



Eugene Goossens 1893-1962

CD1	[66'24]	23 Hommage à Debussy, Op. 28 (1937)
Kaleidoscope, Op. 18 (1917)	[15′09]	Two Pieces, Op. 56 (1938)
I. Good Morning	0′55	24 Bonzo's Dance
2 II. Promenade	1′44	25 Pikki's Lament
3 III. The Hurdy-Gurdy Man	1′00	Os Carriagia (1060)
IV. The March of the Wooden Soldier	1′09	26 Capriccio (1960)
5 V. The Rocking Horse	1′01	27 Concert Study, Op. 10 (1914)
6 VI. The Punch and Judy Show	0'45	Nature Poems, Op. 25
7 VII. A Ghost Story	2'15	
VIII. The Old Musical Box	0'44	28 I. Andante moderato e con moto (Awakening)
9 IX. The Clockwork Dancer	1′04	29 II. Andantino grazioso (Pastoral)
10 X. Lament for a Departed Doll	1'44	30 III. Allegro molto e feroce (Bacchanal)
11 XI. A Merry Party	0'44	
12 XII. Good Night	2'03	CD2
Four Conceits, Op. 20 (1917)	[6'09]	JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685-1750 arr. Eugene Goossens
13 I. The Gargoyle	1′23	1 Andante from Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 (1932)
14 II. Dance Memories	1′36	2 Rhythmic Dance for two pianos, Op. 30 (1920)
15 III. A Walking Tune	2′08	E hilytilline balice for two plants, Op. 30 (1920)
16 IV. The Marionette Show	0′55	Forlane and Toccata (1960)
		3 Forlane
Ships – Three preludes for piano, Op. 42 (1924)	[8'20]	4 Toccata
17 I. The Tug	2′10	F4 - f C C C O 22 (1022)
18 II. The Tramp	3′12	East of Suez – Suite for piano, Op. 33 (1922)
19 III. The Liner	2′53	5 Overture
Two Studies, Op. 38 (1923)	[5'42]	6 Incidental Music to Scene 1
20 I. 'Folk Tune'	2′48	7 A street in Pekin
21 II. 'Scherzo'	2′54	Prelude to Scene 3 (The Buddhist Temple)
11. JOHO120	2 54	Prelude to Scene 4 (The Andersons' House)
Page to Paderewski (1941)	2'28	Prelude to Scene 5 (Courtyard of the Temple)

2'39 [3'23] 1'17 2'06 2'33 2'39 [17'22] 6'41 5'43 4'58 [70'03]

4'09 3'44 [4'46] 2'49 1'56 [25'50] 5'09 1'19 6'20 3'31 4'20 5'02

	L Ecole en Crinoline – Ballet, Op. 29 (1921-22)	[31 20
11	Prelude	3'01
12	Curtain rises: Entrance of Miss Jones to school room, where she angrily	
	notes the absence of Amelia, and departs.	2′05
13	Entrance of Amelia, and Dance	0'57
14	Re-entry of Miss Jones who admonishes Amelia angrily. Classroom scene.	2′20
15	Students dance a quadrille.	2'27
16	Entrance of the Reverend Joseph Hopwell: he timidly hands Miss Jones a	
	bouquet and inspects the classroom.	2′14
17	Amelia dashes off to fetch tea. Scene with the curate.	2′11
18	The curate gives an invitation to a garden party at the vicarage.	0'42
19	Miss Jones accepts joyfully. Angry scene with Amelia in which she is handed a dunce's	
	cap and put in the corner. The other students prepare for the party.	1′27
20	Everyone departs for the party while Amelia is left behind playing a march on	
	the spinet. The door closes.	1′02
21	Amelia dashes the dunce's cap from her head and rushes to the window to watch her	
	friends departing. She finally resolves to be good, returns to her seat and falls asleep.	1′12
22	The dream sequence, in which Amelia becomes the ballerina of her dreams.	3′08
23	Miss Jones appears searching for the curate: she sees and pursues him, finally catching	
	his cloak, which remains in her hands while he rushes off. Mortified, she disappears.	1′31
24	Amelia is thrilled by the return of the curate, and she flirts with him.	0'45
25	He finally gives in and they dance joyfully together.	1′17
26	They stop suddenly on perceiving Miss Jones' return.	1′36
27	The other pupils enter, dancing. Amelia relates her dream. Miss Jones and the	
	curate return. Miss Jones, who has been putting her bouquet in a vase, turns to see Amelia	
	teasing the curate. Miss Jones faints at the sight! The pupils rush to her aid and revive her.	1′21
28	Amelia forces the curate to his knees beside Miss Jones.	0′34
29	Finale. Miss Jones promptly recovers and everyone dances merrily. Amelia gives	
	Miss Jones and the curate her blessing. General gaiety.	1′27
	Total Playing Time	137'27
	Total Flaying Firms	10/2/

L'Ecole en Crinoline - Ballet, Op. 29 (1921-22)

Antony Gray piano

Behind the often severe facade of the composer and conductor Eugene Goossens lurked an almost naive attachment to childhood, and to some of the larger manifestations of modern transport – ships, planes and, especially, trains. Within his compositional output these obsessions achieve their fullest musical expression in his piano music, most of which consists of collections of descriptive miniatures.

[31'20]

The other aspect of Goossens' piano music to note is that very little of it escaped orchestration by the composer, Goossens' work as a conductor, administrator and entrepreneur. amongst other things, would have been guite enough to fill the life of most ordinary mortals. and yet on top of this he produced a body of work amounting to 65 numbered compositions (including two symphonies, two operas, four concertos and a vast oratorio) as well as several un-numbered works. This again would have taken most composers a good part of their lives to achieve. He was therefore not averse to padding out his orchestral catalogue with orchestrations of his piano music, producing four different versions in two cases.

The Goossens family was one of the cornerstones of British musical life in the 20th century. Originally from Belgium, Eugene's father and grandfather were both distinguished operatic conductors, and his four brothers and sisters were exceptionally gifted instrumentalists

who all, apart from Adolphe who was killed in World War I, went on to have long and distinguished careers. Eugene, born in 1893, was the eldest of the five. He underwent a conventional musical training, studying piano and violin, but it soon became apparent that he was more than ordinarily gifted.

Goossens studied at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford as his composition teacher Stanford was a brilliant teacher and most of the well-known composers of the first half of the 20th century came under his influence at some stage. He was not, however, a progressive, and was considerably dismayed with some of the modernist tendencies Goossens, along with several of his fellow students of the pre-war years, was greatly excited by the extraordinary sound world and harmonic language of Debussy, whom he had heard conducting La Mer and Prelude à l'aprèsmidi d'un faune in 1908. In 1911, Diaghilev brought Stravinsky's The Firebird to London, and this proved to be an equally revelatory experience. These two influences, the impressionism of Debussy and early Stravinsky, and the English environment of Stanford and his students, can be seen as seminal in Goossens' developing musical language and style.

His first published work, a student piece submitted to Stanford, was a set of orchestral variations on a Chinese theme, completed in 1912, shortly after the experience of *The Firebird*, and probably directly influenced by it. There followed a series of chamber and orchestral works, and in 1914 the first solo piano work, **Concert Study**, Op. 10. In an article in *Musical Opinion* in 1921 surveying Goossens' work to date (a rare honour for one still in his 20s) this is described as a 'tour de force of artifice'. It is certainly a slight work, and as ungrateful to play as many piano concert studies are, but it is saved, surely, from charges of complete artifice by the magical moment just before the final rising climax.

After this, the piano features in a number of classic chamber works and songs, including some majestic and impressive writing in Rhapsody with cello. And in his twelve short pieces for piano of 1917, the Kaleidoscope, Op. 18, Goossens produced one of his finest works. Deceptively simple, these works are in a direct line from Schumann's Scenes from Childhood. Not pieces to be played by children (although they are one of Goossens' few works still in print, as they make suitable additions to examination syllabuses), but pieces about children and childhood, they are perhaps also evidence of a nostalgia for his own happy childhood and the close relationship to his family that Goossens was to carry through his compositional life. The pieces traverse the whole range of childhood concerns, from jolly games and rather sentimental dolly pieces to horror

stories and slightly sinister wooden soldiers. The Promenade is a particularly striking piece, written largely in five-four time, and using daring but beautiful chromaticism, suggesting that things are possibly not what they seem, and there are darker elements lurking below the surface. Several of the pieces, 'Good Night' in particular, show Goossens' genuine melodic gifts, which, perhaps, in some of his later works were overshadowed by what some critics saw as over-intellectualisation. Goossens was naturally very pleased with the work's success, and played it himself many times. He also capitalised on it by making no fewer than four orchestral versions of all or parts of it.

Shortly after Kaleidoscope, and still in 1917, Goossens published his Four Conceits. These can almost be seen as a continuation of the idea. behind Kaleidoscope - another promenade, another puppet show, another little waltz and a gargovle - but this time the pieces are longer. the technical demands slightly greater, and the style more sophisticated. The 'Dance Memories' is even written bi-tonally, with the right hand in A major and the left in E-flat. This sort of thing can perhaps be seen now as a rather artificial device, more interesting for a composer than anyone else. A listener will find the piece slightly quirky harmonically, and the pianist will just find it awkward to read. Again, Goossens made two arrangements of Four Conceits, the first in 1918 for orchestra, when he considerably extended

the last movement, and the second in 1932 for military band. Four Conceits was dedicated to his friend William Murdoch, for whom he had a great admiration, and who was to give the first performances of both of Goossens' piano and violin sonatas with the violinist Albert Sammons.

The first of these two sonatas was written the following year and was one of Goossens' most substantial works to date. Although he never wrote a sonata for piano alone, his next solo piano work, the Nature Poems of 1919, is on the same grand scale, and is, if anything, more successful. The obvious parallel is the last act of Ravel's ballet Daphnis and Chloe of 1912. How aware Goossens was that he was copying Ravel's structure is not documented, but a more obvious tribute is made to Debussy. Goossens puts the titles of his three pieces at the end of each piece in brackets, as Debussy had in his piano preludes, suggesting perhaps that the titles were almost an afterthought and not to be taken too much into account when listening to the works. They are by far the most difficult and challenging of Goossens' solo works, and were appropriately dedicated to one of the foremost pianists of the time, and a lifelong friend and poker partner of Goossens', Benno Moiseiwitsch, who played them in a Queen's Hall recital in 1920. Moiseiwitsch was not an ardent champion of contemporary music and the Nature Poems did not become a part of his repertoire, and he certainly never recorded them. In fact no one

else took them up and they have remained virtually unknown and, until now, unrecorded. This is somewhat surprising given the undeniable stature of the Nature Poems, and the high regard they were certainly held in by a number of writers who had at least seen the score. Arthur Bliss, a friend and fellow student. wrote in 1921 that he had sent them to a friend in Germany as an example of one of the best pieces of contemporary British piano music. Goossens had originally conceived the second and third pieces as orchestral works but finally changed his mind and turned the sketches into piano pieces, adding a first movement. In 1938 he returned to them and did finally make orchestral versions of the second and third pieces, finally deciding that the first was too pianistic.

The next and final major solo work was the only one to escape orchestration or other reworking. **Ships**, consisting of three preludes, was written in 1924, and is a rare public display of a particular passion of this very private individual. This may be one reason why he was happy for it to remain in the more intimate genre of the solo piano repertoire. In their own unassuming way, these preludes were expressing a type of modernism perhaps unique in England, where Vaughan Williams and Grainger were rediscovering folk song, and Bax was exploring his Irish roots. Goossens, and a couple of European composers, such as Honegger and

Martinů, were exploring the technological achievements of their own day.

The remaining pieces are all slighter in scale,

though not necessarily in quality. The Two

Studies of 1923 are not technical studies as such, but are studies in form. The folk song used by Goossens was first sung to him by Peter Warlock before the War, and Goossens obviously thought highly of it. He arranged it in 1935 as the second of three pictures for flute and piano, which he later orchestrated, and he later used both the Scherzo and Folk Tune as the second and third movements of his 1960 Divertissement. (Mystery surrounds a further set of Studies for piano, listed by Goossens in his own catalogue as Op. 27 and withdrawn. No manuscript or other copy has as yet surfaced, and it is possible that in fact the two works are the same.) The Two Pieces about Bonzo and Pikki were written in New Mexico for Goossens' daughter Sidonie. and were published in a progressive tutor called Masters of our Day: Educational Series. The short Hommage à Debussy was written for inclusion in a collaborative publication issued by the French periodical La Revue musicale. That Goossens was the only English composer invited to contribute showed the international reputation he was already acquiring. Other composers included Stravinsky, Dukas, Ravel and Satie.

The **Homage to Paderewski** was written in 1941 for a collection originally intended to honour the 50th anniversary of Paderewski's Carnegie Hall debut. The pianist died, however, a few months before the date and the collection came out as a posthumous tribute. Goossens' piece, although his shortest published work, being only sixteen bars long, is a powerful and moving meditation on Chopin's C minor Prelude.

Goossens' final solo piano work, **Capriccio**, is a curious little piece written for the Chester Centenary Album, a collection now remembered only because it included Poulenc's beautiful third *Novelette*. Goossens based this piece on his own 'Hurdy-Gurdy Man' from *Kaleidoscope*, originally published by Chester more than 40 years earlier. It is a skittish little piece, unable to settle down to anything for more than a few bars at a time before whizzing off somewhere else, but ultimately a miniature of sophisticated charm and wit.

Completing this collection are another five works which in some way do not come under the category of original solo works. Obviously this is the case with the **Rhythmic Dance** of 1920, a powerful and exciting piece for two pianos which showcases Goossens' extraordinary facility with polyphonic writing. The original genesis of this work was as a piece for pianola, a medium which was not going to guarantee many performances. The version for two pianos quickly

followed, with subsequent versions for orchestra and band in 1927 and 1932.

In 1932 the British pianist Harriet Cohen asked all her composer friends to contribute a Bach arrangement to a collection that was to be published by Oxford University Press. She was a great champion of contemporary music, and her composer friends included all the major figures of early 20th-century British music, all, with the possible exception of W. Gillies Whittaker, still household names. The majority of these composers chose chorale preludes to arrange, Bax arranged an organ Fantasia, and Goossens was the only one to choose an instrumental work. His arrangement of the second movement of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 shows a real understanding of the possibilities of the piano, both technical and sonorous.

One of Goossens' last completed works was the Forlane and Toccata of 1960, which he wrote at the request of a clavichord-playing friend. The early music movement in England was well under way with the Dolmetsch family and their circle making a great impression, but few composers had considered writing new works for these instruments. Goossens must have experimented with the clavichord as his piece fits the technique and sonority perfectly. The two short dances are based on old forms, and are included here on the piano as the music is too attractive to languish unperformed.

In 1922 Goossens was commissioned by the director Basil Dean to write incidental music for Somerset Maugham's new play, East of Suez. The play had an initial run of 209 performances at the Haymarket Theatre in London, and Goossens conducted the opening night before handing over the baton to the resident staff conductor for the rest of the run. He was not impressed with the audience reaction to his music, as this extract from his autobiography Overture and Beginners shows: "Except for some atmospheric melodrama throughout the play, the rest of my contribution, consisting of an overture and some music for the entr'actes. might just as well not have been written, for all the attention it got from the London public. Entr'acte music makes an appropriate background for a jabbering audience, but a composer gullible enough to suppose it holds their attention is laying in store considerable heartache." The play is set partly in the far east. and Goossens had tracked down a hand of Chinese musicians in Limehouse in London's east end to get the authentic flavour of their music, which he wanted to incorporate into his score. The Chinese musicians attended the opening night, and were reportedly pleased with the results. Goossens used no Chinese instruments in the orchestration, which was for a small theatre orchestra, plus harp, piano and percussion, and the musical language crosses between the Chinese-influenced and a richly

chromatic romanticism. Much of the music has great beauty, and Goossens was understandably reluctant to let it go to waste, as much theatre music inevitably does. He made a piano transcription of the first five movements of the music and published it as a suite the same year. It is somewhat strange that he did not also issue it as an orchestral suite, but it could of course be played in this form. Three further pieces exist in the full score, but they are relatively insubstantial, and use music already heard in earlier movements. The play originally starred Meggie Albanesi and Basil Rathbone, and was later made into a successful film, but without Goossens' music.

From around the same time as the music for Fast of Suez dates Goossens' most substantial score for solo piano, the ballet score L'Ecole en Crinoline. Goossens had been working for some time with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in repertoire and a theatrical environment that he loved conducting major ballet scores by Debussy, Stravinsky, Ravel, Falla and others, so it is not surprising that he thought of writing a ballet himself. He more or less completed the score over two years, 1921-22, and played it through on the piano to Diaghilev some time later. Having been turned down by Diaghilev he approached the Paris Opera; from Overture and Beginners again: "In Paris I saw Rouche, the sapient director of the Paris Opera, who had asked to hear my ballet, 'L'Ecole en Crinoline'.

Diaghiley, who I had hoped would produce it, had not cared much for the subject, based on an early Victorian scenario. He probably found it excessively stylised, though he never actually said so. Finally Rouche, who was on the lookout for a novelty for his corps de ballet, arranged an audition in his room at the Opera, and I fumbled through my piece feeling something like a pupil at the conservatoire playing for the Director. 'C'est épatant, Monsieur! Mais c'est pour Diaghilev, pas pour moi!' (It's splendid, sir, but it's for Diaghilev, not for me!) And so I was back where I started and took my leave of Rouche..." Given the type of subjects Diaghilev was creating, it is hardly surprising that he rejected L'Ecole en Crinoline, and as English ballet at the time was virtually non-existent there were really no other immediate possibilities of having the work staged. Goossens put the score aside and it wasn't until 1960 that he thought again of trying to get the ballet staged. He wrote to longterm friend and colleague Dame Ninette de Valois, the creator and still at the time the director of the Royal Ballet, in September 1960:

"A long time has passed since we last met. The thought of you arouses always happy memories in my mind of those good Diaghiley days.

"I wonder whether, in the near future, you would give me the pleasure of your company at lunch, so that I may get your advice about an unperformed Ballet of mine, which I feel might prove attractive, and not tax too greatly the

finances or the resources of the Royal Ballet. It dates from the '20s, and Serge toyed with the idea of producing it, but he had more immediate worries and the project fell through.

"I have a scenario of it, which calls for a small group of girl dancers and three principals, of which one is a male dancer with a keen sense of characterization. It is humorous and mid-Victorian, Its title is 'The Crinoline School' and was originally written by a now defunct American lady for Pavlova. However, she commissioned me to write the music for it, and the score. which in places still has to be completed, has lain fallow ever since those far off days. I looked at it the other day and realized it would have a quaint and, I think, immediate appeal to the people who care little for the profundities of a 'message' or deeply introspective music. Indeed it contains polkas and marches with a strong Victorian flavour. Anyway I will defer further account of it until the pleasure of our meeting, if you can so arrange it..."

De Valois obviously responded appropriately, and in December Goossens replied:

"I was delighted to hear from you, for you are such a world traveller (like me) that it seemed after I had sent you my letter, ages might elapse before you read it.

"I will certainly telephone you soon to give myself the pleasure of your company at lunch and tell you a few things about my Ballet which might prove of interest to you. It is no worldshattering opus and is more of an early 19thcentury pastiche than a work contemporary in feeling. Perhaps this is all to the good."

Alas, nothing was to come of their meeting, if it took place, and Goossens died without having heard the work performed. In fact he never completed the orchestration, so the piano score is the only complete version left to us today. At some point in the intervening 40 years Goossens had orchestrated around two thirds of the score for small classical orchestra. apparently using a copyist's piano score which is complete up to exactly the same point. It seems that when making the orchestration Goossens did not have access to his complete piano score. In his second note to de Valois, he says that the work remains incomplete in some places. In the score there are a number of suggestions for cuts, transpositions and other slight changes, but in fact there is only one short transitional section towards the end of the score which is sketched in, and it requires only a modulatory passage for completion. Otherwise the score is in fact complete. There are also a number of marks in the complete piano score indicating that Goossens was looking at the possibility of extracting an orchestral suite. Nothing was to come of this either.

The last decade of Goossens' life saw very little compositional activity. Following the massive

oratorio Apocalypse, finished in 1954, and which took four years to complete, there were only two major works before his death in 1962. It must have been very tempting for him to be able to have a new score, and especially one of considerable scale, produced at last. However by the 1950s, his compositional style was well and truly out of favour, his works had more or less disappeared from the concert platform, and a work such as L'Ecole en Crinoline would surely have been seen as anachronistic, even in the world of classical ballet. In the end, however, the music is of such charm, wit and, as well, pathos, and the story no sillier than many in the current ballet repertoire, that there is no reason for it not to be finally staged now. The piano score was finally performed for the first time in London in 1994, but the orchestration remains incomplete.

As a piano score it works remarkably well. Goossens was an excellent pianist and obviously wrote the work at the piano. Furthermore he often sanctioned performances of his orchestral reductions as chamber works with piano – the Oboe Concerto, and the later Concert Piece for oboe, two harps and orchestra or piano, for example. Given his habit of rescoring his works for different media it would have been highly likely that at some stage he may have published the work complete as a piano piece, or at least drawn a suite from it, as in the case of Fast of Suez.

If Eugene Goossens' works are not as well known as they surely deserve to be it is possibly

due to the fact that he never had the time to promote them himself. Composition was a vocation and a necessity to him, and his punishing schedule as a conductor left him little time for this side of his creative life. This, coupled with a naturally modest disposition, left little time for the practical and tedious business of promotion, and as any composer will testify, no one else will do it for you. It is also probably true that towards the end of his life his musical language, to which he had stayed true throughout his composing career, was considered dated by the modernists of the time. Hopefully we can now take a more balanced view of things and restore a major composer to the position of respect he deserves.

Antony Gray

Extracts from Goossens' personal correspondence and autobiography, *Overture and Beginners*, reproduced by kind permission of Pamela Main of the Sir Eugene Goossens Archive.

Antony Gray

Antony Gray was born and educated in Victoria, Australia. He graduated from the Victorian College of Arts where he studied with Roy Shepherd and Stephen McIntyre, and won several awards, including the Allans Keyboard Award two years running. In 1982 he received a scholarship from the Astra foundation to continue his studies in London with Joyce Rathbone and Geoffrey Parsons.

He has performed widely throughout Australia, Britain and Europe, and has recorded the complete piano works of Williamson, Goossens and Poulenc as well as discs of Grainger, Bach transcriptions and the late piano works of Brahms. He has appeared on Australian and British radio and television, both as soloist and with other artists including Mischa Maisky, Sherban Lupu and Martin Robertson. He has performed at London's South Bank, Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square and as soloist with the Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican, as well as at several British and continental festivals

He is an active champion of new music, and in 1994 gave the first complete performance of the four sonatas by Malcolm Williamson, having premiered the third in Australia in 1993. He has given many other first performances, including several works written for him. Among the

distinguished contemporary music groups with which he has worked are kion, The Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, London New Music, Tapestry, The Cambridge New Music Players and Double Image. He was a member of the jury for the 1994 Cornelius Cardew composition competition, and is currently the British representative of the Australian Music Centre.

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Recording Engineers Mike Ross-Trevor (CD1), Allan Maclean (CD2)

Editors Ralph Mace (CD1), Murray Khouri (CD2)

Recordings Manager Virginia Read

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Cover and Booklet Design Imagecorp Pty Ltd Cover Photo Window at Marseilles, 1927 (oil on canvas) by Christopher Wood (1901-30). Private Collection © Whitford Fine Art, London, UK

CD1 recorded 2, 3 October 1995 and 14 September 1996 at Whitfield Street Studios, London.

CD2 recorded 3, 4, 5, 10 March 1998 in the Eugene Goossens Hall of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Ultimo Centre, Sydney.

Antony Gray and ABC Classics would like to thank Pamela Main, Joyce Rathbone, Julian Dupuy and Matthew Freeman for their assistance.

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