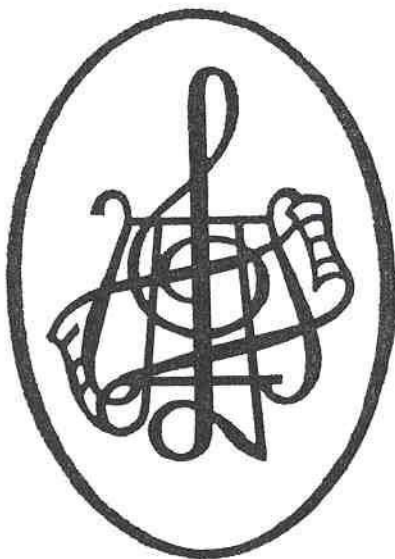


Background information about the  
Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra  
to accompany the  
Klassic Haus Restorations  
release of the  
Bliss/Tippett/Previn/Pinkett  
Argo recording



Leicestershire  
County School of Music

Following the success of *Dead in Tune*, there were soon plans afoot to record the full orchestra - around 110 players - in a programme of purely orchestral music. Just to put this into context, the LSSO was second only to the National Youth Orchestra at the time and was widely acknowledged as being the best school orchestra in the country. Having worked with many illustrious conductors over the years the orchestra was privileged to have Sir Michael Tippett as its Patron and regular guest conductor. One evening, during an interview on the Simon Dee show, the newly appointed principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, Andre Previn, threw into the conversation that he would like to work with the LSSO. Andre was a friend of Herbert Chappell and Bert had told Andre that he would be ideal for the LSSO. To hear this confirmed live on national TV was tremendous news. Our regular conductor, the great Eric Pinkett, contacted Previn the following morning and the outcome was that he agreed to take part in the new Argo recording, personally choosing three pieces to direct.

Previn and Tippett were signed up but that left another 20 minutes of an LP to fill. The repertoire in 1970 included *Introduction and Allegro* by Bliss and this was a big favourite with the orchestra. When approached, Sir Arthur was very enthusiastic and he agreed to conduct this on the record. The contents of the new record were now finalised. Bliss arrived in the studio on the first day of the session (Saturday, August 29th), and his tempi were faster than Eric Pinkett's. After this rather unsettling start, one complete take followed by some small repairs got the job done. Sir Arthur was very professional and easy to work with. By the end of day one Bryan Kelly's *Cuban Suite* had also been recorded. Eric Pinkett conducted the work and the session was attended by the composer, whom we had worked with on previous occasions. Day one was complete and we then had the task of tidying the studio for the London Philharmonic Orchestra who had a session on Sunday. We then headed back to the Royal Hotel in Russell Square and took the next day off.

Our second day in the studio was on Monday, August 31st and this was potentially a challenge. Bliss and Kelly were known quantities. Not so Andre Previn. We hadn't even met him before but were scheduled to record three works in one day. It sounded like a difficult proposition but it didn't turn out that way at all. He breezed into the back of the studio while we were playing *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. Having just returned from honeymoon with his wife, Mia Farrow, he apologised for his unshaven appearance, sight read Herbert Chappell's *Panache*, sharpened up some of the rhythms and then set down a complete take. This overture was written for the LSSO and Herbert Chappell was in the control room listening to the performance. Previn's *Overture to a Comedy* was nigh on impossible to play with its high level of virtuosity but the final result is really quite exciting. Previn's third chosen work was Ireland's *Elegy for Strings*. Andre Previn was at the height of his fame in the 1970s and he was a real pleasure to work with - dynamic but very demanding, especially of the string players.

Finally we came to Sir Michael and his *Shires Suite*, another work written for the orchestra and premiered at the 1970 Cheltenham Festival. Two movements were recorded: *Interlude II* and *Epilogue*. In the *Interlude II* he just couldn't get the right percussion sound. Cellist Martin Walker accidentally hit one of the huge aluminium ash trays, which were scattered around the studio floor, with his bow. "That's it!" shouted Michael and an ash tray was passed through the ranks to the percussion section.

The final LP was released in April 1971 and received excellent reviews in The Gramophone, Records & Recording and HiFi news.

# Sir Arthur to help schools orchestra

SIR ARTHUR BLISS is the latest in the impressive list of famous composers and conductors who have agreed to work with the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra will be travelling to Oxford at the beginning of next month to rehearse with Sir Arthur and with their patron Sir Michael Tippett for the Cheltenham Festival.

Sir Arthur will conduct his own piano concerto which, with the distinguished soloist Frank Wibaud at the keyboard, will have a performance at Loughborough University on May 1, prior to Cheltenham in July.

Cheltenham will see the first performances of a new work written especially for the Schools Symphony Orchestra by one of Britain's foremost young composers Richard Rodney Bennett, and of Sir Michael Tippett's complete five-movement suite for orchestra and choir, also written for Leicestershire—three sections of which have already been played. The work's title will probably be "The Shires Suite".

## New booklet

Other engagements planned for the Orchestra this year include an appearance at the Peterborough Festival where it is to give the inaugural concert at the end of this month, and at Long Eaton Festival on May 9. There will, too, be the customary Continental tour in September.

A new 22-page booklet about the Orchestra has just been published which describes its aims, ambitions and achievements with a history of its formation and growth.

The greater part of the booklet however, is given over to extracts from Press reports both in this country and abroad — all of which, without exception, add up to a veritable hymn of praise.

One, from Germany, puts its finger neatly on the whole purpose of the orchestra and the County School of Music which produces it.

"If we wished to reduce the essence of this orchestra to a formula", it declares, "we should have to speak of 'a stroke of genius in musical education'".

—R.A.P.

# ANDRE PREVIN AND COUNTY ORCHESTRA-A STRONG CHANCE

THE possibility that Andre Previn, the London Symphony Orchestra's famous conductor, will work with Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra seems strong — according to Mr. Previn himself in a TV interview.

He was asked in Simon Dee's late-night programme about his attitude to the encouragement of music among young people. He replied that his rehearsals were open to students and that he was looking forward to working with the young musicians of Leicestershire.

No-one was more pleased to hear this than the County School of Music's information officer, Mr. Jack Richards. Leicestershire's contact with Previn, he said today, had been made through composer Herbert Chappell who was associated with the schools symphony orchestra in a television feature "Dead in Tune," screened two years ago, and who will be at the De Montfort Hall at the end of April to conduct the overture that he has written for the county's Junior Schools Festival.

## 'Ideal man'

Chappell, a friend of Previn's, remarked some time ago that, because of his dynamism and youthfulness, "Andre would be an ideal man" for Leicestershire. Previn, when approached said he was willing.

There was nothing in writing, said Mr. Richards, and nothing further had been done about it. Not surprising in view of Previn's heavy commitments — including his recent American tour with the L.S.O. which has been described as their most successful ever.

"So I was delighted" added Mr. Richards, "to hear from his answer to Simon Dee that the Leicestershire idea is at the forefront of his mind."

LEICESTER MERCURY  
FEBRUARY 70

LEICESTER MERCURY  
MARCH 70





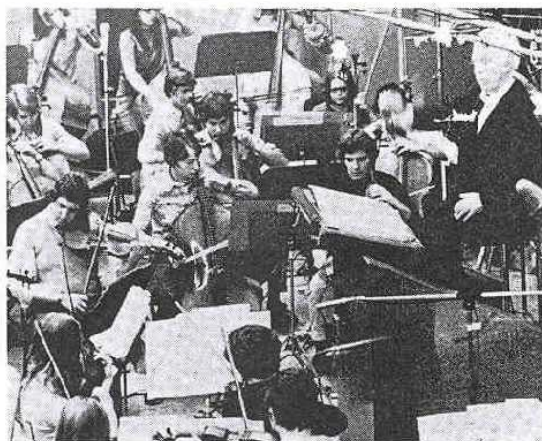
Sir Arthur Bliss rehearsing the LSSO in Oxford, Easter 1970



# Great Happenings in Leicestershire

HI FI NEWS & RECORD REVIEW

APRIL 1971



## How a fine schools orchestra came into the recording business

by Frederick Woods\*

\*Argo Records.

Members of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra rehearsing under Sir Arthur Bliss. They recorded Sir Arthur's *introduction and Allegro* and works by Previn, Ireland, Tippett, Herbert Chappell and Bryan Kelly.

TOWARDS the end of 1969 I received a letter from a schools orchestra asking if I would like to hear a tape of a new piece of educational music that had recently been televised on *Sounds Exciting*. On the principle that it's best to listen to everything—but not expecting very much—I said I would. When it arrived, it turned out to be a very original, very funny comedy-thriller with words by Robin Ray and music by Herbert Chappell, and apart from being weak with laughter I was very impressed from the musical point of view. The record came out in May 1970 under the title *Dead in Tune* and received highly enthusiastic notices (Argo ZDA 134).

The orchestra was the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1947 by Eric Pinkett, a man of quite incredible determination and drive who lets nothing stand in his way—not even producers! It must be now the finest youth orchestra in the country.

Scarcely had the last notes of that first recording died away when Eric began to discuss the next one. His idea was to produce something that would supply music for school occasions such as speech days, assemblies, prayers and so on. This at once seemed an excellent idea and further talks followed these lines. For a while, that is.

Suddenly things took a rather different course when Sir Arthur Bliss and Sir Michael Tippett agreed to conduct. At once the record became more important. And it became more important still during—of all things—one of the Simon Dee shows. The guest was André Previn who, when asked what he would like to do while over here, replied that he'd most like to work with the LSO. Eric Pinkett moved into action next morning and in a surprisingly short time I was discussing fees with Previn's agent. The next problem was Previn's exclusive contract with RCA. Not feeling very hopeful, I approached Miss Rosemary Schnutz who was very sympathetic and cabled her New York office. Time went by and I had begun to resign myself to a refusal when permission arrived—received, I may say, with enormous gratitude.

This more-or-less finalised the repertoire. Previn would conduct his own *Overture to a Comedy*, commissioned by Leonard Bernstein for the opening of the Lincoln Centre, the *Elegy* from John Ireland's little-known but exquisite *Downland Suite*, and a new work by Herbert Chappell, commissioned by the orchestra. Sir Arthur would conduct his *Introduction and Allegro* in its first stereo

recording and the first to be conducted by the composer. Sir Michael Tippett would take over for two movements of his *Shires Suite*, written especially for the orchestra and premiered by them at last year's Cheltenham Festival and performed again on the last night of the Proms. And finally Eric Pinkett would join the conductors to direct Bryan Kelly's *Cuban Suite*, another new work especially written for the orchestra. So, apart from the Bliss, all the works were premieres.

Few of these pieces offer any concessions musically, and it says much for the orchestra that three such eminent musicians were willing to participate. But then the orchestra is unique. Indeed, the standards and scope of musical education in Leicestershire are unique. The county runs three full symphony orchestras, a chamber orchestra and a military band. It boasts a string quartet of eight-year-olds who have appeared on television—and not as a piquant curiosity either.

The children in the senior orchestra—aged roughly 14–18—give up Saturday mornings to rehearse, and during the summer go into purdah for a fortnight of their holidays for intensive work. Their enthusiasm is staggering when you first meet them. At the end of a full day's rehearsal, after tea, they will, for instance, voluntarily reconvene, appoint a conductor from the ranks and go on practising for the whole evening. Or, possibly, the three members of the orchestra who form the *Shadows of Thyme*—their own folk group—will provide a concert. And lest it be thought that the folk interest is just a pastime, I should point out that the trio reached the semi-finals of a national talent competition at their first attempt.

It's difficult to put across the atmosphere generated by this orchestra. The children are not specialist music students but ordinary pupils. Some, to be sure, will go to the RCM, RAM or elsewhere, but the vast majority will not. But four years' work on a back desk will leave something that other children must lack. And four years' such work will also offer continental tours, concerts, broadcasts and recordings.

Musically, they can stand with the best. As Sir Arthur Bliss said to me at the end of this session, 'If I couldn't see they were children, I'd say it was a professional orchestra.' André Previn's repeated comment was 'Fantastic', and he has promised to write them a new work and conduct them again. Sir Michael's opinion is possibly biased as he is

their patron, but it is significant that when he wrote the *Shires Suite* for them he made not the slightest concession to their age. It is a difficult and possibly even a major work.

It is, I discovered, a fairly complex task to bring together a studio, an orchestra composed of children with such annoyances as lessons and homework to consider, and three major conductors. In the end we solved the problem by recording over the August Bank Holiday weekend, and by feeding them on the spot. The supplies list reads like that of a small if quirky army—600 sausage rolls, 600 pork pies, 600 pasties, 200 bags of assorted crisps, about sixty pounds of fruit and heaven knows what else. Needless to say, not a crumb was left!

The orchestra arrived at the studio at 9.15 on the Friday evening and was promptly put through a full rehearsal by Eric Pinkett. This was invaluable for me as, though I had attended several rehearsals and concerts in various parts of the country, I still had not heard certain works, notably the Previn, and that score was a three-part Sellotaped photostat of uncertain clarity standing somewhat over two feet high!

The session with Sir Arthur finished early thanks to magnificent playing and Sir Arthur's usual superb efficiency. As Sir Arthur left the rostrum, Eric Pinkett began another rehearsal... Sunday afternoon was another rehearsal!

When a somewhat dishevelled André Previn arrived on Monday morning direct from Scotland ('A holiday to me isn't a holiday if I have to slave—sorry I look so terrible') the orchestra was yet again rehearsing, this time *Russian and Ludmilla*. Previn listened from the back of the studio for a few minutes and then turned to me and said, 'If we get time, could we record this as well? They're fantastic!' Once he started with the orchestra, there was total rapport within five minutes.

In the afternoon, Sir Michael arrived for the excerpts from the *Shires Suite*. The orchestra is very accustomed to working with Sir Michael and in spite of the difficulty of the work (and I can add that, from the producer's point of view, the score is no hayride) again we finished early. Half an hour afterwards, the orchestra's coaches were loaded and the members were on their way back to Leicester—to return to school the next morning!

I understand that one of Eric Pinkett's ambitions for the orchestra is a Prom. Having worked with them now over quite a long period I would say they deserve it.



# Tippett, Bliss & Previn conducting

## The Leicestershire Schools Orchestra

TIPPETT: Interlude and Non Nobis Domine *from A Shires Suite*; BLISS: Introduction and Allegro; PREVIN: Overture To A Comedy; IRELAND: Elegy *from A Downland Suite*; CHAPPELL: Overture Panache; KELLY: Cuban Suite

Argo ⑤ ZRG 685

The second Argo recording by this brilliant young orchestra, featuring some of the greatest names in contemporary British music. The Tippett and Chappell works were written for this orchestra and in every case these are the only available recordings.

The Leicestershire Schools Orchestra's previous release

**CHAPPELL:** Dead In Tune\* George And The Dragonfly\*\*

\*Written and narrated by Robin Ray \*\*Narrated by Susan Stranks and John Kershaw

Conducted by Herbert Chappell

Argo ⑤ ZDA 134

'The orchestra... is splendid and the whole thing is done with infectious enjoyment.'

*The Gramophone*

'throughout one is aware of the freshness and vigour of the LSSO... Musically this is a real and unusual treat for the jaundiced critic.'

*Record Review*

'this utterly original record is brilliantly successful in its main purpose—to interest young people in the mechanics of musical foundations.'

*Records and Recording*

Important recordings of Britten works for performance by young people.

### The Golden Vanity Children's Crusade

The Wandsworth School Boys' Choir conducted by Russell Burgess with Benjamin Britten (Piano)  
Recorded under the composer's direction

Decca ⑤ SET 445

### School Concert

Songs from 'Friday Afternoons'; Gemini Variations; Psalm 150  
Boys of Downside School, Purley. Viola Tunnard (Piano)  
Gabriel and Zoltan Jeney (Pianos) conducted by Benjamin Britten

Decca ⑤ SXL 6264

### Noye's Fludde

Soloists, East Suffolk Children's Chorus and Orchestra & The English Chamber Orchestra  
conducted by Norman Del Mar

Argo ⑤ ZNF 1

Of course, I know the famous Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra of old. In fact, I have in my hand a remarkable recording they made including a work of mine that I wrote for Stokowski and his virtuoso orchestra in Philadelphia. I have often played this record to musicians and asked them which professional English orchestra they thought had recorded it. None got it right. They would not believe that it was a youth orchestra. And the thanks for keeping this orchestra, which continually changes, up to such a pitch of discipline and confidence are due to their inspiring trainer and conductor, Eric Pinkett.

Arthur Bliss

ARTEFACT  
APRIL 75

HAWKES POCKET SCORES

ARTHUR BLISS

INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO

For Tech Richards

for

Arthur Bliss

Jan. 1970

B O O S E Y & H A W K E S

No. 774



**CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRAL  
WORKS. Leicestershire Schools  
Orchestra conducted by \*Sir Arthur  
Bliss, †André Previn, †Eric Pinkett,  
§Sir Michael Tippett. Argo ZRG685  
(£2.39).**

**Bliss:** Introduction and Allegro\*. **Previn:** Overture to a Comedy†. **Ireland:** A Downland Suite—Elegy†. **Chappell:** Overture—Panache†. **Kelly:** Cuban Suite†. **Tippett:** The Shires Suite—Interlude; Non nobis Domine (with choir) §.

When I heard the first record by this schools orchestra (Pye Golden Guinea GSGC14103, 3/68) I gave it an indulgent notice; but hearing it later, I did wonder if I hadn't done readers something of a disservice in leading them to believe that it was better than it in fact was, for it undoubtedly sounded like a schools orchestra—rather feeble violins and suchlike. I have no such qualms about this latest record, for I have tried parts on two listeners, neither of whom guessed that it was other than some adult orchestra, even if not one of the leading ones regularly recording. Admittedly a third was quickly suspicious, for he spotted a weak cello note—but he was a professional string player!

This Leicestershire Schools Orchestra has the enthusiasm of their Director of Education behind it, as also a far-seeing Music Adviser in Eric Pinkett, who is himself a most capable conductor. Other such orchestras may be jealous at their latest feat in getting on to an Argo record (though it should be cheaper), but they have been clever. They 'captured' Sir Michael Tippett as their 'patron saint' early on; now they have added Sir Arthur Bliss and no less a famous conductor than Previn; and they have recorded works not otherwise available.

The playing really is remarkable. Just occasionally the strings show their extreme youth in a difficult passage in octaves or a high entry for violins which should be strong but isn't, but otherwise I could find little to fault and so much to admire. Most of the music is "Contemporary Orchestral Works" only in that it belongs to this century, for apart from Herbert Chappell's overture they were all composed a good while ago. But that is no quibble, for the playing is the thing—and that Bliss's work, in particular, is a fine piece that ought not to have been neglected; also that the playing is not only so technically expert but is so extraordinarily musical.

Bliss's *Introduction and Allegro* is a virtuoso piece composed for Stowkowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1926, but it is far more than that, as its opening, most expressively played, at once shows; and even in the Allegro, there are passages like that at fig. 24 (miniature score available from Boosey & Hawkes) where the sensitive playing touches the heart. As to the sheerly virtuoso bits, they get brilliant treatment from every section of the orchestra (with those very occasional, and slight, weaknesses I have mentioned). Ireland's *Elegy* makes no technical demands on the strings, which enables them to show how sensitively musical these young players are—a most affecting performance.

Previn's overture, and Chappell's, are virtuoso pieces and not much more, though most skilfully done—but their titles imply nothing more and both are, of their kind, exhilarating. Bryan Kelly's *Cuban Suite* is uncommonly gifted for a student work, even if it is, as he writes, an unashamed attempt to write popular light music with immediate appeal—I bet those children enjoyed playing the 'naughty' tango, especially as relaxation from the demands of Bliss. Tippett's two excerpts from his *The Shires Suite* (originally written for this orchestra) take us again into the world of serious and beautiful music, with an excellent choir joining in "Non nobis domine" in the Epilogue, and this makes a moving end to the record. T.H.

**BLISS:** *Introduction and Allegro*<sup>1</sup>. **PREVIN:** *Overture to a Comedy*<sup>2</sup>. **IRELAND:** *A Downland Suite — Elegy*<sup>3</sup>. **CHAPPELL:** *Panache — Overture*<sup>4</sup>. **KELLY:** *Cuban Suite*<sup>5</sup>. **TIPPETT:** *The Shires Suite — Interlude II; Epilogue*<sup>6</sup>. <sup>1-6</sup>Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra/'Sir Arthur Bliss, <sup>2-4</sup>André Previn, <sup>5</sup>Eric Pinkett, <sup>6</sup>Sir Michael Tippett. Argo ZRG 685. £2.35.

THIS IS A LIVELY collection of good light music. By far the best work is the first one in the programme. Sir Arthur Bliss directs a cogent account of his spacious

and deeply felt *Introduction and Allegro* — splendid stuff, full of life and character.

Then we have Previn conducting three pieces. Firstly, his own pithy *Overture to a Comedy* — full of bounce and quite brilliantly scored. This is a most zestful affair. In complete contrast, Previn turns to Ireland's lovely *Elegy* from his poetic *Downland Suite* — English music to the core — full of quiet cloudscape and dreamy movement. Chappell's racy *Overture*, well-named *Panache*, comes in for another fiery Previn interpretation. This is more commonplace stuff than Previn's own overture, but it makes agreeable listening for the uncritical. Kelly's *Cuban Suite*, directed with flair by Eric Pinkett, is, again, less worthy than the Bliss or Previn pieces, but it is colourful, even if the melodies are somewhat second-rate. Far better, of course, are the two lovely pieces from Tippett's engaging *The Shires Suite* — poetic, beautifully accomplished and thoroughly worthwhile.

The whole programme is despatched with brilliant aplomb by the astonishingly able Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, who respond especially well to Previn's direction.

The recording is finely detailed and has a nice spacious acoustic.

GEOFFREY CRANKSHAW

**RECORDS AND RECORDING  
APRIL 71**

Gramophone  
April 1971



## LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BLISS: Introduction and Allegro\* / CHAPPELL: Overture Panache\*\* / IRELAND: Elegy from 'A Downland Suite'\*\*\* / KELLY: Cuban Suite\*\*\* / PREVIN: Overture to a comedy\*\* / TIPPETT: Interlude and Epilogue from 'The Shires Suite'\*\*\*\*

Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra / \*Sir Arthur Bliss / \*\*André Previn / \*\*\*Eric Pinkett / \*\*\*\*Sir Michael Tippett

Argo ZRG685 (£2.39)

It was in 1926 that Fritz Kreisler said in an interview that if Paganini were to return to earth he would be astonished at the current quality of violin technique and might easily find half a dozen violinists surpassing him in virtuosity. It was in 1926, too, that Sir Arthur Bliss wrote his *Introduction and Allegro* as a showpiece for the Philadelphia Orchestra, dedicated to Leopold Stokowski. That it is now played with accomplishment by a schools orchestra is testimony to the general truth of Kreisler's observation. The Leicestershire Schools orchestra made previous records, for Pye, which I reviewed in March, 1968, and for Argo the recording of Chappell's *Dead in Tune*, etc. Best here are the Bliss and the Tippett, the latter being very demanding in its virtuosity in the first part, and testing in the slow second part. Bryan Kelly's *Cuban Suite* is, as it is meant to be, excellent and colourful light orchestral music, while the Previn and the Chappell are bright boisterous pieces apt for the occasion (though not written for it). John Ireland's *Elegy* is well known and a good test of string playing.

Performances are fresh, eager, responsive, less polished naturally than a crack pro orchestra would make them but a thousand miles from routine or bland. It really is remarkable that schools can produce music making of this artistic and technical quality, giving hope for the future and enlightening the darkened hours (see article by Frederick Woods on page 695). There is something a bit queer about the slow movement of the *Cuban Suite*, could be flutter, or could be a lapse in the playing, though its recurrence in a different context makes that unlikely. Otherwise the recording is pretty good; well balanced, clear, in 'mean' focus. If it sounds a trace fluffy in places, that may well be due to some lack of absolute precision in the playing leading to slightly roughened edges and furry chords. But much enjoyment is to be had from this varied concert and its uninhibited performance. [A: 2]

Burnett James

## LSSO show fine form on stereo recording

A NEW stereo record by the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra presents them in fine form with lively and vital sound from Argo and the conducting shared by Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir Michael Tippett, André Previn and the County's Music Adviser, Eric Pinkett.

Although this is the third disc to be made by Leicestershire's young musicians, it is actually the second involving the full 100-strong orchestra — the witty and entertaining "Dead in Tune." / "George and the Dragonfly" was made with an ensemble of 45.

The six items on the new disc present quite a range of styles from the closely-wrought brilliance of Bliss's *Introduction and Allegro* to Bryan Kelly's light and easy-on-the-ear "Cuban Suite". Listeners will have their favourites, but everyone is going to fall in love with the *Elegy* for strings from John Ireland's *Downland Suite*. André Previn chose it as one of his pieces with the LSSO and he conducts it beautifully.

### Musical quiz

The playing is superb and the recording transmits excitingly the sensitive reaction of these young musicians to the tip of Previn's baton. Here, in fact, is a musical quiz you could try: play this track over and invite friends to identify the orchestra under Previn's command. The answers will be flattering, but I doubt if they'll be correct!

Previn also conducts his own breezy "Overture to a Comedy" and the LSSO-commissioned "Panache" overture by Herbert Chappell. Sir Arthur Bliss gets excellent response in his virtuoso *Introduction and Allegro*, Sir Michael Tippett commendable clarity and atmosphere in the two concluding items from *The Shires Suite* (another LSSO commission) and Eric Pinkett directs an easy-flowing *Cuban Suite*.

All in all, a disc to marvel at.  
—R.A.P.

HI - FI NEWS

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LEICESTER MERCURY

APRIL 71





Argo session photographs – Sir Arthur Bliss with engineer Kevin Daly







Argo session photographs  
Sir Michael Tippett with engineer  
Kevin Daly





**SIR ARTHUR BLISS · SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT  
ANDRÉ PREVIN · ERIC PINKETT**

**conduct**

**THE LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

BLISS: Introduction and Allegro · PREVIN: Overture to a Comedy  
IRELAND: Elegy from 'A Downland Suite' · CHAPPELL: Overture-Panache  
KELLY: Cuban Suite · TIPPETT: 'Interlude' and 'Epilogue' from 'The Shires Suite'



Original sleeve - front



# SIR ARTHUR BLISS · SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT ANDRÉ PREVIN · ERIC PINKETT conduct THE LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BLISS: Introduction and Allegro · PREVIN: Overture to a Comedy (1960)  
IRELAND: Elegy from 'A Downland Suite' · CHAPPELL: Overture-Panache  
KELLY: Cuban Suite · TIPPETT: 'Interlude' and 'Epilogue' from 'The Shires Suite'

BLISS: Introduction and Allegro (cond. Sir Arthur Bliss)  
PREVIN: Overture to a Comedy (1960) (cond. André Previn)  
IRELAND: Elegy from A Downland Suite (cond. André Previn)

CHAPPELL: Overture - Panache (cond. André Previn)  
KELLY: Cuban Suite (cond. Eric Pinkett)  
TIPPETT: Interlude II and Epilogue from The Shires Suite (cond. Sir Michael Tippett)

## BLISS: INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO

The writing of my *Introduction and Allegro* for full orchestra resulted from my first hearing a concert by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Stokowski, during a visit to America in the years 1923-5. The brilliance and superb technical skill of this orchestra made an unforgettable impression on me, and I determined to write a virtuoso piece for them. It was finished in 1926, and dedicated to Leopold Stokowski, who gave a performance of it in Philadelphia in the following year.

I emphasise the words 'virtuoso piece', because this twelve-minute work makes great demands on every section of the orchestra - woodwind, brass, strings, harp and percussion. It was therefore all the more surprising to me that these young players in the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra could tackle its difficulties with such ability and confidence. I am full of respect for their achievement, and for those who have worked to bring it about. It just goes to prove that year by year the technical prowess of young musicians has been growing.

Arthur Bliss

## PREVIN: OVERTURE TO A COMEDY (1960)

My *Overture to a Comedy* was written in Los Angeles, California, in 1960. I had several requests from various orchestras for a brilliant-sounding, non-problematical, rather slam-bang overture, and I had great fun in putting it together in a very short time. To my great surprise, the piece was played many times in the United States by more than a dozen different orchestras. When the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra kindly invited me not only to conduct their admirable organisation but also to give them a short piece to play, I remembered this overture which, at the time this recording was made, I had not heard in about nine years. It certainly is noisy, has lots of cross-rhythms, and might be fun to play. I still like approximately two dozen measures of it. My admiration for the playing of the orchestra is enormous and I look forward to writing them something new this year. Perhaps then, ten years from now, I will like three dozen measures of it.

André Previn

## IRELAND: ELEGY FROM A DOWNLAND SUITE

John Ireland (1879-1962) was born in Bowdon, Cheshire, and became an important figure in the great creative upsurge in English music in the first half of the 20th century. Although he was at the Royal College of Music contemporaneously with Vaughan Williams and Holst he did not share their interest in folk-music; nevertheless he developed within the English tradition, part of which has always been fertilised by continental influences. The Channel Islands and Sussex were inspirational background for his music. To call him a miniaturist simply because he wrote no symphonies is to mistake the nature of his gifts: if he chose the smaller forms, what he put into them was big in concept. The *Downland Suite* was written to a commission from his friend Kenneth Wright for the 1932 National Brass Band Contest at Crystal Palace. Some years later he arranged it for strings. The *Elegy* is the most characteristic movement with its melodic breadth and individuality.

Michael Kennedy

## CHAPPELL: OVERTURE-PANACHE

Writing a piece of music is comparatively easy; the difficult bit is finding a title. This overture, composed in the spring of 1970, started out jokingly - but not without some justification - as *Schizo* - a sort of scherzo. Anxious for improvement I sought other suggestions - *Prima donna*, *Festival 70*, *The Comedian*, *Groucho* (there's a fortissimo section with his characteristic 'Liszt' ...) and so on. My wife, as usual, had the last word; with a flash of inspiration she suggested a common factor which was absolutely right: *Panache*. After all, the original commission from Eric Pinkett and the orchestra (to whom the overture is dedicated) had been for something 'tuneful, cheerful, exuberant and short', and that's just the way it turned out.

Herbert Chappell

## KELLY: CUBAN SUITE

I wrote the *Cuban Suite* while I was still a student. It remained unplayed for three years but was eventually taken up by the BBC and has become, since its first performance, a popular repertoire piece. The four movements, in dance-like character, are unashamed attempts to write popular light music with immediate appeal. The first movement is slow and lazy, the second a 6/8 scherzo, the third a nostalgic tango, and the finale a rumba in which two themes are eventually combined with the theme from the opening of the Suite. After the first performance I was asked by the conductor if I had written the *Cuban Suite* before, or after, the Castro revolution. I leave the listener to guess my answer!

Bryan Kelly

## TIPPETT: INTERLUDE II AND EPILOGUE FROM THE SHIRES SUITE

The Interlude II and Epilogue are the last two movements of *The Shires Suite*, which I wrote for the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra. Traditional canons appear in each movement: 'Great Tom is cast' (anon) in Interlude II, 'Non nobis domine' (Byrd) in the Epilogue.

The remarkable virtuosity of Interlude II is partly helped by the method of composition. Thus the four horns who took part in the recording each had the same single line of solo in the printed part, from high B flat to low F sharp. This line was divided up between the players according to ability in order to produce the sound needed. This dividing-up might change as the players changed. In the same way the thirty violins all had the same part in essence but played either a version with rhythms like  $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$  or  $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$ .

Those players with the necessary bow and finger technique played the one, the rest the other. But these latter added enormously to the vigour of the pulse.

Michael Tippett



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17th October 1979

Andrew N. Fairbairn, Esq.,  
Director of Education,  
County Education Office,  
County Hall,  
Glenfield,  
Leicester, LE3 6ZD.

Dear Mr. Fairbairn,

Thank you very much for your letter of October 8th, and I apologise for my delay in answering it. I am delighted that there is to be ~~this~~ splendid Eric Pinkett Memorial Concert, and very touched that you should think of including me amongst the guests. I have put January 23rd in my engagement diary and enclose a cheque for £3 for my ticket.

I have been thinking of all the happy occasions on which Sir Arthur and Eric worked together, and it will give me great pleasure to be with you all on that occasion.

*Yours very sincerely*

*Lady Bliss*

Lady Bliss

enc.



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16th August 1999

John Whitmore, Esq.  
35 Stoneswood Road  
Delph, Oldham  
OL3 5DY

Dear Mr. Whitmore,

Thank you for your letter which came on July 29th and, with it, a great quantity of material from your Eric Pinkett archive. I have enjoyed all of this and, of course, it has revived many happy memories.

Yes, of course, I recall Mr. Richards and his kindness in the Isle of Man. Please do greet him for me.

I am so glad you enjoyed Girl in a Broken Mirror. That young cast makes it very touching. Perhaps I should point out that the video is a copy of the Thames TV recording, and ought not to be shown to the general public.

I am very grateful for the CD you sent me: I have played it and enjoyed both the very good performance by the Leicestershire Schools Orchestra and the interview with my husband. I remember so well his pleasure in that young orchestra.

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*Gentruede Bliss*

Lady Bliss