press.

In the *Elegy*, Leighton presents a compact, rounded and tender work. As a composer, one of his greatest attributes was his intense lyricism and the particular quality of the cello allows him to use this facet to great effect. At the time of this composition, Leighton's musical language was grounded in the early-twentieth century pastoral qualities of English music, which was quite prevalent in Oxford at the time. The *Elegy* is steeped in the qualities of English music and those composers who Leighton named as early influences on his music all feature in some way in this music – namely, and among others, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi and Herbert Howells.

Partita for cello and piano, Op. 35

Completed in September of 1959, almost ten years after *Elegy*, the *Partita*, Op. 35 was Leighton's next work for solo cello and piano. Much had occurred during the preceding ten years in Leighton's life. Following completion of his studies at Oxford, he had studied in Rome with the *avant garde* composer Goffredo Petrassi as a recipient of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, where he was to begin to discover his mature musical language that was to make his music instantly recognisable, as well as meeting his first wife, Lydia. On return to England he took

up the post of Professor of Harmony at the Royal Marine School of Music in Deal, Kent, before accepting a Gregory Fellowship at the University of Leeds from the Autumn of 1953. After three years in the fellowship he was appointed as a lecturer at the Faculty of Music at the University of Edinburgh, in succession to Hans Gál, where he was to spend most of the rest of his life.

The years 1956 to 1968 represented a settled period in Leighton's life. His notoriety as a composer increased rapidly during this time with most of his works now being published and widely distributed by the publishing house of Novello and Co., while the birth of his two children, Angela and Robert, represented a prolonged episode of success in his life. The *Partita* for cello and piano came toward the end of a particularly productive year, which began with the completion of the *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet*, Op. 34 and also saw work on the *Nine Variations* for piano, Op. 36, the *Nocturne* for violin and piano and his *Second Piano Concerto*, as well as this substantial work for cello.

With Leighton working on a number of works simultaneously, the genesis of the *Partita* was relatively long, taking almost a year to come to fruition. It was not the result of a commission, but rather of inner compulsion, although it received its first performance quite soon after its completion in February 1960; the cellist Florence Hooton, who had premièred Leighton's *Cello Concerto* in July 1956 at the Cheltenham Festival under the baton of Sir John Barbirolli, also gave the premièr of the *Partita* in the Wigmore Hall accompanied by Wilfrid Parry at the piano.

Formed of three movements – *Elegy*, *Scherzo* and *Theme and Variations* – Leighton himself described the work as follows:

'The opening *Elegy* is an intense lyrical movement with two distinct themes and a final mysterious section in the manner of a slow march. This is followed by a brilliant and energetic *Scherzo* [...] while the final movement, *Theme and Variations*, is more extended and carries the main emotional weight of the work. A bell-like theme [...] is followed by variations which bear the titles – *Allegro*

inquieto, *Ostinato* (a kind of *Passacaglia*), *March*, *Appassionato*, *Waltz*, and finally *Chorale*.'

Sonata for cello solo, Op. 52

The *Sonata* for cello solo, Op. 52 was written by Leighton during the summer of 1967. It received its first performance by the eminent cellist Joan Dickson in December of the same year, during one of the regular lunch-hour concerts that took place at the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. The *Sonata* was written just a year before Leighton was to depart Edinburgh for two years to become a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, this time in succession to Edmund Rubbra. Leighton's position in British music as a composer had, by this point, become undeniably cemented. His output had now grown to include many major works and commissions in a diverse number of genres, each of which impeccably crafted and constructed.

A suggestion of homage to J.S. Bach in this work for unaccompanied cello is almost inevitable – Leighton had previously composed the piano work *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, Op. 24 as a homage to Bach, who had influenced much of his work – although this was something Leighton never acknowledged. The lyrical nature of the cello is exploited to its fullest, with the often rhapsodic nature of the work and frequent use of broken chords and other techniques suggesting more than a fleeting influence of Bach, whether subconscious or not. Leighton explains the sonata in his own note on the work:

'The first movement [*Lament and Pizzicato*] is really a triptych, opening and closing with sustained melodic line, punctuated from time to time by two funereal pizzicato notes, which later return towards the end of the work.

'The second movement [*Toccata and Cradle Song*] opens with restless buzzings, the lullaby serving as a *Trio* at first tender and later more passionate. In the *Finale* [*Flourish, Chaconne and Coda*] the opening *Flourish* and the ensuing variations on a ground are easy to follow, and they culminate in a return of the grave and elegiac music of the first movement.'

Alleluia Pascha Nostrum, Op. 85

Leighton returned to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1970 as Reid Professor at the Faculty of Music following the retirement of Sidney Newman, who had been in the post for almost thirty years. It was to be Leighton's last appointment, and he was to die in the post at the premature age of 58. The years that followed were somewhat turbulent for Leighton and resulted in the dissolution of his first marriage. During the 1970s Leighton was to meet his second wife, Jo, and it was at the end of a difficult decade that they were to marry, bringing about a new episode in Leighton's life.

Composed in August of 1981, and subtitled 'Meditations on plainsong melodies from the 12th century Salisbury Chant for Easter Day', *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum* was Leighton's final work for solo cello and piano. It was commissioned by the cellist Raphael Wallfisch and pianist Richard Markham and first performed at a BBC concert in Manchester's Royal Exchange on 25th February the following year. *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum* demonstrates Leighton's passion for hymns and plainsong, and his

strong links with the music of the church. Leighton himself explained how 'Like the *Missa de Gloria* for organ (composed in the previous year) it is based on plainsong melodies from the 12th Century Salisbury Chant for Easter Day, and this material (freely varied and extended) is present almost throughout.'

It consists of six clear sections that are to be played without a break. The first shows Leighton's integration of the plainchant with original material, the opening statements of the cello based on the chant and the original material accompanied but the piano, both of which undergo a series of variations. Leighton describes the second section as 'A slow pulsating variation', while the third is a *Presto precipitoso* that builds tension leading to 'A broad statement of the melody (varied) of the *Haec Dies*. The final two sections see, firstly, a return to the original melody of the opening section followed by a '[...] mystical epilogue in which the cello sings quiet variations on the melody of the Epistle for the day [...]' The music eventually fades away in the highest range of the cello.'

Adam Binks

Raphael Wallfisch



have worked closely with him, many having written works especially for him. These include Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, James MacMillan, John Metcalf, Paul Patterson, Robert Simpson, Robert Saxton, Roger Smalley, Giles Swayne, John Tavener and Adrian Williams. In 2014, he succeeded John McCabe as President of the British Music Society.

Raphael Wallfisch was born in London into a family of distinguished musicians, his mother the cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and his father the pianist Peter Wallfisch. At the age of twenty-four he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Cello Competition in Florence. Since then he has enjoyed a world-wide career and is regularly invited to play at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Spoleto, Prades, Oslo and Schleswig Holstein. His extensive discography explores both the mainstream and lesser-known works by Dohnányi, Respighi, Barber, Hindemith and Martinů, as well as Richard Strauss, Dvořák, Kabalevsky and Khachaturian. He has recorded a wide range of British cello music, including works by MacMillan, Finzi, Delius, Bax, Bliss, Britten, Moeran and Kenneth Leighton. Britain's leading composers

Raphael Terroni



Photo: John Terroni

Raphael Terroni was born in 1945, and studied the piano with John Vallier and Cyril Smith. For fifteen years he was Head of Piano at the London College of Music and Media, and examined and adjudicated at music festivals in Britain and abroad. He worked with broadcaster Richard Baker, giving first performances in Britain of several works for narrator and piano. He was active in concerts worldwide, and appeared at major festivals as a soloist, accompanist and chamber-music player. A founder member of the British Music Society, he served two terms as the Society's Chairman, and made several critically acclaimed recordings of music by British composers, Lennox Berkeley, Robin Milford, Howard Ferguson, Josef Holbrooke, Eric Coates and Arthur Butterworth among them. His 1989 recording of piano quintets by Cyril Scott and Frank Bridge with the Bingham Quartet was issued on CD for the first time shortly after his untimely death in 2012.



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In addition the Society produces a Journal, *British Music*, packed full of scholarly articles and reviews, as well as a regular e-newsletter for members. Our website lists forthcoming BMS events as well as performances of British music, and also provides a forum for discussion and debate.

www.britishmusicsociety.com

Kenneth Leighton's distinctive gifts as a composer were apparent as early as the première of his *Cello Concerto*, when he was barely 26. It was an instrument for which he wrote with particular subtlety and often from an inner compulsion. The *Elegy, Op. 5* is full of brilliance, lyricism and mystery whilst by the time he wrote the rhapsodic and expressive *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 52*, his position as one of Britain's leading composers had long been cemented. The beautiful *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum, Op. 85* was first performed by the soloist on this disc, Raphael Wallfisch.



Kenneth
LEIGHTON
(1928-1988)

<p>Partita, Op. 35 (1959) 20:55</p> <p>1 I. Elegy 5:09</p> <p>2 II. Scherzo 4:15</p> <p>3 III. Theme and Variations:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Theme 2:11</p> <p>4 Variation I: Allegro inquieto 0:45</p> <p>5 Variation II: Ostinato 1:23</p> <p>6 Variation III: March 1:14</p> <p>7 Variation IV: Appassionato 1:08</p> <p>8 Variation V: Waltz 1:28</p> <p>9 Variation VI: Chorale 3:22</p>	<p>10 Elegy, Op. 5 (1949) 7:44</p> <p>Sonata for Cello Solo, Op. 52 (1967) 18:32</p> <p>11 Lament and Pizzicato 5:33</p> <p>12 Toccata and Cradle Song 5:25</p> <p>13 Flourish, Chaconne and Coda 7:34</p> <p>14 Alleluia Pascha Nostrum, Op. 85 (1981) 13:53</p>
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Previously released on BMS

This recording was made possible thanks to generous assistance from
The British Music Society Charitable Trust (Registered Charity No. 1122597) (Michael Hurd Bequest)

Recorded at The Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon, UK, on 8th April, 2009 (tracks 1-13),
and on 18th February, 2010 (track 14) • Producer: John Talbot

Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor (Dinmore Records) • Booklet notes: Adam Binks

Publisher: Novello & Co. • Cover photo: *Norland Moor, Yorkshire* by Christopher Smith (Dreamstime.com)