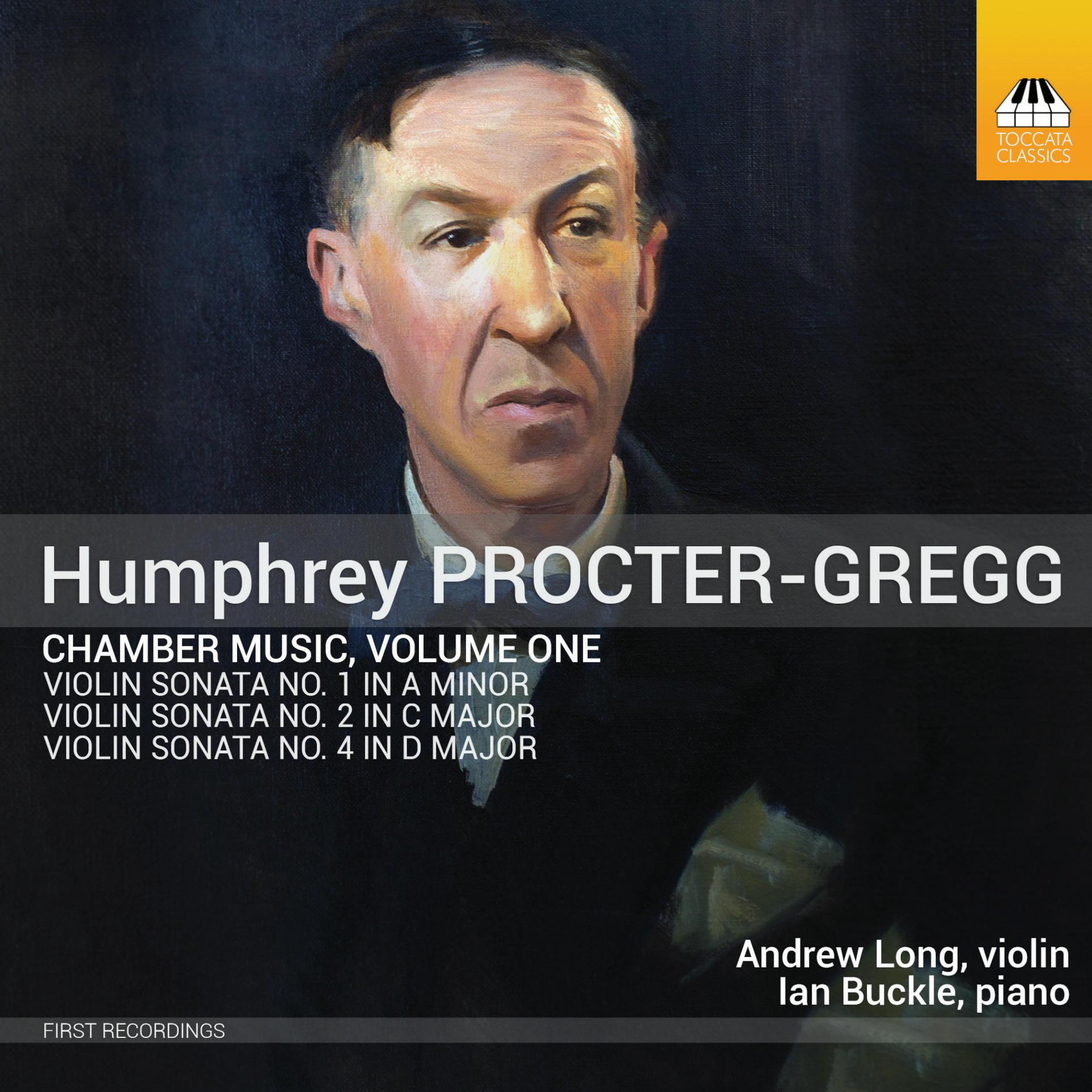
TOCCATA CLASSICS
Humphrey PROCTER-GREGG
CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE
VIOLIN SONATA NO. 1 IN A MINOR
VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2 IN C MAJOR
VIOLIN SONATA NO. 4 IN D MAJOR
Andrew Long, violin
Ian Buckle, piano
FIRST RECORDINGS

HUMPHREY PROCTER-GREGG: CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by Michael Almond and Robert Ashworth

Humphrey Procter-Gregg (universally known to students and colleagues as 'P-G') was born on 31 July 1895 in Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmoreland. He went to school at King William's College on the Isle of Man, and was Organ Scholar at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, where he also read history. At the Royal College of Music, studying composition under Sir Charles Stanford, he was also the Opera Scholar and subsequently gained a similar scholarship for further study at La Scala, Milan. Always passionate about opera in England (he was involved in the first production of Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover* in 1924), he worked tirelessly in various capacities for several operatic organisations, leading to a friendship with Sir Thomas Beecham, to whom he showed a lifelong devotion. In the 1930s he took up an appointment at Manchester University, founding the Music Department there and, in 1954, becoming its first Professor of Music. Later, in 1958, he was Director of the Carl Rosa Opera Company and the Touring Opera of the Arts Council. On leaving Manchester University in 1962, he became the first Director of the new London Opera Centre (set up to train young singers, répétiteurs and conductors), eventually retiring to Windermere in 1964 to devote himself to composition and opera translation. For services to music he was appointed CBE in 1972. The proceeds from two books he wrote about Beecham[1] enabled the commissioning of the magnificent bust of Sir Thomas by Michael Rizzello, which was unveiled in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, shortly before Procter-Gregg's death, in a nursing home in Grange-over-Sands, in Cumbria, on 13 April 1980.

[1] *Sir Thomas Beecham, Conductor and Impresario, as remembered by his Friends and Colleagues*, self-published, Windermere, 1973; and *Beecham Remembered*, Duckworth, London, 1976.

A man of wide-ranging interests in all the arts, Procter-Gregg was ever active in the cause of English music and musicians, and of opera in English. He was unflagging in his enthusiastic support of chamber music: he founded Ad Solem, a chamber-music group (and choir) initially made up of both staff and students, the name arising from Manchester University's motto 'Arduus ad solem', meaning 'striving towards the sun', a metaphor for aspiring to enlightenment, quoted from Virgil's *Aeneid*; the choir still exists. Procter-Gregg also helped to design the Manchester University concert hall in Denmark Road, a converted cinema acquired around 1960 and known simply as The Faculty. In its day, acoustically, it was one of the best halls for chamber music in the north of England.

Like Beecham, Procter-Gregg always had a deep love for and understanding of the music of Delius. Procter-Gregg's First Violin Sonata was dedicated to Albert Sammons, who premiered several works by Delius, including the Violin Concerto. In many of Procter-Gregg's works this aesthetic affinity with Delius is undoubtedly declared, even though he always speaks with a distinctive and personal voice, quite unmistakable once known. Indeed, as Edward Greenfield once wrote, reviewing a BBC broadcast: 'The announcer's introduction promised us music influenced by Delius […] but the style was fresher than that, more like early Bridge or Ireland'.[2] There is certainly a profound feeling for the beauty – and essential sadness – of the natural world, perhaps, and particularly the ageless beauty of the hills, the lakes and the dales of his native Westmoreland.

In some sixty years of activity as a composer, Procter-Gregg wrote solo piano pieces, instrumental sonatas, songs with piano accompaniment and several orchestral and choral works, although his extensive and varied output was overshadowed by other facets of his talented career. There are early piano études which date from the First World War, and his last work, a fine set of variations on an 'Air from Aberdeenshire' for violin and piano, was completed shortly before his death. Some works were taken up by the BBC; one 1962 broadcast included piano preludes, madrigals and his String Quartet No. 1.

[2] *The Guardian*, 1 August 1978.

He did enjoy local performances. One of us (Robert Ashworth) first came into contact with Procter-Gregg in 1975 as a horn student at the Royal Northern College of Music. He composed a Horn Sonata, which had its first performance in the Denmark Road concert hall, along with the Viola Sonata, Violin Sonata No. 2 and several pieces for solo piano, including several of the evocative *Westmoreland Sketches*. Maurice Aitchison, a colleague of Procter-Gregg at Manchester University, edited the 27 *Westmoreland Sketches* (published by Forsyth in Manchester in 1983) and performed many of the instrumental string sonatas with Clifford Knowles (violin), Paul Cropper (viola) and others.

Procter-Gregg's musical philosophy was, at heart, a simple one: he worshipped beauty in music and all other forms of art – he painted in his spare time. His melodic gifts and superb command of harmony enabled him to compose fluently in a late-Romantic vein, enriched by many personal stylistic fingerprints, epitomised by a natural fluidity and, despite some striking key juxtapositions, a seemingly inevitable ebb and flow that is immensely rewarding to discover. None of his music derives from any of the technical or aesthetic 'isms' of the twentieth-century musical mainstream: he was always content to write what he knew and what he felt, often evoking the essential sadness of the transience of natural beauty.

A chance meeting with Rachmaninov in London in 1930 (the circumstances are unknown) made a deep and lasting impression on Procter-Gregg. Rachmaninov's views on contemporary music were well known. In a response to the *Musical Courier* asking his thoughts about modern music, Rachmaninov stated:

> The new kind of music seems to come, not from the heart, but from the head. Its composers think rather than feel. They have not the capacity to make their works 'exult', as Hans von Bulow called it. They meditate, protest, analyze, reason, calculate, and brood – but they do not exult. It may be that they compose in the spirit of the times; but it may be, too, that the spirit of the times does not call for expression in music. If that is the case, rather than compile music that is thought but not felt, composers should remain silent and leave

contemporary expression to those authors and playwrights who are masters of the factual and literal, and do not concern themselves with soul states.[3]

In a reminiscence to one of us (Michael Almond, his former student), Procter-Gregg recounted that at their meeting Rachmaninov was seated in the wings of a London concert platform, wearing a huge Russian fur coat. Clasping Procter-Gregg's hand tightly and looking intently into his eyes, perhaps recognising someone who felt the same way about the importance of melody, he repeated the thoughts he had previously expressed: 'Composers think rather than feel. They have not the capacity to make their works "exult"'.[4] In these Sonatas it is evident that Procter-Gregg's music exults in the outpouring of emotional melody in a manner of which Rachmaninov might have approved.

Procter-Gregg was an endearing character, generous of spirit, with a fine sense of humour. He had a pronounced stammer ('the bane of his life', he said) and was blind in one eye, but neither of these setbacks deterred him from a life devoted to music. He was energetic, a lover of the natural world, an authority on gentians, of which his garden had a beautiful display, and a very keen walker, with a special rapport with animals. Basically, he was a very kind-hearted man, extremely supportive of students, colleagues and friends. Although he was extremely well connected musically throughout his life – school, Royal College of Music, the world of opera – he shunned any form of self-promotion.

The Violin Sonatas

Within their apparently conventional three-movement format, Procter-Gregg's four violin sonatas contain a wealth of melodic invention, rhythmic drive, ingenuity and skilful use of tonality. Changes of metre and development of themes combine with intense lyricism, expressing yearning and sadness, but are finely balanced with humour

[3] Quoted in Sergei Bertenson and Jay Leyda. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001, pp. 351–52.

[4] Reported in Michael Almond and Peter Hope. 'Two Memoirs – Humphrey Procter-Gregg (1895–1980)', *Manchester Sounds,* Manchester Musical Heritage Trust, Volume 4, 2003–4, pp. 71–97.

and zest. The complex development and interweaving of thematic material combine with Procter-Gregg's mastery of compositional structure and tonal harmony, so that although he was regarded in his time at Manchester University as an ultra-conservative professor, closer acquaintance with his music reveals an altogether more adventurous composer.

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor

Procter-Gregg's First Violin Sonata appears to have been written in the early to mid-1930s; the manuscript does not bear a date (frustratingly, Procter-Gregg rarely dated his manuscripts), but the work was published in 1936, by Boosey & Hawkes, giving a *terminus ante quem* for its composition. It was probably first performed in Manchester by Henry Holst[5] and R. J. Forbes.[6]

In the first movement, marked *Allegro* 1, a yearning tune in A minor, *con anima*, on the violin propels the music forwards to a *fortissimo* bridge passage that leads towards a lyrical second subject in B minor. Although a more serene affair, it is not without reference to the first theme, which seems to infiltrate and even coalesce with the second subject as it proceeds – so much so that the exposition seems to lean to monothematicism. All is revealed in the following development, where the two main themes appear in counterpoint as if in a duet, with the second subject on the violin. But the fervent first subject eventually gains the upper hand and monopolises the scene until the return of the bridge passage. The recapitulation now opens without the first subject but with the second tune in A major on the piano, as if to compensate for its neglect in

[5] The Danish Holst (1899–1991), a violin student of Axel Gade and Emil Telmányi (and, for piano and harmony, Carl Nielsen, Telmányi's father-in-law) in Copenhagen, studied with Willy Hess in Berlin, where, in 1923, he became leader of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Furtwängler, moving to England in 1931 and taking up the post of professor of violin at the Royal Manchester College of Music, as had Hess. In 1945 he took up a professorship at the Royal College of Music before returning to Denmark in 1954.

[6] Robert Jaffrey Forbes (1878–1958), born in Stalybridge, to the east of Manchester, began his musical career as an organist. After some years on the teaching staff of the Royal Manchester College of Music, he was appointed Principal in 1929. According to Michael Kennedy, in his *The History of the Royal Manchester College of Music, 1893–1972* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1971), 'Loveableness was not his most apparent characteristic, for he was a man who successfully concealed his feelings, and his enemies regarded him as a past master of intrigue'. He retired as Principal in 1953.

the exposition. A substantial coda in A minor redresses the balance, with the opening tune gaining dominance and sweeping the movement to an impassioned plagal cadence.

The slow movement, *Andante sostenuto* [2], has two main tonal centres, E and A flat, but not two distinctive tunes – it is more of an extended romantic melody with a brief diversion to C major along the way. Violin flourishes, swoops and a *fortissimo* climax on a high B subside to a calm close.

The element of contrast required to offset the previous romanticism and nostalgia, however beautiful, comes in the *Allegro brioso* finale [3]. The piano opens with an extended bravura solo passage, in which an important rhythmic motif is established. But a sudden change of mood, key from A minor to F major and time-signature from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ (mixed with $\frac{2}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$) leads the violin to take up the reins with a most endearing principal melody; it surges on with increasing urgency until a change to D major leads to a return of the main violin tune, with piano accompaniment derived from its bravura opening. Both instruments work up this ingenious conflicting dialogue, neither willing to cede to the other, until a triple *forte* climax marks the introduction of a new tune and a *calmandosi* passage that leads to a compressed recapitulation, starting with the violin tune in A major, but without the opening piano bravura which was extensively and sufficiently worked through in the development. There is a felicitous touch in an echo of the first movement before the brilliant and triumphant A major coda.

Violin Sonata No. 2 in C major

A pencil note on the original manuscript of the Second Sonata records its first broadcast by the BBC on 22 May 1951, probably given, once again, by Holst and Forbes. Since the Violin Sonata No. 3 was completed in 1947,[7] this and various other clues place its predecessor firmly in the war years of the early 1940s. It was frequently played in subsequent years by Clifford Knowles (leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

[7] The Third Sonata in F major, recorded by Richard Howarth (violin) and Ian Buckle (piano) on Dutton Epoch CDLX 7165, was written for Thomas Matthews, the former leader of the Hallé Orchestra, Head Professor of violin at the Royal Manchester College of Music. He was a well-known international figure, closely associated with the Delius and Elgar violin concertos, and with the Britten Violin Concerto: he gave the first UK performance on 6 April 1941, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Basil Cameron.

Orchestra) and Maurice Aitchison; a later performance, with Knowles accompanied by one of us (Michael Almond), took place in 1975 on the notable occasion of Procter-Gregg's 80th-birthday concert at the Music Faculty of the University of Manchester, at that time in Denmark Road. The same programme (which also included the Horn Sonata, played by both of us, and the Viola Sonata with Paul Cropper, and various piano *Sketches* and *Études* played by Michael Almond) was repeated the following spring at the Theatre in the Forest at Grizedale, near Coniston, in Procter-Gregg's beloved Lake District.

The apparently conventional three-movement format (C major – A minor – C major) conceals a wealth of melodic invention, rhythmic drive and ingenuity, and skilful use of tonality that serves to highlight the diatonicism and serenity of the C major opening and close of the Sonata. The piano opens [4] with a syncopated arpeggio accompaniment which insists on a $\frac{3}{2}$ rhythm, while the violin sings a beautiful $\frac{6}{4}$ melody in Procter-Gregg's characteristic *lusingando* ('coaxing', 'caressing', 'flattering' or 'alluring') style. This opening tune, marked *Allegro moderato*, is a strong presence throughout and makes several appearances, although in various guises and keys, and often fleeting and fragmented, so that one longs for a complete restatement of the ravishing opening paragraph. That is duly provided in the recapitulation – unexpectedly in E flat major, before it gets back on a tonic track, but with still more surprises in store, including a second-subject modulation into E minor. A beautiful coda has the violin harking back to the main tune, while the piano has arabesque-like decoration derived from the second subject. The movement is unified by mere suggestions of the opening tune – even a two-note appoggiatura is enough to evoke the prevailing *lusingando* mood.

As with the Clarinet Sonata (c. 1943), which preceded this Second Violin Sonata, the central movement, *Con moto e scherzando* [5], is a 'will-o'-the-wisp' scherzo, and its style and chromatic texture nicely set off the long, lyrical diatonic tunes of the outer movements. There is a subtle joke here: the violin sets the scene in the opening bar with a motif that pervades the whole movement. In the very last bar, the unaccompanied violin changes the emphasis of the beat as if teasing the piano with the real accentuation of the motif, reminiscent of the opening horn motifs of *Till Eulenspiegel* by Richard Strauss.

The finale, which opens *Molto moderato* [6], is an extensive movement with a substantial introduction, which contains an important motif for use later on. A big, swinging tune, *Allegro con brio*, on the violin carries all before it until modulating to E flat for the *più tranquillo* second subject and the development section, cast as an impassioned duet between the two instruments, using the introductory motif. The piano urges the violin into the recapitulated main tune with a return to the tonic key, and from this point the melodic drive is relentless until an *allargando* with double stoppings and trills brings a beautiful coda, *a tempo un poco sostentuto*. Tantalising references to fragments of previous tunes mingle with the haunting motif from the introduction in a calm, expressive close.

Violin Sonata No. 4 in D major

Procter-Gregg's D major Violin Sonata, his fourth and last, was completed in 1969, more than twenty years after its predecessor, and is a product of those years of retirement at his home in Windermere, after a busy operatic career in Italy and England between the wars, university life (1936–60) and his spell as Director of the London Opera Centre. But those last sixteen years produced many more compositions: four books of *Westmoreland Sketches* for solo piano, sonatas for viola, cello, oboe and horn, this final violin sonata and a number of songs and short piano pieces.

Violin Sonata No. 4, cast in Procter-Gregg's customary three movements, is characterised by long diatonic tunes over much chromaticism and modulation, supported by a strong tonal foundation. At the opening of the *Allegro moderato* [7], after a few bars of piano chords, the violin leads off with the principal theme, in D major, with phrase-lengths of 6+6+4 bars: much use is made of these phrase-lengths throughout the movement, particularly the opening rhythm. But for now a new rhythmic figure becomes insistent and leads to the second subject in F sharp minor, *poco meno mosso*. This new tune comes with its own inbuilt countersubject, reappearing later in inversion. A modulation to E minor (by way of G sharp minor) begins the development, which treats the opening at some length before a completely new tune appears in G minor. New *agitato* rhythmic figures, but also including an earlier one, lead to a climax in A major

when an *un poco tranquillo* beautifully ushers in the recapitulation. Now the second subject is presented in G minor, complete with countersubject, but this time without the subsequent inversion, shortening this section from the 35 bars of the exposition to twelve, so that both principal subjects can appear together contrapuntally: a felicitous touch which heralds a coda of considerable beauty.

The brevity of the central *Andante* in F sharp minor [8] – it is only 82 bars long – belie its importance. Many of its bars are in $\frac{10}{4}$ time and it is very much the emotional heart of the sonata. The structural simplicity of this movement (the form is ABABA) conceals a wealth of ingenious melodic manipulation. The piano leads off with a *cantando* melody, only to yield to the violin. A passionate extension with violin flourishes leads to section B, *poco più mosso* with undulating violin quaver triplets over piano crotchets in $\frac{4}{4}$, the theme of which is haunted by echoes of the opening of the Sonata. A *calando* into *Tempo I* brings a varied recapitulation of the opening until the return of B, with the violin over piano triplets and a final appearance of A.

A fondness for contrapuntal writing was always a feature of Procter-Gregg's style, and the finale [9] opens with an *Andante* three-part fugal exposition in $\frac{5}{4}$, before a *più mosso* urges the movement into an *Allegro giocoso* main theme. This tune bustles along gaily, only to be calmed momentarily by (a) the opening fugal subject, effectively extended into a full-blown second theme, and (b) a *mormorando* episode. But the main joyous tune insists on racing on, to exciting trills and double stoppings. These bars form the climax of the whole work, despite the absence of *fortissimo* indications. Marks of expression in this Sonata, as in other works by Procter-Gregg, are thin on the ground in places, but the expressiveness of the music is self-evident in performance. A master-stroke comes in the final bars: the main joyous energetic tune is unexpectedly hushed, *più calmato e piano*, by a three-note motif plucked from the main tune. It is as if the *Allegro giocoso* will not be stilled and at the last moment sneaks in a reminder of happy times gone by.

Michael Almond was a student in the Faculty of Music, Manchester University, graduating Mus.B.Hons. and then at the Royal Manchester College of Music in piano performance (1955–58). He was Lecturer in Music at Salford University (1973–97). Robert Ashworth is currently Principal Horn with the Orchestra of Opera North in Leeds, a position he has held since 1978. In addition to his Opera North commitments, he has made guest appearances with several UK orchestras, most recently at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He is also involved in music publishing: his 'edition db' features many first editions of Procter-Gregg's compositions.

Photograph: Michael Ardron

After leaving his position as Assistant Leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, **Andrew Long** is now Acting Co-leader of the Orchestra of Opera North and Leader of the New World Ensemble. As a soloist he has given concerto and recital performances throughout Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Norway and Poland, where he gave a performance of Elgar's Violin Sonata that was televised live. He is also a regular recitalist at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, the country home of the Duke of Westminster. He led the Performing Arts Symphony Orchestra throughout the UK for many years, where he regularly performed concertos and solos to audiences of over 16,000 people, and was a tutor at Chetham's School of Music and Manchester University. He also taught privately for Sir Yehudi, later Lord, Menuhin and was invited to accept a post at his specialist music school. A keen exponent of contemporary music, Andrew Long has commissioned many new works and recorded on the Naxos, ASC and Campion labels. In 2016, Naxos recommended his recording, with the New World Ensemble, of Kevin Malone's *Eighteen Minutes* as one of their Top 20 tracks – from a catalogue of 1.9 million. His recording, with Ian Buckle, of music for violin and piano by Sir Edward German, also released on Naxos, includes previously unrecorded material. His recent commission of Kevin Malone's new violin concerto, *A Day in the Life*, has been performed several times with the Orchestra of Opera North, and there are plans to take it to Ukraine and the United States. On a lighter and more unusual note, he conducts, arranges for and presents the Andy Long Orchestra, where he

indulges his passion for light music and the easy-listening genre. He has a library of light music numbering many thousands of scores, and is dedicated to upholding the tradition of British light music.
www.newworldensemble.com


Photograph: Mark McNulty

Ian Buckle maintains a varied performing career, working as soloist, accompanist, chamber musician and orchestral pianist. He enjoys long-standing relationships with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (RLPO) and the John Wilson Orchestra and has appeared as soloist with both on numerous occasions. He has also played concertos with the Royal Philharmonic, the Orchestra of Opera North, Sinfonia Viva and the Manchester Concert Orchestra. Committed to contemporary music, he has been the pianist in Ensemble 10/10 since its inception by RLPO players in 1997, premiering many new works in venues nationwide that include the Wigmore Hall; they have also been heard on BBC Radio 3. He frequently collaborates with the former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion in recitals of piano music and poetry, recent programmes including 'Shropshire and Other Lads', a celebration of A. E. Housman; 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', a commemoration of the First World War; and 'Philip Larkin's England'. Ian Buckle is the director and pianist of Pixels Ensemble, a collective of chamber musicians with a shared passion for performing repertoire from the Classical period to the present. He teaches at the Universities of Leeds and Liverpool and is an examiner with ABRSM. Numerous album releases include transcriptions for cello and piano with Jonathan Aasgaard (*Something Borrowed*, MSR Classics MS1378), a recital of new works for clarinet and piano with former BBC Young Musician winner Mark Simpson (*Prism*, NMCD139) and an album of English music with the clarinettist Nicholas Cox (*The Thurston Connection*, Naxos 8.571357). A recording of Gershwin's *New York Rhapsody* with the John Wilson Orchestra live from the Royal Albert Hall is available on iTunes, and Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*, where he featured, alongside his duo partner Richard Casey, with Vasily Petrenko and the RLPO, was recently released (Warner Classics 9029575952).

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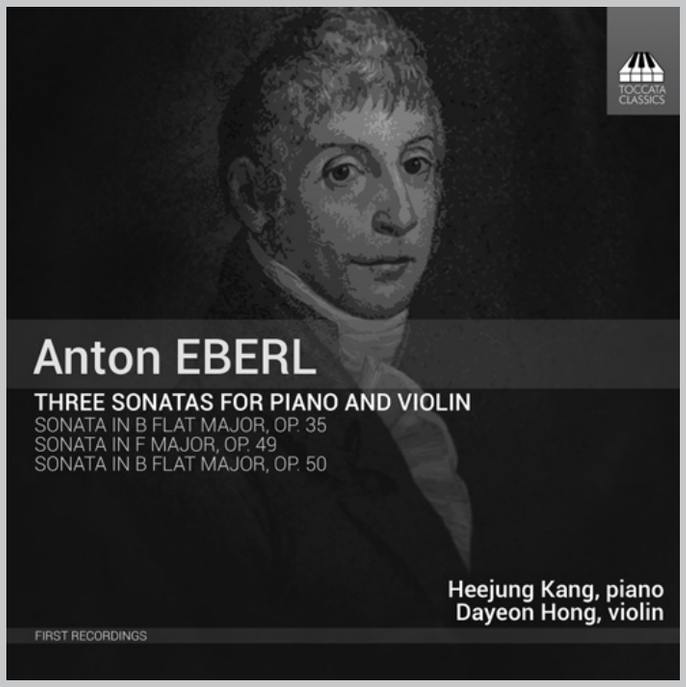

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Recorded on 10 and 11 September 2018 in the Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall in Manchester University
Engineering and editing: Richard Scott and Daniel Lock, RAS Audio

This recording has been made possible with funds from the Procter-Gregg Trust and generous donations from the Ida Carroll Trust, the Douglas Steele Foundation and the John Ireland Trust. Thanks go also to Manchester University for use of the Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall.

Booklet essay: Michael Almond and Robert Ashworth
Cover: Portrait of Humphrey Procter-Gregg by Alfred Livesley (1949) used by kind permission of the Music Faculty of Manchester University
Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and lay-out: KerryPress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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HUMPHREY PROCTER-GREGG Chamber Music, Volume One

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor (c. 1934)	**21:36**
1 I *Allegro*	7:51
2 II *Andante sostenuto*	5:45
3 III *Allegro brioso*	8:00
Violin Sonata No. 2 in C major (c. 1943)	**28:07**
4 I *Allegro moderato*	10:16
5 II *Con moto e scherzando*	5:18
6 III *Molto moderato – Andante quasi Lento – Allegro con brio*	12:33
Violin Sonata No. 4 in D major (1969)	**28:48**
7 I *Allegro moderato*	9:18
8 II *Andante*	9:31
9 III *Andantino – Allegro giocoso*	9:59

TT **78:35**

Andrew Long, violin
Ian Buckle, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS