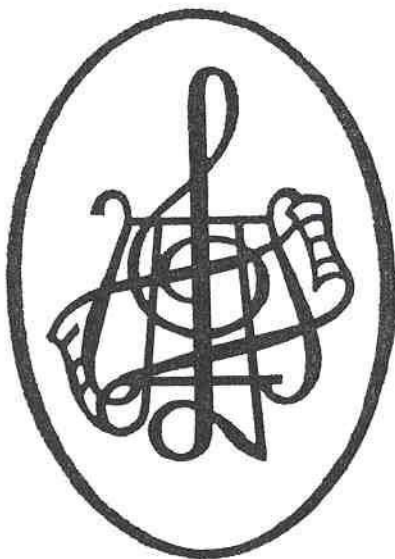


Background information about the
Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra
to accompany the
Klassic Haus Restorations
releases of the orchestra's
Unicorn and CBS
Havergal Brian recordings



Leicestershire
County School of Music

The LSSO Havergal Brian recordings

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra secured their own place in musical history when they made the very first commercial recordings of Havergal Brian's music for the Unicorn and CBS labels in 1972 and 1974 respectively. To understand how these recordings actually came about it's probably a good starting point to refer to a couple of press articles that appeared in the local and national newspapers at the time:

Leicester Mercury, 1972

County schools orchestra to make first recording of Composer's work

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, with their conductor, Eric Pinkett, are to have the distinction of making the first gramophone record of music by the 96-year-old British composer Havergal Brian. Rehearsals are already under way and the recording will be done at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, next July. The chosen works are the 10th and 21st symphonies and the record issued by Unicorn records is expected to be on sale by the following autumn. Havergal Brian, born in Staffordshire and now living in Shoreham, Sussex, has become something of a legend in the musical world as a composer who is hardly ever performed but who nevertheless has worked quietly and contentedly over the years to amass an output that includes 32 symphonies (including the two hour long *Gothic*) five operas, concertos for violin and cello and numerous choral works and songs. The fact that much of his music demands large forces is an economical reason for its rare appearances in concert halls and for the complete absence of recordings. However, he does have determined champions - among them Dr. Robert Simpson (A member of the BBC's music staff) who was mainly responsible for some recent broadcasts of Brian's works, and Alan Watkins, Press Association's deputy news editor and a music enthusiast with early training as a timpanist and percussionist. The recording project really all started from the time when Alan Watkins listened to the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra's existing discs. He was greatly impressed by the standard of playing and was struck by the thought that here was the solution to the economical problems of giving permanence to some of Brian's music. He wrote to the composer outlining the idea and obtained permission to explore possibilities. Within a short time, Mr. Watkins arranged a meeting between John Goldsmith (director of Unicorn records), Eric Pinkett and Dr. Simpson. The outcome was a wholehearted and enthusiastic decision to go ahead and the chosen works on Dr. Simpson's recommendation were the 10th and 21st symphonies both of about 30 minutes duration and for which orchestral parts for the 100 instrumentalists were available. Dr. Simpson, who is the foremost authority on Havergal Brian's music, has since spent a day at the County School of Music at Birstall where he talked to the Schools Orchestra about the composer and the two symphonies and listened to them being rehearsed by Eric Pinkett. He was delighted with their progress and reported favourably to Havergal Brian.

Sunday Express, 1972

Havergal Brian, Britain's most prolific but possibly least-performed classical composer, is to have his music recorded for the first time at the age of 95. Paradoxically the disc will be cut by our top youth orchestra, the Leicestershire

Schools Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Brian, described by BBC music expert Dr. Robert Simpson as a composer of the stature of Elgar is one of music's great enigmas. He has written 32 symphonies, more than three times as many as Beethoven, five operas, 114 songs, not to mention choral works. Yet until now none of them has been recorded. Says the composer from his seaside home at Shoreham, Sussex: "I am absolutely delighted that these young people are to record two of my symphonies. It shows how good they are. They are not easy works to play."

Symphonies Nos.10 and 21, conducted by James Loughran and Eric Pinkett respectively, were recorded at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester in 1972. The producer was Robert Simpson and Angus McKenzie was the recording engineer. The LP was released by Unicorn Records to great critical acclaim in 1973. A special edition of the television programme *Aquarius* called *The Unknown Warrior* gave considerable coverage to the recording session and a camera crew also joined members of the orchestra during a visit they made to the composer's home in Shoreham-by-Sea.

Alan Watkins, who was a prime mover in making the Unicorn recordings actually happen, made the following four comments on the GMG Classical Music Havergal Brian forum in 2006. They provide an excellent insight into the recording sessions and also the difficulties encountered by the orchestra when they worked from the less than accurate printed parts.

1) The world premiere recordings of ANY music by Havergal Brian were symphonies 10/21 for Unicorn, played by the Leicestershire Schools Symphony conducted by Eric Pinkett and Jimmy Loughran from the Halle. I know that because it was my idea and I organised it in conjunction with John Goldsmith, then the founder and owner of Unicorn Records, and Bob Simpson, composer and (at the time) BBC Music Department and Brian enthusiast. Several times I flew in from Prague to help and coach the percussion section in this very difficult music. It was recorded in the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, with me at one time standing behind the timpanist (a young lady of about 14/15 or so I think) to help her with the very difficult counting in case she came unstuck (She didn't).

Correction by JW: the young lady Alan mentions was in fact the xylophone player, Corinne Bradly. The timpanist in the 1972 LSSO recording session was Stephen Whittaker who, some years later, played the xylophone solo in the Schmidt/LSO Gothic.

2)| The world premiere recordings of 10/21 or anything of Brian were by the kids of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra (ages 14-18) who, on vinyl, were the first in the world to bring any of this music to life. I have previously posted on this and how we took the orchestra to meet the composer. The 10/21 recording is not perfect. There are certainly intonation problems (particularly with the strings) but this is often immensely difficult music to play, even for professional musicians, let alone a bunch of kids at school. They played so well, however, that I was in tears from time to time. One of the most moving moments of my life was seeing the orchestra meet the composer, sitting in a great semi circle around him, firing questions and chatting very happily with him. It was such a memorable occasion. They loved him and he loved them and I feel sure it would have brought more meaning to his music and to their playing.

3) The choice of symphony 10/21 (by Bob) was partly dictated by the fact that the parts for same were available and vaguely readable but only just with no cues and very poor page turns for some of the orchestra (wind in particular). I went through the percussion parts of both and ended up rewriting the set of parts for both inserting cues and correcting (twice) inaccurate rest indications and in 21 restoring a xylophone part that was correct in the full score but completely missing in the parts. Many wrong notes in the parts for tuned percussion in both symphonies. A mess, in fact. At that time all the parts were hand written, i.e not engraved.

4) It was a very long time ago and I cannot say accurately for certain but I don't think the composer wrote out for the parts for Symphony 10/21. His hand written notation that I have seen is difficult to follow - very difficult in some cases - and these parts were "well written" in terms of the calligraphy as it were but terribly inaccurate. It might have been him but, if so, he was at great age and they simply got corrected for him. I personally do not think it was him because I think he would not have made the page turn mistakes (particularly for wind and strings) nor left out an entire xylophone part (an instrument that mattered to him).

As a former member of the LSSO, having read with interest these Havergal Brian forum comments, I decided to upload *The Unknown Warrior* video onto Youtube and was immediately struck by the level of interest this created. This gave rise to one particular email exchange with J.Z. (Johan) Herrenberg, a member of the Havergal Brian Society in October 2007 as follows:

Absolutely incredible, being able to see this at last (i.e. *The Unknown Warrior* video), 30 years after discovering this great composer! Very moving. And in particular seeing the opening of the Tenth played (an opening that made an indelible impression when I heard it for the first time) is really wonderful. It's great the documentary is still extant. This recording (10 & 21) has been extremely important to me personally. In 1980 I started studying English at the Free University in Amsterdam, a bit reluctantly, as I was determined to become a writer, and eventually I stopped coming. A friend of mine was living in digs in the 17th-century canal ring area. His mother had found Brian's 10th & 21st in a local library in the east of the country, and ever since hearing the Tenth I had become completely obsessed by it. So I called at my friend's lodgings every other day, and if he was in my only request was - 'I want to hear the Tenth!'

The Unicorn record was released in May 1973 and received some very positive reviews, especially one from Calum MacDonald in *Records and Recording*. He was bowled over by the 10th but slightly more critical of the 21st. The reviewer put his cards firmly on the table, however, when he claimed: ".....this is about the most important issue of 1973."

The icing on the cake was a tremendous review from the E.M.G. monthly newsletter:

LEICESTER MERCURY, DECEMBER 1973

Distinction for LSSO

It is quite an accolade to get into the Best Records of the Year, a list published annually by E.M.G. in its monthly letter, so there is a look of the cat licking the cream on the faces of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra. Their record is of

Brian's Symphonies Nos. 10 and 21 and is one of the 60 selected out of thousands produced during the year 1973.

In case you may never have heard of the composer Brian the Briton, you need feel no shame for he has been woefully neglected and this is the first recording of any music by one of this country's most remarkable composers.

Havergal Brian died last year at the fine old age of 96. He wrote 32 symphonies and five operas. The review of the record says: "Brian's music is among the most original to have been written in this century and it is doubly exciting and satisfying to hear the verve with which this remarkable youth orchestra attacks the formidable task set by these two difficult but very rewarding scores."

Symphony No. 21 was composed when Brian was 87 and was one of 22 symphonies he wrote after the age of 80. Late flowering if you like! And pleasant to record that in this triumph of youth and age, Leicestershire has played a significant part.

Following the success of the Unicorn issue, a second Brian album was recorded by the LSSO in 1974.

Leicester Mercury, April 1974

LSSO puts four more works on record

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra will be in Brighton tomorrow to make two recordings simultaneously. The BBC and CBS Records will each have a control room to tape performances of Havergal Brian's setting of the 23rd Psalm and his 22nd Symphony and also of Berlioz's "Resurrexit" and his "Death of Orpheus". All this music is being recorded for the first time - the BBC's tape for eventual Radio 3 broadcast and CBS's for processing into a disc which it is expected will be issued in the autumn. The conductor for all four works is Laszlo Heltay and the choir is the Brighton Festival Chorus, which Heltay directs. The LSSO was first in the field in making an LP of Havergal Brian's music with their brisk-selling disc of the 10th and 21st Symphonies, conducted respectively by the Halle's James Loughran and the orchestra's permanent director, Eric Pinkett who is Leicestershire's music adviser and founder of the County School of Music. Once again, the BBC's Robert Simpson (stalwart champion of Brian's music) is concerned with production and he is responsible too for performances of the two Berlioz rarities. Brian died, it will be remembered, without ever hearing the very first record of his music and it is interesting that following the LSSO's disc there is a projected one or other of the composer's symphonies by the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Hove Town Hall was the venue for the 22nd Symphony and the 23rd Psalm sessions where the orchestra was conducted by Laszlo Heltay. Eric Pinkett completed the disc with his account of the English Suite No.5 (*Rustic Scenes*) which was set down at Leicester's De Montfort Hall. The recording sessions were produced by Robert Simpson (Hove) and William Robson (Leicester) and the disc was issued by CBS in February 1975.

The LSSO was at its peak in the 1970s and 80s. The orchestra's patron and regular conductor, Sir Michael Tippett, expressed the view that it was on a par with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. That may have been an exaggeration but the orchestra, inspired by the one and only Eric Pinkett, could certainly lay claim to be the best regional schools orchestra in England.

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

ARGO

in association with the Student Arts Centre

Concert by the

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Conducted by ERIC PINKETT

Solo Flute: SUSAN PHIPPS

7.30 p.m. Edward Herbert Building Friday 28 April 1972

(This concert marks the sixth anniversary of the granting of the University's Charter)

PROGRAMME

CAPRICCIO BURLESCO

WALTON

This most recent of Walton works is in effect an overture and was written in 1968 for the New York Philharmonic, since when the London Symphony Orchestra and André Previn have featured it in their Russian tour.

Walton's title doubly underlines the nature of the work and if it is a 'whimsical farce' then it is also elegant and polished in the Walton style.

It is also a virtuoso show piece designed to open a programme and requires dexterity and dash from the players.

CONCERTO FOR FLUTE

CHAMINADE 1857 - 1944

Cécile Chaminade was one of the rare and successful female composers. Even so, her music, though prolific and versatile, ranging from opéra comique and orchestral suites to piano sonatas and songs, is mostly described as charming and fragile, and is seldom played.

This concerto for flute and orchestra is very typical; it is an exquisitely conceived vehicle for flute solo in all its moods, with delicate orchestral colouring to match.

SYMPHONY No. 21 IN Eb

HAVERGAL BRIAN

1. Adagio - Allegro and con Anima
2. Adagio Cantabile and Sostenuto
3. Vivace
4. Andante, Adagio - Allegro con Fuoco

Havergal Brian is 97. He has written a prolific amount of music, songs, operas and oratorios and not least of all 32 symphonies and yet his name is scarcely known and his music rarely performed. This has been a great misfortune for which it is not easy to account.

Elgar complimented him on his music, Sir Henry Wood and Sir Adrian Boult have conducted his works. André Previn avows a great interest and the B.B.C. have the highest regard for him. Why then has he not claimed attention?

His music is quite ageless, his style highly original. His ideas are clear cut and incisive. The sounds can be harsh and there are frequent sombre overtones, but then again he can be light hearted and lyrical and he can weave noble melodies. All this and more can be heard in this work Symphony No. 21 written in 1921. Perhaps there are so many ideas that the work needs to be heard several times to be fully appreciated. We the Leicestershire School Orchestra enjoy the work. Tonight we are giving its first performance and in July we are honoured to be putting the works of Havergal Brian on to a record for the first time.

INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO

ELGAR 1857 - 1934

This major work composed in 1905 is certainly amongst Elgar's finest music and must be rated with the greatest British music.

From the magnificently exhilarating opening chords, through the sensitive answering themes of the quartet, into the piquant fugue, finally into grand recapitulation, this is spacious and heraldic music and truly British.

TUNBRIDGE FAIR

(Conducted by CLIFFORD HUTT)

WALTER PISTON

Walter Piston is an American Composer born in 1894 and this work is described as an Intermezzo for Symphonic Band.

America is the birth place of the Symphonic Concert Band which in itself is a progression from the Military Band.

More and more composers are lending their skills to this style and are exploring all the possible colours which can be developed from the whole galaxy of wind instruments, string basses and percussion.

Here is a good example of such works. It is vigorous, ebullient and quite rhythmic. It can readily be compared and contrasted with the Walton Capriccio Burlesco.

SPANISH CAPRICE

RIMSKY KORSAKOV 1844 - 1908

Rimsky Korsakov was first and foremost an orchestra colourist. He loved the picturesque and the exotic and his music always glitters and dazzles.

This suite was originally planned as a virtuosic violin fantasy on Spanish themes, but in its final shape proved to be a brilliant composition for orchestra with virtuoso cadenzas scattered amongst the various members of the orchestra.

There are five movements which are played in sequence without pause:

1. Alborada, 2. Variations, 3. Alborada, 4. Scene and Gipsy Song, 5. Fandango of the Asturias, with a coda reverting to the Alborada theme.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HOVE

Saturday 10 March at 7.30 pm

1973

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL CHORUS

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX CHOIR

Conductor LASZLO HELTAY

Tenor STUART HOLLAND

PROGRAMME

VARIATIONS ON A HUNGARIAN FOLKSONG (THE PEACOCK) ZOLTAN KODALY (1882-1967)

Kodaly's orchestral masterpiece, "The Peacock", written in 1939, consists of an Introduction, sixteen Variations and a Finale. Based on one of the most ancient folk-songs known to man, "The Peacock", the theme is a descending, pentatonic melody, described by Bartok as "a classic example of musical concision".

In the Introduction, the folk-tune is heard in the low basses, and the following ten Variations are the most closely related to the original tune, culminating in the curious "Chinese" Variation - so-called for its peculiar orchestration.

The second part of the work, Variations 11 to 13, form a complete change in character. The sorrowful 11th Variation leads into the tragic climax of the turbulent 12th Variation, which forms the climax of the work. This is followed by the moving Funeral March.

In the third section, the sombre mood of the previous Funeral March is resolved by the calm pastoral scene depicted in the 14th Variation and suggestive of a shepherd playing his flute. The remaining Variations are brilliant and joyful in character, leading to the coda, the apotheosis of the ancient folk song representing the Peacock, the symbol of freedom to the Hungarian people.

The Peacock Variations were commissioned for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. The first performance was conducted by Mengelberg in November 1939.

ET RESURREXIT

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

Written in 1825, when Berlioz, at the age of 22, had just given up his medical studies to study music, and when none of his more famous works had yet been composed. According to his memoirs, Berlioz completed a Mass that July which he claimed to have burned, preserving only the Resurrexit. However, it is known that the Mass was performed in 1827, though of course it is now lost. The Resurrexit, Berlioz' first surviving work, opens with a Fanfare which is supposed to have reduced Berlioz to a state of convulsive trembling, so moved was he while writing it that he could only complete the work with difficulty and was compelled to rest for some time afterwards.

I N T E R V A L

ROMAN CARNIVAL OVERTURE

HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

The Roman Carnival Overture was written in 1843, and based on the motifs of Berlioz opera "Benvenuto Cellini" and was later used as an entr'acte in the opera. After a short festive opening there is a languid love melody to be heard on the cor anglais (the love-duet in the opera) as a slow introduction to the brilliant allegro, written in a fiery 6/8 - the Carnival music.

PSALM XXIII for tenor solo, chorus and orchestra

HAVERGAL BRIAN (1876-1972)

This setting of Psalm XXIII "The Lord is My Shepherd" opens with a short Introduction consisting of rhythmical figurations that recur throughout the work. The first section for mixed choir alternating with female voices, is followed by an Allegro in 3/4 time to the words "Yea, though I walk through the valley". The middle section (Lento) is for tenor solo, and the work ends in a complex polyphonic section for the choir, with a short coda echoing the music of the Introduction.

Original notes from the Unicorn LP

Havergal Brian was born in Dresden, Staffordshire, in 1876 and died in Shoreham, Sussex in 1972, shortly after this recording, the first to be made of any of his music. There is no case parallel to his in music. Many composers have survived neglect and continued work in spite of it — but it would be hard, not to say impossible, to find one who had gone on so long, with such unrelenting persistence, who not only had the spirit and the physical constitution to enable him to sustain the effort, but was astonishingly capable in his latter years of an actual acceleration. Who else wrote 22 symphonies after he was eighty? Facts of this sort are remarkable enough, and human interest and sympathy would be aroused even if the music in question were of no exceptional value. That Brian wrote 32 symphonies, 5 operas, and many other miscellaneous works, very few of which he heard, that he was forced to earn his living in all sorts of ways unconnected with music, that he never sought success or even performance (at least during the last fifty years of his life), that he was a man of immovable obstinacy — all these and other facts add up to a story which, if romanticized, could lead to false evaluations by the over-sympathetic. But the music itself bears the kind of scrutiny that rightly regards all such matters as irrelevant to artistic judgement. Its originality and apparent eccentricity are bound to make it enemies, and occasionally there is an awkwardness of bearing and movement that seems to get in the way of clear communication. These characteristics, however, turn out in the end to be positive, not negative in their effect on anyone who takes the trouble to become familiar with the music. One gets to accept and finally love what is revealed as single-mindedness rather than a clumsy inability to ingratiate the ear. To please anybody but himself was never Brian's object. Both as a man and as a musician he could perhaps be described as the original Awkward Cuss raised to the level of genius. There is in his work naivety of a peculiarly and fascinatingly hard-bitten kind, a seeming simplicity that conceals (and at length reveals) an extraordinarily deep and direct sense of purpose. Not that the music is always simple; often it is far from that. Its range of texture and character is very wide, in movement it tends slowly to fluctuate through all the phases between stillness and violence. One cannot describe its "style"; this music is not like any other, and as soon as one hears a fleeting reminder of some other composer, it is gone. Its consistency is that of Brian himself. As a person you could take him or leave him — it was all the same to him; so is it with his music. Yet as he communes with himself we sense a profound human sensibility and a courage of altogether unusual depth; as we learn our way into this music it grows more and more significant until we discover that we are face to face with a great composer, and this is the point at which the depths are seen to be unfathomable. So take your time — the rewards are immense. The young musicians of Leicestershire seemed to sense this.

Symphony No 10 (1954)

With the *Sinfonia Tragica* (No 6) of 1948 Brian finally moved away from the vast dimensions of his earlier symphonies, of which the Gothic is the most celebrated, to more compact designs. The Sixth, Eighth, Tenth, and Twelfth symphonies are all one-movement forms, as are a number of other later symphonies. The Tenth is one of the deepest of these, ultimately

enigmatic, yet it is one of the most immediately gripping of Brian's works. One of its most absorbing characteristics is its way of continually transforming its material, which is often eventually converted into shapes that could not be connected with their origins were one not to hear all the intervening stages. Thematic transformations do not ensure unity in a work; in Brian the unity is more deep-laid, with cogent tonal processes and control of movement. Behind the Tenth is an utter stillness that is not destroyed by violent and dramatic events; everyone knows, if he stops to think about it, that no matter how disturbed the mind is, however joyous or despairing — active, in a word — there is a part of it that is always quite detached and unmoved; it *observes* quietly what is happening. Two passages in No 10 lay bare this part of the mind, so essential to sanity, the first preceding a fierce and short-lived storm and the second ending the whole work.

The Tenth is a genuine and unified one-movement symphony, though it still retains traces of the four-movement design. The opening is deliberate and massive (*Adagio e solenne*), like a funeral march, but essentially active, with powerful climaxes and the kind of internal change one associates with a first movement; at length it subsides into the first of those utterly still passages already mentioned, one of the most riveting in Brian's music, with nothing but sustained soft harmony and detached fragments on harp and glockenspiel. This leads to what is really the scherzo, a storm whipped up and quickly quenched; then a sombre reference to the opening is followed by an off-stage trumpet call. Some mysterious trappings bring in the slow movement, with its prominent violin solo, this section based largely on descending phrases originating near the start of the symphony. In due course the finale breaks out; at first it seems grimly triumphant, yet disturbingly fragmented, with some remarkable orchestration. Passing through various developments, sometimes massive, sometimes flying apart, it heaves itself up to a volcanic crisis. All at once everything vanishes into the stillness again and we are in an astonishing coda. Completely original and beautiful suspended harmonies lead to an astounding soft brass chord that stares, sphinx-like, at a foreign key. The solo violin remembers poignantly the past. Then the music moves quietly into the main tonality of C, immovable, untranslatable, like the enigma of life itself, unquestionable, unanswerable.

Symphony No 21 (1963)

At the age of 87 Brian was finding in his music a new buoyancy, a sense, almost, of youthful enjoyment, and the Twenty-first Symphony in E flat shows clearly this aspect of his mind. There are four separate movements, and the opening *allegro* (preceded by a short slow introduction) is concise and vigorous, in a modified sonata form, ending well within its own length, with some abruptness. The scoring is hard-edged and unsensuous, but the mood is cheerful and touched with humour. The slow second movement is in G flat, relaxed and reflective except where abrasive harmony and curious instrumentation reveal that the composer is not always interested in comforting the listener's ear. The movement is a continuous growth of melody and counterpoint, making its own individual shape and, like the first movement, deliberately foreshortening its end.

Next follows a sparkling little scherzo with quicksilver changes of texture and colour and a subtly quick wit that would be remarkable in a composer a third of Brian's age. The tonality is indeterminate but finally settles in G major, and the ending solidifies and dignifies everything, as if in preparation for something else. So far the movements have been short and concentrated; now there is room for expansion, and the finale, after various calculated hesitations, begins in C with a brightly vigorous theme which, despite its plain dignity, yet displays a streak of scepticism.

Soon the key is E flat, the main key, and after a transition the second theme appears in D flat; this is derived from the first theme and eventually brings about the final climax by turning itself into a straightforward but grand canon. Between these points the music is variously developmental and always genial. Do not expect a continuous *allegro*; the composer often turns aside, and while as always he is sparing of transitions, he is positively extravagant in the use of parentheses. The ending is very simple and highly original; timpani and full orchestra alternate with massive E flats – but it is the drum that unexpectedly has the last word.

Robert Simpson Authors copyright 1973

Producer: Robert Simpson

Recording Engineer: Angus McKenzie

Recording Location: De Montfort Hall, Leicester, 18th, 19th July 1972

A Dolby Recording

Side 1

SYMPHONY NO. 22 'SYMPHONIA BREVIS' (1964-5)

PSALM 23 (1901) (for Tenor, Chorus and Orchestra)

PAUL TAYLOR, Tenor

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL CHORUS

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA

LASZLO HELTAY, Conductor

Produced by Robert Simpson

Side 2

ENGLISH SUITE NO. 5 'RUSTIC SCENES' (1953)

I - Trotting to Market

II - Reverie

III - The Restless Stream

IV - Village Revels

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA

ERIC PINKETT, Conductor

Produced by William Robson

Album Co-ordinator: Robert Walker, CBS Records

Havergal Brian, the 'unknown warrior of English music', was born in Staffordshire in 1876 and died in Sussex in 1972. He was the first major British composer from a working-class background, and the creator of some of the 20th century's biggest musical works. Though largely self-taught (his parents were pottery-workers, and he was apprenticed to a carpenter) he doggedly devoted his long life to music in the face of almost total public indifference and neglect. He wrote five operas, concertos, orchestral, choral and piano music, many songs, and more symphonies than anyone since the 18th century - 32 in all, no less than 21 of them after the age of 80! Performances during his lifetime were few and far between, and at the time of his death the bulk of his immense creative output remained unpublished and unheard.

But interest in Brian's music began to grow during his last years, chiefly due to the advocacy of Robert Simpson of the BBC, and has continued apace. An increasing number of people believe that his tough-minded, sometimes abrasive, undeniably original works represent one of the major achievements in 20th-century British music. The scale, integrity and human power of his symphonic output, in particular, marks him as a composer of European stature, comparable with (though quite independent of) Mahler, Nielsen or Sibelius. Nevertheless there are still many misconceptions rife about Brian: for instance, the idea that he wrote nothing but grim, gargantuan symphonies. Well, the symphony is the shortest item on this record, and the three works here, spanning more than 60 years, give a good idea of the real breadth of Brian's expressive range. Some of the music is difficult, like most worthwhile things, but much is immediately approachable, and all repays repeated hearings. Brian's voice is a unique one in the music of our time: the expressive world his works inhabit, once entered, is not easily forgotten.

Psalm 23, a setting of Miles Coverdale's 1535 translation in the Book of Common Prayer, for tenor, chorus and standard-size orchestra, was composed around 1901, at Hartshill near Stoke-on-Trent. In 1904 Brian showed it to Elgar, who greatly

admired it. But no performance materialized, and in 1920 Brian somehow lost the original score, though he was able to reconstruct it in 1945. In fact it was only after his death that **Psalm 23** received its first performance, in Hove in March 1973, with the same choir, orchestra and conductor as we hear in this recording.

The 1945 rewriting seems to have preserved Brian's original conception in all essentials – the style, form and orchestration are characteristic of Brian's other works of the 1900's, and the score must therefore be judged as one of his earliest surviving major compositions: the kind of starting-point we need to locate before we can begin to estimate any artist's creative stature. Even this early, Brian's musical personality is strongly in evidence. The influence of other composers – notably Wagner, and Brian's hero Elgar – can indeed be felt, but an independent mind is shaping those influences to new ends, building a large-scale structure in a bold and basically symphonic manner. The choral writing is highly effective, and the structure is easily grasped through thematic and motivic repetition: the grand march-rhythm of the beginning, and the expressive phrase which follows, are both resourcefully developed throughout. The tonal scheme is wide-ranging, helping to give the work its sense of scale.

The expansive **Andante Maestoso** opening ('The Lord is my Shepherd') states most of the main material but only fitfully establishes C major as the main key; the second section ('He shall convert my soul') then gravitates to the opposite end of the tonal spectrum in a pastoral F sharp major. F major, changing to D minor, is the focus of the central **Allegro** for 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death', which Brian's setting makes both sinister and exciting with the simplest dramatic effects. Some of this music recurs at an appropriate point in the succeeding tenor solo in D flat ('Thou shalt prepare a table before me'); then another distant key-change brings us into G major and perhaps the finest music in the whole work, a nobly expressive and entirely unacademic fugue to the words 'But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me'. After this the various sections of the chorus softly reiterate the words 'for ever' while the music swings through a tranquil, unhurried series of spacious modulations – an apt metaphor for eternity – leading at last to a triumphant climax. The music of the opening returns, and the work closes in a peaceful, confident C major. Very few other British composers were writing music of this quality in the early 1900's.

More than 60 years separate **Psalm 23** from the **Symphonia Brevis**, Brian's 22nd Symphony, which he completed in 1965 shortly before his 89th birthday. His language had undergone many changes in the meantime, and this, his shortest symphony, displays all his later characteristics of drastic compression, inexhaustible polyphonic invention, oblique, allusive changes of mood, and a structure of developing variation, built on the continual metamorphosis of terse germinal figures rather than repetition of themes. But some features remain – the fondness for dogged march-rhythms, the sudden snatches of singing melody, the delight in massive orchestral sounds. This is still demonstrably the composer of **Psalm 23**: his musical imagination is simply more experienced, much quicker in motion, and incomparably richer.

Symphony No. 22, while wholly satisfying as 'pure' music, seems to evoke (for this listener, at least) the sense of strange landscapes and rumours of war. The first movement (**Maestoso e ritmico**) expands from first bar to last to form a single indivisible musical organism. It is best regarded as a brief exposition – with the rising figure heard at the very outset the most important element – merging into a searching, intricate, stormy development and lacking any formal recapitulation. The

tritone interval in the rising figure works its way into every aspect of the music, and imparts a mood of continual unrest, relaxing only a little in the soaring tune at the end. The second movement (**Tempo di Marcia e ritmico**) follows without a break: it begins as a kind of mysterious nocturnal march in 3/4 time, with some uncanny scoring and little easing of the prevailing tension. Suddenly the first movement's opening material crashes in (this is the 'missing' recapitulation, delayed to round off the whole work) and provokes a bitter, dissonant climax. A brief, lamenting epilogue ends in a bleak F minor with minatory brass and tolling timpani, seeming to suggest that the real struggle is still to come.

Early in 1953, just after he had finished his opera **The Cenci**, a publisher suggested to Brian that he should write something lighter than symphonies and operas. In fact, he **had** written lighter works in earlier years, notably the Comedy Overture **Doctor Merryheart** and four **English Suites**: so he had no difficulty in producing an **English Suite No. 5**, subtitled 'Rustic Scenes'. But the publisher turned it down, because some movements did not use the full orchestra! So this wholly delightful music had to wait another 20 years – for this recording, in fact, which is the first performance. The work is not 'light music' in any conventional sense: Brian never tried to keep his disconcerting individuality out of it, though it does show a simplification of some aspects of his style. He explained the music in terms of a kind of 'recollection in tranquillity' in a letter written soon after its completion:

"The music of 'Rustic Scenes' is as simple as a Moody & Sankey hymn. It follows the plan of the previous **English Suites** . . . short descriptive movements inspired by a particular locality. The 1st Suite . . . definitely arose from the soil of Staffordshire and Shropshire. The 3rd Suite is definitely Sussex. The [5th Suite's] locality is definitely Shropshire – first 3 movements – the finale Staffordshire. I should not write music of this type unless I had a long memory of faraway days . . . of course we cannot see into other people's minds – I can't even see inside my own."

Memories of landscapes and country towns 60 or 70 years before: that has something to do with it, then – though it does not explain the whole work by a long way.

The first movement ('Trotting to Market' – the apparently naive titles are no preparation for the sophistication of the music) with its repeated fanfares and bouncing rhythms, is in Brian's lighter symphonic manner, and radiates a sense of well-being and high spirits. But it is followed by something very different and much deeper – a 'Reverie' for string alone: a long, elegiac meditation in which Brian seems to explore some dark, haunted corner of the English pastoral tradition. This is intensely-felt music, with a hint of tragedy at the climax. Something of its uneasy mood persists beneath the bubbling surface of 'The Restless Stream' – a curious intermezzo, beautifully written for woodwind and percussion only, with echoing horns at the end, unlike any other Brian I know. The ebullient finale ('Village Revels') calls us to attention with a fanfare, then launches into a splendid folk-dance-like tune that is put through some very vigorous paces before the work ends in high good humour and a blaze of brass. It is, indeed, **English** music of the purest stock, full of the fascinating contradictions of that extraordinary race: it surely deserves a place in the repertoire alongside the lighter works of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst.

MALCOLM MACDONALD

Jack Richards, Esq.,
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23 January 1974

Dear Jack,

Herewith return of all your parts for Psalm XXIII, plus Tpt IV part and newly photocopied full score; I have a duplicate score of similar quality here which could be ~~XXXX~~ supplied to Eric ~~if~~ he requires it - otherwise it would be reserved for recording studio (producer's) use. (I assume Laszlo has a full score already - if not please let me know if he requires one.)

? ? ?

Please note that you did not send me glockenspiel, harp and organ parts: if you don't have these, I would get them copied for you (let me know in good time to arrange the copying!)

Back to the 4th Tpt part: this includes additional passages where Malcolm MacDonald suggests its possible use in addition to the two places ~~in~~ in the autograph score where HB has the four-part chords which necessitate its use. I have indicated the additional passages in red on the enclosed full score. I have carefully (I hope!) checked and corrected the other three ~~existing~~ Tpt parts in the light of the 4th.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Graham Fatta

* bars 53-56 and 221-22

BRIAN: Symphony 10 □ Symphony 21*
*Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra | James Loughran | Eric Pinkett**
Unicorn RHS 313 (£2.26)

Better late than never. These recordings were made last summer in Leicester, and would have appeared earlier were it not for Unicorn's temporary financial difficulties. As it happened, this first review was preceded by an obituary, adding to the ironies surrounding Havergal Brian's life and music; rather than attempt a summary, I'd refer the reader to the February article.

The tenth dates from 1954, and is in one continuous movement, although subdivisions are apparent. It is scored for conventional large orchestra with much extra percussion, including thunder sheet and wind machine which are used in totally integrated fashion; there is no suggestion of the cheap effects associated with their use. The technical demands are considerable, but the orchestra rises to them. Slight reservations are caused by occasional omissions of (carefully scored) details of phrasing and dynamic, but Brian's unique music comes across strongly, and

the overall effect is of a professional orchestra—and who would match their enthusiasm and dedication? There will, eventually be better performances, but none will be as welcome or as timely.

The four-movement twenty-first was written in the middle of Brian's last prolific bout of composition, in 1963. Again, the tight, economical, linear developments feature (affinities with Schoenberg in this respect) although rather more fragmented. The performance feels less convincing than before, with more lack of low-level contrast and occasional ragged ensemble. Nevertheless, while the symphony doesn't seem up to the tenth's heights, it should not disappoint.

The recording has a concert-hall naturalness, although timpani and bass drum can be rather overpowering and an awkward edit appears towards the end of the tenth. The unusually wide dynamic range is welcome, and surfaces on our pressing were reasonably silent. This important and adventurous record should belatedly spark much interest, even if it might take more to convince a curiously apathetic public of the composer's stature. [B: 2/3] *Michael Thorne*

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MAY 73

BRIAN: Symphony 22 (Symphonia brevis) □ Psalm 23 □ English suite, No. 5 (Rustic scenes)
Paul Taylor (ten) | Brighton Festival Chorus | Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra | Laszlo Heltay | Eric Pinkett
CBS 61612 (£1.79)

This thoughtful issue is Havergal Brian made easy. In presenting his *Symphonia brevis*, a fair reflection of his more uncompromising major works, with *Rustic Scenes* and the re-worked *Psalm 23*, a clear insight is provided about his relation to any English tradition that we may care to define in retrospect. Easy access is so provided, and it is needed, although he needs few props if half the large claims made on his behalf are justified.

The original score of *Psalm 23* was lost (a familiar story) but the composer thought enough of it to reconstruct it in 1945. For 1901 vintage it is very adventurous: here are the characteristic English choral gestures, but associated with, if anyone, early Vaughan Williams rather than Elgar or the Parry-Stanford axis. Although just 15 minutes, scale is large; the tenor, chorus and orchestra are used in broad, unashamedly dramatic sweeps epitomised in the declamatory close.

The nine minute symphony is not wholly successful. It follows the 35 minute 21st and shares its approach—it is therefore short, not compressed. Overall shape plays against traditional first movement expectations by delaying recapitulation with an amiable scherzando insert, although the strongest remaining impression is of the powerful, slipping desolation of the closing chords. The single movement form sits uncomfortably around Brian's big gestures, and some of the resulting changes jar even his abrupt nature; rather pedantic rhythmic delivery doesn't help. Such language works better in the *English Suite*, tempered with a few unselfconscious tunes from a more relaxed composer.

Orchestral playing is sometimes erratic, but projects the music fairly directly, particularly with the strong Brighton Chorus in the psalm. For a composer with such a singular but dated voice, we miss some semblance of consensus or performing tradition; eventually symphony and suite may feel slightly stiff, but the orchestra's playing is much improved over their recording of symphonies 10 and 21. Minor balance troubles apart, recording is comfortably natural, with smooth strings and clear but resonant bass. Cutting and pressing were clean. [A/B: 1/2/3] *Michael Thorne*

HI - FI NEWS
FEBRUARY 75

BRIAN: *Symphony No 10 in C minor*.
Symphony No 21 in E flat. Leicestershire
Schools Symphony Orchestra/James
Loughran, Eric Pinkett. Unicorn RHS
313. £2.26.

CALUM MACDONALD

I HAD BETTER state my partisan conviction at the outset: this is about the most important issue of 1973. For some years now I've been investigating the music and personality of Havergal Brian. Casual interest drew me at first, but I've gradually been forced to the conclusion that — against all odds to the contrary — this lonely, disconcertingly idiosyncratic figure was a creative artist who justifies the claims of his most enthusiastic admirers: one of the greatest composers (and specifically one of the greatest symphonists) this country has ever produced. I consider his symphonies far more important than those of (say) Bax or Rubbra — his true peers, it seems to me, are Elgar, Mahler, Sibelius, and Nielsen. But even had I never heard of Havergal Brian before now, I think this disc would be enough to convince me that here is a creative mind of unusual power and originality, and would whet my appetite for more.

The strange circumstances of Brian's long life of neglect, stubborn persistence, and unquenchable creativity are now pretty well known. Born in 1876 into a working-class family in the Staffordshire Potteries, virtually self-taught as a composer, he made a reputation as one of English music's white hopes before the Great War; but subsequently his work was largely ignored, public performances ceased, and he himself became a forgotten composer — this in spite of admiration from Elgar, Delius, Bantock, Goossens, Tovey and Richard Strauss. Nevertheless he persevered heroically in creative work on an enormous scale, writing a fantastic, satirical comic opera (*The Tigers*, never performed), and the largest of all symphonies (*The Gothic*, first performed 1961). After World War II his career entered its most unlikely phase: his music reached a new peak of boldness and originality, and from 1948 to 1968 (between the ages of 72 and 93!) he composed a vast amount of music that includes four operas and 27 symphonies (bringing his life's total to 32). Alert to the end, still interested in new music, he died last November, nearly 97 years of age, the last representative of the generation of Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bridge and Ireland.

That is Brian, the prodigious phenomenon. But the one really vital fact in the story is the quality and nature of his music. And since at the time of his death none of it was available on record, 95 per cent of his output remained in manuscript, and no work of importance had been published since 1932, a thorough knowledge of it has been confined to a tiny number of enthusiasts — with all the suspicions of special pleading that entails. Despite infrequent broadcasts in the last 20 years (all due to the vision and faith of Robert Simpson, who contributes the sleeve-note for the present record), this tough, unfamiliar music only reveals its true depths on repeated hearing — which is why commercial recordings have been so badly needed. Now Unicorn, harnessing the enthusiasm of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, have begun to fill the gap. Furthermore, the scores of both works recorded here have just been published by Musica Viva — along with the equally impressive Eighth Symphony — which will enable score-readers to further enrich their enjoyment of the music.

Symphonies Nos 10 and 21 belong to the last period of Brian's creative life. He began his career with a sturdy, individual application of late-romantic language, stemming from Wagner, Elgar, and Strauss; his mature music developed richly and variously through bitonality, cluster harmonies, neo-medieval heterophony and near-total chromaticism, always retaining its strong personality; but by 1948 he had established a complex, often obsessively contrapuntal style that accepts a high degree of dissonance within a basically diatonic framework, along with highly-concentrated, sometimes curiously fragmented structures, and an utterly individual orchestration that makes very extensive use of the percussion (sometimes almost as a 'continuo'). Within these very broad limits, the two Symphonies are excellently contrasted.

Symphony No 10 (1953-54) is a powerful one-movement work, by turns stormy and contemplative, rather 'Nordic' in tone, reminiscent at times of Nielsen. The listener may find its abrupt changes of character and direction disconcerting at first but with greater familiarity they are seen to be logical features of the overall design. Sibelius is the better comparison here: like him, Brian is concerned to accommodate vast extremes of symphonic motion within the confines of a single, tight-knit form. But whereas the mature Sibelius reconciles these extremes by imperceptible transitions, Brian brings them into direct confrontation, yoking them together without linking-passages, creating a rough-hewn music of great inner tension, whose turmoils mark it out as an utterance of our own age. The highlights of No 10 include a furious 'storm' — using wind and thunder machines — as vivid as anything in Strauss's *Alpensinfonie*, yet not really naturalistic at all: it is an inner struggle that is played out here. Calm is restored with the romantic image of an off-stage trumpet call, and the music moves, by way of a central slow section dominated by a solo violin, to a conclusion in an atmosphere of enigmatic, almost unearthly calm.

It must be said at once that the performance is a triumph. The Leicestershire children's playing is of completely professional standard, with splendid fire, attack, and responsiveness to detail (their true, hushed pianissimo, in the 'calm before the storm' that begins two bars before Fig 19, ought to be the envy of established orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic). Only once is there a hint of insecurity, in the weird fugato-like section beginning at Fig 32, where the woodwind have to snatch at their groups of low staccato demi-semiquavers — a cruelly difficult piece of writing, in any event. Not only is the Tenth difficult to play: Brian's original, almost 'open-ended' concept of symphonic structure places severe responsibilities on the conductor. The crucial problem is what I might term that of 'articulation'. The conductor has not only to balance extremes of tempo, dynamics, expressive character and strongly-contrasted blocks of texture (while bringing out the individual lines within those blocks); he must allow the different kinds of music to 'breathe' as their characters demand, without relaxing the tight compression of the overall structure. The key to the problem lies in timing, which often depends on a correct judgement of the very brief unmeasured pauses that are a characteristic feature of Brian's symphonic language. James Loughran has understood this perfectly, with the result that his interpretation combines the maximum suggestion of breadth and underlying stillness. Everything is given its proper weight; every point tells; and Brian's inner ear (at the time he wrote the Tenth he had heard none of his post-1919 music in the concert hall) is proved correct all along the line. This is a great performance by any standard, and is likely to remain a definitive interpretation for a very long time: a truly historic disc debut for both music and conductor.

I can't give quite the same praise to the performance of Symphony No 21; yet it is far more than just a stop-gap. There are a few places where the orchestra seems overtaxed, with slightly ragged ensemble, less-than-perfect intonation, and a (very) few wrong notes. The lapses are understandable, for Brian's scoring, though less obviously virtuosic than in the Tenth, is actually more testing, because more exposed. But buyers needn't be deterred on that account: I've heard worse from some of our major orchestras, and it's only because these schoolchildren's standards are in general so stunningly high that I'm able to make such criticism at all.

Symphony No 21 (1963), written when Brian was 87, seems at first to occupy a more conventional stance than No 10, for all its astonishingly youthful exuberance. It's a serene work in four movements: the first resembling sonata-form (actually it's nothing of the kind, but a continuously unfolding structure of a sort to which only he held the secret), the second a gravely beautiful slow movement, the third a brief, high-spirited Scherzo, and the Finale a subtle fusion of sonata and variations on a very Elgarian tune, with more off-stage fanfares, which rises to a final climax that is a lyrical high point in his work. There are no emotional upheavals and seemingly no enigmas here, but the easy contrapuntal mastery is deceptive: recollection in tranquillity does not preclude profundity. In the rapt opening of the slow movement, for instance, there is true depth of feeling, as well as a sensitive, unsensational harmonic idiom that is as personal — and as deeply English — as that of Elgar, Delius, or Vaughan Williams.

Eric Pinkett's reading is admirably straightforward: maybe a little too straightforward, for this is a symphony of nuances, and more could be made of some passages, particularly the closing pages, which lack something of their necessary weight and nobility. His tempi, though, are all well chosen and idiomatic, save for a rather odd *accelerando* in the Finale, one bar after Fig 95 (not marked in the copy of the MS I have before me as I write). As for the wrong notes — the only serious one is in the work's penultimate orchestral tutti, where in the second half of the bar at Fig 101, the trumpets inexplicably play a B flat instead of a C. It doesn't actually jar on the ear, but that's just the point: we lose thereby one of Brian's typically pungent harmonic clashes. So there's still room for another performance of No 21 (even in instrumentation: the brief vibraphone part in the Scherzo has been omitted here). But in no way am I denigrating the present one — it gives a great deal of pleasure, and its value, simply in making the music available, is incalculable.

The recording quality is first rate throughout, with great presence, vivid stereo separation, and exactly the sense of depth and space that Brian's many-layered orchestration demands. The disc needs playing at a fairly high level for best results, for the dynamic range is very wide indeed. Brian is not, as under-rehearsed performances in the past have sometimes made him seem, a composer who is 'loud all the time': the music is full of dynamic contrasts, and they are fully captured here — the off-stage trumpet and horn calls really do seem to be blowing from another world, while the decisive climaxes are physically overpowering.

An issue, then, which was supremely worth producing, and which cannot fail to accelerate the already growing interest in a fascinating composer. And it's only the beginning. Lyrita has now recorded two more Brian symphonies, for early release; Unicorn also has further recording plans for the summer; and at least two of the major companies are actively considering whether to enter the field. But the palm must go to Unicorn for taking the first bold step. The disc deserves every success, and should be in the collection of everyone who cares about English music. At the very reasonable price, you have no excuse for not getting to know — and, perhaps, to love — some of the finest music of our time.

Fascinating—but this disc has a touch of tragedy

by **Ralph Pugsley**



Dr. Havergal Brian pictured with members of the Leicestershire Schools' Symphony Orchestra during a break from rehearsals last year when they were preparing to record his 10th and 21st Symphonies.

Things tend to happen suddenly and with swift, sharp contrasts in a Havergal Brian score — like the storm which whips up with impressive fury in the single-spanned 10th Symphony and then as quickly subsides.

One notices, too, the progress of the music through brief and seemingly unrelated sound shapes — snippets, even, and juxtaposing full-blooded orchestral colours with the thin textures of one or two solo instruments.

Yet even on first listening I found the onward progress of the music never in doubt.

With great ingenuity Brian sees to it that the ear is sufficiently stocked with relevant information to apprehend new twists and turns — new shocks and digressions — in the forward journey.

Listening for the third and fourth time one begins to glimpse the deeper meaning of the notes — especially in the magnificence of the 10th symphony — and marvel at the optimism which, at the age of 87, Brian poured into

the four-movement 21st Symphony which expostulates so buoyantly in its grandly conceived final movement.

I recommend this disc to those who seek an original musical mind working through self-assured unorthodox procedures and skilful and intriguing handling of the orchestra to express a worthwhile philosophy. The lucid conducting of Loughran and Pinkett helps in reaping this pleasure.

THE latest record to be made by the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra is certainly their most important and it is also, I think, their best.

It has just been issued by Unicorn and it is a landmark because it makes available on a commercial disc for the very first time the music of Havergal Brian who died last year at the age of 98.

One is conscious, indeed, of the element of tragedy in the fact that Brian, who composed music for so long without encouragement or recognition, never lived to hear this pioneer disc made by musicians young enough to be his great great-grandchildren.

The chosen works are the 10th Symphony (1954) and the 21st (1963), the conducting being shared by James Loughran and Eric Pinkett, respectively, and I can think of no higher compliment to the L.S.S.O. than to say that, listening to their playing, one accepts it on the same standard as that of a professional orchestra.

Contrasts

And what of the music? I can only say that I am amazed that these symphonies have not been heard before and grateful to the efforts of Dr. Robert Simpson whose tireless advocacy of Brian helped to make the record possible.

The composer's style as shown in these two works is highly individual and always fascinating.

LEICESTER MERCURY
MAY 73

LSSO puts four more works on record

THE Leicestershire Schools' Symphony Orchestra will be in Brighton tomorrow to make two recordings simultaneously.

The BBC and CBS records will each have a control room to tape performances of Havergal Brian's setting of the 23rd Psalm and his 22nd Symphony, and also of Berlioz's "Resurrexit" and his "Death of Orpheus."



All this music is being recorded for the first time — the BBC's tape for eventual Radio 3 broadcast and CBS's for processing into a disc which, it is expected, will be issued in the autumn.

The conductor for all four works is Laszlo Heltay and the choir is the Brighton Festival Chorus, which Heltay directs.

The LSSO was first in the field in making an LP of Havergal Brian's music with their brisk-selling disc of the 10th and 21st Symphonies, conducted respectively by the Halle's James Loughran and the orchestra's permanent director, Eric Pinkett, who is Leicestershire's music adviser and founder of the County School of Music.

Once again, the BBC's Robert Simpson (stalwart champion of Brian's music) is concerned with production and he is responsible, too, for performances of the two Berlioz rarities.

Brian died, it will be

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remembered, without ever hearing the very first record of his music and it is interesting that, following the LSSO's disc, there is a projected one or other of the composer's symphonies by the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

The LSSO will remain in Brighton after their two-day recording session to rehearse the Tchaikovsky violin concerto with the highly-regarded young Russian player Philip Hirshhorn. This, again, is another instance of Leicestershire's youthful orchestra serving a valuable role as sort of "pace-maker" for young virtuosi learning new works.



Previously they have worked with pianist Peter Frankel and violinist Kyung Wha Chung.

"Do you by any chance happen to be rehearsing Tchaik's fiddle concerto?" came the question from a Hirshhorn's London agent. Eric Pinkett's reply was "Yes" — the LSSO happen to be playing it with Campoli as soloist at Loughborough on May 2nd.

Distinction for LSSO

It is quite an accolade to get into the Best Records of the Year, a list published annually by E.M.G. in its monthly letter, so there is a look of the cat licking the cream on the faces of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra. Their record is of Brian's Symphonies Nos. 10 and 21 and is one of the 60 selected out of thousands produced during the year 1973.

In case you may never have heard of the composer Brian the Briton, you need feel no shame for he has been woefully neglected and this is the first recording of any music by one of this country's most remarkable composers.

Havergal Brian died last year at the fine old age of 96. He wrote 32 symphonies and five operas.

The review of the record says: "Brian's music is among the most original to have been written in this century and it is doubly exciting and satisfying to hear the verve with which this remarkable youth orchestra attacks the formidable task set by these two difficult but very rewarding scores."

Symphony No. 21 was composed when Brian was 87 and was one of 22 symphonies he wrote after the age of 80. Late flowering, if you like! And pleasant to record that in this triumph of youth and age, Leicestershire has played a significant part.

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RECORD IN THE MAKING

"SSSHH . . . ! Not quite so loud, cellos. Let's have a real pianissimo here."

This, judging from his expression in the picture alongside, seems to be the message that James Loughran (the Halle Orchestra's conductor) is putting across during the preparation for the recording with the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra of Havergal Brian's 10th Symphony at the De Montfort Hall.

The disc they were making, with Brian's 21st Symphony on the reverse side (conductor, Eric Pirkett), will be issued in the autumn—one of several involving the county's senior orchestra who now add Loughran's name to the imposing list of famous conductors who have worked with them.



Brian, Havergal (1876–1972)

(i; ii) *English suite No. 5 (Rustic scenes)*;
(i; iii) *Symphony No. 22 (Symphonia brevis)*; (i; iii; iv) *Psalm 23* (for tenor, chorus and orchestra).

(M)**(*) CBS Classics 61612. (i) Leicestershire Schools SO; (ii) Pirkett; (iii) Heltay; (iv) Paul Taylor (tenor), Brighton Festival Chorus.

The *Symphonia brevis*, two brief but ambitious movements plus epilogue, represents Havergal Brian's later work at its most enjoyable, undisciplined in its way but with an unmistakable flavour. The Psalm setting of sixty years earlier is characteristically expansive, remarkable music to be written in the early years of the century. The *Suite* is a set of colourful, lightweight pieces, deliberately unambitious but more sharply memorable than most of Brian's music. Enjoyable performances for which very few allowances have to be made. Good recording.

Symphonies Nos. (i) 10 in C minor; (ii) 21 in E flat major.

** Unicorn RHS 313. Leicestershire Schools SO, (i) Loughran, (ii) Pirkett.

It was left to a small company and an amateur orchestra to make the first recording of a Brian symphony. Both are works of his old age: No. 10, a powerfully-wrought and original one-movement work, dates from 1953–4 and is the more immediately appealing of the two. No. 21 was composed when he was in his late eighties and is in four movements. There need be no serious reservations about the recording, and the performances are astonishingly accomplished.

**PENGUIN STEREO
RECORD GUIDE**

New disc provides key to unlock a musical language

LEICESTERSHIRE Schools' Symphony Orchestra, first in the field to put Havergal Brian's music on record, have produced another disc devoted to the music of this prolific and, up to now, neglected composer.

Brian died in the Autumn of 1972 — a month or so before the original LP was issued.

That record was judged to be one of the best classical issues of its year. The new one has qualities which are likely to make it equally valued.

Its sound is good, the playing again a remarkable achievement by this young orchestra doing service with the shared conducting of Eric Pinkett and Laszlo Heltay to music of marked originality and fascination.

May I suggest, too that the new record provides an accessible "key", so to speak, to a personal musical language that can, at times, be difficult to unlock.

Play over Brian's 5th English Suite (Rustic Scenes) a few times

and you have a rewarding and entertaining guide to his compositional style.

The suite occupies the second side of the record, with Pinkett conducting the LSSO and producing an excellent interpretation of music which, as Brian says, evokes memories of landscapes and country towns 60 or 70 years before it was composed in 1953.

It is descriptive music which however, goes much deeper than mere sound painting: the feeling of the opening Trotting to Market being far more profound than its title suggests.

Reverie is a beautifully thought out elegy for strings, The Restless Stream a really extraordinary piece of writing for woodwind and percussion, and the final Village Revels a marvellously conceived impression of rural well being.

New delights

Against a familiar background Brian's characteristic "brush-strokes" are vividly comprehensible and yield new delights on each playing. His fondness for compression and juxtaposition of dissimilar ideas and textures are there in the Reveille to which the village awakes and in the tiny pastoral glimpse (solo oboe against strings pedal) that flashes by as the revelling mounts in excitement.

Compression is the essence of the composer's shortest symphony — No. 22 (Symphonia Brevis) which opens the record's other side, with Heltay conducting. The time scale is brief but the symphonic scope (huge, granite blocks of sound impress the ear) is amazingly grand.

The other work involving tenor soloist and Brighton Festival Chorus, as well as the LSSO is the early setting (1901) of Psalm 23, an attractive work as Heltay demonstrates in his sympathetic direction.

LEICESTER MERCURY FEBRUARY 75

HAVERGAL BRIAN, Britain's most prolific but possibly least-performed classical composer, is to have his music recorded for the first time—at the age of 95. Paradoxically the disc will be cut by our top youth orchestra, the Leicestershire Schools' Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Brian, described by B.B.C. music expert Dr. Robert Simpson as "a composer of the stature of Elgar, is one of music's great enigmas. He has written 32 symphonies — more than three times as many as Beethoven — five operas, 114 songs, not to mention choral works. Yet until now none of them has been recorded. Says the composer from his seaside home at Shoreham, Sussex: "I am absolutely delighted that these young people are to record two of my symphonies. It shows how good they are. They are not easy works to play"

COUNTY SCHOOLS ORCHESTRA TO MAKE FIRST RECORDING OF COMPOSER'S WORK

LEICESTERSHIRE Schools Symphony Orchestra, with their conductor, Eric Pinkett, are to have the distinction of making the first gramophone record of music by the 96-year-old British composer Havergal Brian.

"Rehearsals are already under way and the recording will be done at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, next July. The chosen works are the 10th and 21st symphonies and the record, issued by Unicorn records is expected to be on sale by the following autumn.

Havergal Brian, born in Staffordshire and now living in Shoreham, Sussex, has become something of a legend in the musical world as a composer who is hardly ever performed but who nevertheless has worked quietly

and contentedly over the years to amass an output that includes 32 symphonies (including the two-hour long "Gothic") five operas, concertos for violin and cello and numerous choral works and songs.

The fact that much of his music demands large forces is an economical reason for its rare appearances in concert halls and for the complete absence of recordings.

His champions

However, he does have determined champions — among them Dr. Robert Simpson (a member of the B.B.C.'s music staff) who was mainly responsible for some recent broadcasts of Brian's works, and Alan Watkins, Press Association's deputy news editor and a music enthusiast with early training as a timpanist and percussionist.

The recording project really all started from the time when Alan Walker listened to the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra's existing discs. He was greatly impressed by the standard of playing and was struck by the thought that here was the solution to the economic problems of giving permanence to some of Brian's music.

He wrote to the composer, outlining the idea and obtained permission to explore possibilities.

Within a short time, Mr. Walker arranged a meeting between John Goldsmith (director of Unicorn Records), Eric Pinkett and Dr. Simpson. The outcome was a wholehearted and enthusiastic decision to go ahead and the chosen works on Dr. Simpson's recommendation were the 10th and 21st symphonies both of about 30 minutes' duration and for which orchestral parts for the 100 instrumentalists were available.

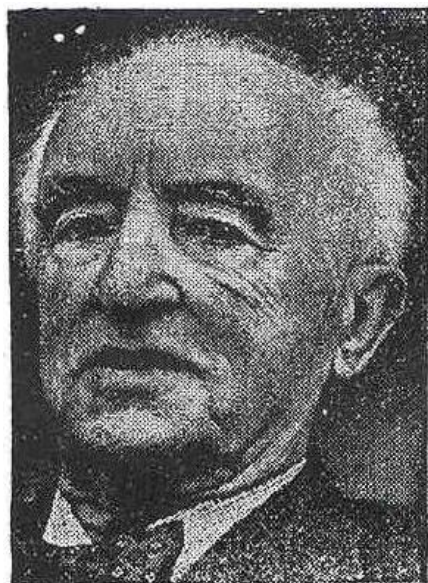
Dr. Simpson, who is the foremost authority on Havergal Brian's music, has since spent a day at the County School of Music at Birstall where he talked to the Schools Orchestra about the composer and the two symphonies and listened to them being rehearsed by Eric Pinkett.

He was delighted with their progress and reported favourably to Havergal Brian.

Local link

There is already an important local link, incidentally, with Unicorn Records. The company has earned considerable repute for its re-issues and projected new issues of music conducted by the late Wilhelm Furtwangler.

A dynamic force behind this venture is Paul Minchin, chairman of the international Wilhelm Furtwangler Society who lives in Evington Lane, Leicester.



HAVERGAL BRIAN

EP, the wandering minstrel, signs off

by RALPH PUGSLEY



★
Eric Pinkett, artist, dog breeder, sportsman... and a man of energy, enterprise and audacity who found world fame as a pioneer of music education.
★

ERIC PINKETT, once the lone, self-styled "wandering minstrel of the county" and now assured of a prominent and permanent place among the world's pioneers of music education, has retired as Leicestershire's first music adviser.

It is a job he has done ceaselessly and enormously well for 28 years. "Progress by misadventure" in his own colourful summing up of his distinguished career — and allusion to the odd quirks of fate which often helped to choose his path forward right from the very beginnings at Melton when, he recalls, it was his reputation as a games player which really brought him to Leicestershire in the first place.

His energy, stamina and resourcefulness are by now legendary. There are not many people who know of his work as conductor of the now famous Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra who are also aware of his ability as an artist ("My paintings had a bit of influence on my appointment, here, as music adviser") or the success he had as a dog breeder and international judge.

Experience

I can remember the time when, many years ago, he told me that he was better known on the Continent as a judge of terriers than he was as a musician. No one — not even "E.P." — would suggest that, today.

Eric Pinkett's interest and enthusiasm for music education began in a Nottinghamshire school before the war. By the time he was called up he had established a schools orchestra there, good enough to win for three years in succession the top award at an annual competition held at

the old Queen's Hall in London.

The Royal Air Force's original intention was that Eric Pinkett should teach Radio Location; but as it happened he soon gravitated to Cranwell and, henceforward, spent most of his six years as an airman conducting bands, including the R.A.F.'s main one.

He did not realise it at the time, but the experience was invaluable for his future in music education in that it enabled him so to expand his knowledge of instruments that he re-entered civilian life as the perfect one-man peripatetic — teacher of the complete orchestral line up of strings, woodwind and brass plus percussion.

Back in his Nottinghamshire school he successfully applied for the job of music master at Melton Mowbray Grammar School, impressed with his games record and for two years did as much sport as music.

In November 1947 he received a visit from the newly-appointed Director of Education for Leicestershire, Stewart Mason, an art connoisseur as well as an educationalist. Pinkett canvassed on the walls made an impact and E.P. (the initials soon became the virtually exclusive mode of identification) still maintains that those paintings smoothed the way to the County Offices in Grey Friars where, in April 1948, he presented himself as Adviser for Music.

Audacious

Because there was no precedent for the job, there was no advice to the adviser on how to set about it. So, having found himself a table, a chair and some office space, he quickly formulated the corner-cutting, enterprising, risk-taking and frequently audacious methods that have characterised his work-style ever since.

In the early days he was a

man in a hurry, impatient for results and quite unwilling to fester his ankles with red tape. He became the bane of the "treasury boys" because of his short-circuiting of the usual channels.

Musical instruments, desperately needed, could then often be obtained cheaply at the right place, at the right time and with ready money. E.P. snapped up bargains with his own money, but the official feathers flew when he presented the receipts and requests for reimbursement.

Some headmasters, too, were beginning to resent the effect of this musical gadfly on their orthodox calm and there was a time when it seemed that his "only friends were the children."

Yet, on an historic May Saturday morning in 1948 at an Elbow Lane School rehearsal room in Leicester there began a weekly routine that has continued unbroken ever since.

Today the headquarters of the County School of Music with its large staff of peripatetic instrumental teachers is at Birstall where three symphony orchestras meet on Saturdays — the Junior, the Intermediate and the L.S.S.O.

Tolerance

The C.S.M.'s high standards are accepted now, but in those early pioneering days E.P. had only his faith to keep him going. He was once advised to rehearse for five years before giving a concert, and he ignored it. The children's interest he knew, would have evaporated without the stimulus of playing in public.

Yet he was well aware of the sort of noise they made and staged their first outings in village halls, well away from large centres. The theory was that audiences here would be tolerant enough or inexperienced enough not to complain.

As the playing improved, so E.P. edged his way towards more densely populated areas and eventually to the county's principal concert hall — the De Montfort Hall in Leicester.

The L.S.S.O. has since played in many major concert halls in this country and on the Continent and the list of eminent musicians who have been associated with it grows longer each year.

Most distinguished of all is Sir Michael Tippett, who confirmed his admiration of the work of Eric Pinkett and the County School of Music by agreeing to be its patron.

The orchestra has made many records and achieved the distinction of being first in the field with recordings of the music of Havergal Brian.

E.P. is always the first to give credit to his staff at the County School of Music whose teaching has produced many young players of a high enough quality to obtain places in most of the leading British orchestras. He acknowledges, too, the part played by Stewart Mason in helping to launch the L.S.S.O. on its series of foreign tours. But when all is said and done, the Leicestershire adventure owes all to the dream which Eric Pinkett cherished through his difficult and taxing early days as music adviser.

Eric Pinkett, O.B.E. (the honour came in 1972) will not cut completely adrift from the stimulus of working with children. His orchestra from now on will be that which he himself recently formed — the New Leicester Orchestra, its members comprising players from city and county and a handful, even, from Rutland.

So, in a final sentence and after recording my own admiration of his significant achievements, I wish him well and hope for his long-continued pleasure with paintbrush and baton.