



Stephen
DODGSON

Chamber Music with Harp and Guitar

Septet Variations • Pastoral Sonata • Solway Suite

Karolos



	Septet Variations for flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet (1975)	14:38
1	Tema	1:09
2	Variation 1	1:09
3	Variation 2	1:36
4	Variation 3	1:11
5	Variation 4	0:51
6	Variation 5	1:40
7	Variation 6	0:58
8	Variation 7	1:05
9	Variation 8	2:10
10	Variation 9	1:10
11	Variation 10	1:05
12	Coda	0:35
	Pastoral Sonata for flute, cello and guitar (1953/54, revised 1959/98)	14:50
13	I. Overture	3:56
14	II. Elegy	6:23
15	III. Carnival	4:29
	Solway Suite for flute, viola and harp (1974)	16:08
16	I. Invocation	3:58
17	II. Scherzo	2:04
18	III. Pastorale	2:20
19	IV. Ground	4:51
20	V. Badinage	2:43
	Echoes of Autumn for viola and guitar (1998)	5:35
21	Con moto: Espressivo	
	Sonata for Three for flute, viola and guitar (1982)	12:50
22	I. Allegro deciso	2:41
23	II. Lento	5:06
24	III. Agitato	5:01
	Capriccio and Finale for flute, clarinet, harp, violin, viola and cello (1952)	17:00
25	Capriccio: Lento espressivo	10:07
26	Finale: Vivace	6:50

Stephen Dodgson (1924–2013)

Chamber Music with Harp and Guitar

Stephen Dodgson, born in London in 1924, was conscripted into the Royal Navy aged 18 in 1942 and subsequently experienced active service in the Atlantic. Discharged from the Royal Navy in 1946, he entered the Royal College of Music the following year where he studied French horn with Frank Probyn and musical theory with R.O. Morris. Later on, Dodgson studied composition with Patrick Hadley in Cambridge. In 1948 and 1949 he won two prestigious composition prizes, as well as the Octavia Travelling Scholarship, the latter offering the opportunity to spend time in Rome.

Returning to London in 1950, he earned a living for a while teaching in various educational establishments and began prolific activity as a composer. His efforts were rewarded with broadcasts of several of his works on the BBC Third Programme including the *String Trio No. 1*.

His charismatic personality brought him into contact with many leading instrumentalists including the flautist Geoffrey Gilbert and the harpist Maria Korchinska. From these and other associations, he began to receive an increasing number of commissions, with further broadcasts being followed up by more and more performances of his rapidly developing list of works. From the 1960s onwards, Stephen Dodgson wrote music for various documentary films, began freelance work with reviews and programmes for the BBC, and was appointed professor of composition and harmony at the Royal College of Music.

In a tribute in *The Guardian*, John Turner commented that Dodgson's music stylistically is 'tonal, though often ambiguously so ... the music rarely follows an obvious path. Performers find initially that the music is surprising and unexpected – puzzling even – and almost always very intricate ... However, once the music reveals its secrets, it becomes intensely appealing. The influence of early music in his style manifests itself in numerous ways: not just in his choice of instrument but also in a love of decoration and ornamentation, a fondness for virtuoso display, Baroque-style figuration, a predilection for variation form ... and the choice of early vocal texts.'

Septet Variations, first published in 1975, is essentially an exploration of the intricacies of blending flute, clarinet and harp, with the sonorities of a string quartet. The variation form enables the composer to present each instrument with its specific capabilities, demonstrating the sonorities that result from integration in this particular ensemble formation.

The work begins with a gently poignant theme. *Variation 1* showcases the harp with the partners in an accompanying role while the next variation offers playtime for the flute with some percussive effects from the harp. *Variation 3* is for full-blooded ensemble, with some brilliant display by the first violin. *Variation 4* is quasi-orchestral with *scherzando* energy and a sense of skittishness followed by a variation which takes us back to a slower mood with moments of reflection.

Variation 6 presents delicate interplay between harp and flute with the strings in close support. *Variation 7* opens with mysterious clusters of close knit ensemble in quasi-improvisatory style, leading to a *Presto leggiero* episode before concluding with a *Molto moderato* coda. *Variation 8* provides a slightly agitated *Andantino* leading to a harp cadenza, again with some percussive effects. *Variation 9* introduces a more rhetorical tone with harsher dissonances punctuated by dramatic harp chords and momentary interjections from individual strings. *Variation 10* has the most complex textures so far with full ensemble voicings and a sense of drama and development where the harp is the source of harmonic stability. This leads towards an exciting *Vivacissimo* coda of considerable virtuosity, an appropriately climactic finale.

In the *Pastoral Sonata* for flute, cello and guitar (1953/54), the key to understanding the work is the designation of 'pastoral' suggesting sunlit fields and grazing sheep. It was written in response to a request from Julian Bream, and was first played in 1957 by Musica da Camera (featuring Harold Clarke, Joy Hall and Julian Bream). In a further performance by Musica da Camera in 1962, John Williams was the guitarist.

The *Overture* sets the scene with an elegant guitar part and lively themes. The *Elegy* opens with a tranquil cello introduction which draws in the flute, followed by sonorous guitar chords which break away into a filigree accompaniment. This *Elegy* is not mournfully introspective and presents exquisite interplay between the partners. *Carnival*, marked *con brio*, is a perpetual motion of fiesta mood with ample dexterity required from all participants.

Solway Suite, for flute, viola (or cello) and harp, was dedicated to the Polish composer and conductor Andrzej Panufnik (1914–1991), who became a British citizen in 1954. The work was commissioned by the Holm Cultram Abbey Arts Centre for the London Harp Trio, the first performance taking place at the centre in June 1975. Holm Cultram Abbey was a Cistercian monastery in Abbotstown, Cumbria, founded in 1150 and dissolved under Henry VIII in 1538. Following the dissolution, the church continued to function as the parish church.

The first movement, *Invocation*, marked *Moderato sostenuto*, begins with a religious atmosphere, the harp supplying the foundation of the work, the sonorous notes of the viola providing tenor melodies against the shriller flute. A sense of anguished exploration prevails with the harp offering a logical backing to the conversation between flute and viola. This is contrasted with a *Scherzo*, marked *Agitato*, which takes off at speed, the two melodic instruments chasing each other in headlong flight against the harp's strident chords and syncopations. *Pastorale*, restores the sense of clement weather and an optimistic well-ordered landscape of sound and colour. Yet this *Pastorale* is rooted in the 20th century without undue nostalgia for earlier pastoral idylls.

Ground begins with flute and viola in a reflective duo. When the harp joins in with a sensitive accompaniment the viola develops its own melody before giving way to the flute. The music then broadens out into a full-blown trio texture until gradually the conversation disperses and the harp keeps up the continuity against plaintively broken fragments of melodic lines. But irresistibly the voices come together again in animated dialogue before ending with serenity and a sense of resolution.

The final movement, *Badinage* ('banter', 'jesting talk')

is at first reminiscent of a Baroque dance beginning with a lively flute and viola duo before the harp enters with firm chords. The note values then become less measured, punctuated by significant pauses. The viola takes off on its own melody with high notes from the harp, the flute soon joining in with even higher notes. The Baroque mood returns towards the end.

Echoes of Autumn, written in 1998 for viola and guitar, was freely based on the first of the five movements of *Otoñales* ('Autumnals') by Antonio Ruiz-Pipó (1934–1997), Spanish composer and pianist. Stephen Dodgson met Ruiz-Pipó only once, at a guitar festival in France in 1987. But when the French guitarist, Olivier Chassain, invited Dodgson to write a work for duo to be played with the violist, Pierre-Henri Xuereb, the composer decided to write a direct musical tribute to Ruiz-Pipó.

In a note by Dodgson in January 1999, he introduced the *Echoes of Autumn*: 'All this coincided with my first acquaintance of Ruiz-Pipó's *Otoñales* (1994), which consists of five brief movements, each dedicated to a different artist. The first, in particular, has a poignant autumnal feeling: a sequence of linked motifs and expressive harmonies threaded together around a slow sad drone. This is the movement dedicated to Olivier Chassain, a significant champion of Ruiz-Pipó in his extensive contribution to recent guitar literature.

'I resolved somehow to bring all these strands together, aiming at a metamorphosis of the original poetic miniature into a prospect of spring. The shapes and intervals of the motifs are re-lived, with the sap rising, the drone still present but quickened, and a longer span to development and melody. Antonio's slow pulsation is on C, my more animated 'echo' of it is raised to D. In a brief, more conversational episode, it does however drop to C, precisely for the purpose of echoing Antonio's autumn a little more nearly. The subsequent coda steps abruptly back to D, heralding spring with a brightness and vigour to banish all melancholy.'

Sonata for Three, in three movements, was published in 1987 by Editions Orphée in Columbus, Ohio. It is surely the first work ever written for this combination of instruments: flute, viola and guitar. The first movement,

Allegro deciso, begins with a strident chord after which the guitar enters. Following a brief introduction, the flute has a solo, then taken up by the viola, and finally the guitar. The development then begins. In the recapitulation the melodic fragment moves from one instrument to the other. *Lento*, is characterised at the opening by sparse solo guitar chords with flourishes from the flute. The coda begins with a flute theme at first low in the register, providing a sense of mounting tension. The movement ends with guitar harmonics.

Agitato has various surprises in store. Beginning with perpetual motion, the music suddenly pauses to allow the flute to indulge in a kind of mocking laughter. After a flute cadenza, viola and guitar have an episode on their own. A *chaconne* follows, at first as a dialogue between flute and guitar, later with counter rhythms. A *scherzando* episode comes next before a reprise of the opening *Agitato* mood with a dramatic finale.

Capriccio and Finale written in 1952, received its first performances on the BBC Third Programme in 1952, with further broadcast performances in 1953 and 1954, and was also played at a concert in the Royal Festival Hall Recital Room. It was written at the request of the Wigmore Ensemble (the leading London chamber music ensemble of its era), thus giving the composer the opportunity to write for an unusual combination of instruments.

The composer commented: 'Looking back, their belief in this work was amazing. For me, failures in it loom so much larger than any virtues. But some merit I suppose must have been apparent, for there had been ample time to forget by 1958, when still another request arrived (this time for a *Duo* for flute and harp, specifically for Maria Korchinska and Geoffrey Gilbert, another key member of the Wigmore Ensemble). I can look back after 35 years to these four brief movements with many fewer misgivings. Indeed, there's not a note I'd wish to alter.'

'*Capriccio*' in Italian is defined as 'whim, caprice, fancy'. Dodgson's *Capriccio* offers a kaleidoscope of whimsical interludes developing out of the introduction played by flute and clarinet. The interludes that follow present multiple aspects of the fanciful, sometimes vivacious and at other times tranquil. The *Finale*, marked *Vivace*, presents a similar structure of varied episodes each with its own contribution to the overall design.

Graham Wade

Grateful acknowledgement in the writing of these notes is due to Jane Clark Dodgson for her patience and supportive guidance.

Karolos



Exciting, innovative and passionate, Karolos comprises some of the UK's most eminent soloists and chamber musicians, including Craig Ogden (guitar), Graham Walker (cello), Harriet Mackenzie (violin), Juliette Bausor (flute), Maximiliano Martin (clarinet), Philippa Mo (violin), Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola) and Tanya Houghton (harp). Tailoring their programmes to suit each individual audience, Karolos is proud to offer concerts which range from core classics of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, to premieres and performances of works by prominent and emerging composers. The group's discography reflects their commitment to rediscovering neglected masterpieces: their first two discs contain chamber works by the British composer, Stephen Dodgson, and continuing from this will be the first recordings of chamber music by Robin Holloway and others. Noted for the charm and ease of their presentations and the power and virtuosity of their performances, Karolos' remarkable combination of established and rising stars places it at the forefront of emerging chamber groups in the UK.

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Although he was particularly renowned for his music for harpsichord and for guitar, British composer Stephen Dodgson was a versatile craftsman of chamber music. The examples here reveal his intricate but surprising turns of phrase, from the subtle exploration of sonorities in the *Septet Variations* to the sunlit beauty of the *Pastoral Sonata*. Dodgson's mastery of colour and texture is evident in his *Solway Suite*, while the early *Capriccio and Finale* treats the listener to a kaleidoscope of whimsical and witty interludes.

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21	Echoes of Autumn (1998)	5:35
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25–26	Capriccio and Finale (1952)	17:00

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Karolos

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Harriet Mackenzie, Violin I **1–12 25–26** • **Philippa Mo, Violin II** **1–12**
Sarah-Jane Bradley, Viola **1–12 16–26** • **Graham Walker, Cello** **1–15 25–26**
Craig Ogden, Guitar **13–15 21–24** • **Tanya Houghton, Harp** **1–12 16–20 25–26**

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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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