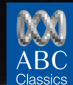

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EUGENE

GOOSSENS

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Symphonies No. 1 & 2 ▪ The Eternal Rhythm
Variations on a Chinese Theme
Kaleidoscope ▪ Divertissement
Oboe Concerto ▪ Concert Piece
Concertino for Strings
Fantasy for Winds
Tam O'Shanter

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ▪ MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
WEST AUSTRALIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ▪ **VERNON HANDLEY**

Eugene Goossens 1893-1962

CD1

Symphony No. 1, Op. 58 (1940) [42'02]

1	I	Andante – Allegro con anima	10'22
2	II	Andante espressivo ma con moto	11'01
3	III	Divertimento: Allegro vivo	6'43
4	IV	Finale: Moderato – alla breve (con moto)	13'36

5 **Oboe Concerto, Op. 45** (1927) 12'22
Joel Marangella *oboe*

6 **Tam O'Shanter, Op. 17a** (1919) 3'10
'Scherzo after Burns'

Concert Piece, Op. 65 (1958)* [22'00]
for two harps, oboe, cor anglais and orchestra

7	I	Fantasia	4'56
8	II	Chorale	9'46
9	III	Perpetuum mobile e burlesca	7'12

Joel Marangella *oboe and cor anglais*
Jane Geeson and Sebastien Lipman *harps*

Total Playing Time 79'55

CD2

Symphony No. 2, Op. 62 (1945)* [38'26]

1	I	Adagio – Vivace ma non troppo	12'37
2	II	Andante tranquillo	8'37
3	III	Giocoso (Interlude)	4'58
4	IV	Andante – Allegro con spirito	12'14

5 **Concertino, Op. 47** (1928)* 13'05
for double string orchestra
Allegro moderato – Andante tranquillo, ma con moto – Allegro moderato

6 **Fantasy, Op. 36** (1924) 9'58
for nine wind instruments
Moderato – Allegro moderato – Andante – Allegro moderato
Janet Webb *flute*; Guy Henderson *oboe*; Lawrence Dobell and Christopher Tingay *clarinets*; John Cran and Fiona McNamara *bassoons*; Robert Johnson and Clarence Mellor *horns*; Daniel Mendelow *trumpet*

Total Playing Time 61'57

CD3

Divertissement, Op. 66 (1956-60) [18'37]

1	I	Dance Prelude	5'38
2	II	Scherzo and Folk Tune	5'34
3	III	Ballet Flamenco	7'25

Variations on a Chinese Theme, Op. 1 (1911-12) [27'18]

4	Theme (Allegro)	0'46
5	Var. 1 [(Allegro)]	0'46
6	Var. 2 (Scherzando)	0'46
7	Var. 3 (Moderato)	2'07
8	Var. 4 (Allegro)	1'49
9	Var. 5 (Andante quasi Adagio)	2'51
10	Var. 6 (Scherzando)	1'13
11	Var. 7 (Andante quasi Adagio)	2'35
12	Var. 8 (Allegro)	1'15
13	Var. 9 (Allegro moderato)	1'10
14	Var. 10 (Tempo di Marcia)	1'42
15	Var. 11 (Semplice – Allegro)	2'04
16	Var. 12 (Tempo di Valse)	2'40
17	Finale (Allegro giusto)	5'34

18 **The Eternal Rhythm, Op. 5** (1913)* 20'24

Kaleidoscope, Op. 18 (1917; 1933) [9'50]

19	I	Good Morning	1'00
20	II	Promenade	1'29
21	III	The Hurdy Gurdy Man	1'12
22	IV	The March of the Wooden Soldier	1'03
23	V	Lament for a Departed Doll	1'40
24	VI	The Old Musical Box	0'45
25	VII	The Punch and Judy Show	0'42
26	VIII	Good Night	1'59

Total Playing Time 76'12

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

West Australian Symphony Orchestra (CD1)
Sydney Symphony Orchestra (CD2)
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (CD3)
Vernon Handley *conductor*

Eugene Goossens (III) is remembered today primarily for his work as a conductor. Yet he was also a notable composer, and in this regard he belongs to that venerable tradition of conductor-composers that counts Gustav Mahler, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Otto Klemperer and Felix Weingartner in its midst. Fortunately, in the age of recordings, Eugene Goossens the composer is beginning to gain a stronger posthumous profile. This set of recordings gives us the chance to look afresh at his output – freed, one hopes, from the prejudice and disparaging sentiment that influenced the writer of the Goossens entry in the last edition of that bible of music dictionaries *The New Grove Dictionary*. His music, we are told, has a 'singular unmemorability', and its eclecticism 'could not cover a lack of melodic invention and inner conviction'. With an ever-growing Goossens discography, and from a more objective, post-avant-garde, early-21st-century viewpoint, we are now more enabled to make up our own minds.

One thing about Eugene Goossens is for sure: from the time when he conducted the London Proms premiere of his *Variations on a Chinese Theme* when he was only 21, to that terrible period in early 1956, when conservative Australian society turned him from principal deity of their music establishment to a shamed, pornography-possessing outcast, he led an extraordinarily colourful, diverse and often charmed existence.

It was an extraordinary family to start with. Both his father and grandfather were eminent opera conductors, working with the Carl Rosa company fairly continuously from 1873, when Eugene I came to England from his native Belgium, to 1915. Eugene II's wife Annie was a contralto in the company, and with Yorkshire blood and Cook as a surname claimed descent from *the* Captain Cook (an ironic twist in the tale, considering how Eugene III's last landing in Australia turned out). Of Annie and Eugene II's six children, four survived the Great War and all had distinguished musical careers; Marie and Sidonie as harpists, and Leon as the world's leading oboist of his generation.

The family was based in Liverpool, but at the age of eight, Eugene was packed off to board at St Francis Xavier's school in Bruges. Two years later he began studying at the Conservatory there – following in his grandfather's footsteps – and subsequently returned to Liverpool. In 1907, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London, and studied first the violin and, from 1910, composition with Charles Villiers Stanford. It was therefore quite an itinerant upbringing, creating a pattern that persisted in later years, and an existence that created in Goossens qualities of independence that perhaps verged on aloofness.

Goossens conducted whilst at college and, a year later, at a Queen's Hall Promenade Concert

in September 1913. But his first years as a professional musician, in addition to fairly prolific composition, were spent as a violinist, both in quartets such as the Langly-Mukle and the Philharmonic, and in Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. A heart condition prevented him from military service during the war, and in January 1916 he took over from Beecham at short notice in the first performances of *The Critic,* an opera by his erstwhile composition teacher Stanford. Thus began a fruitful, sustained apprenticeship as protégé-cum-last-minute-deputy to Beecham – often taking over from him in the pit without any orchestral rehearsals. Goossens thus earned a wholly justified reputation as someone who could quickly master difficult modern scores, and get through performances with panache and confidence. In his autobiography *A Mingled Chime,* Beecham wrote, 'His coolness and facility were phenomenal, and he had good need of both, as I do not think any man of his age was ever subjected to such ordeals as I imposed on him.'

Throughout his 20s, chamber and piano works and songs held sway in his compositional output. In 1921, Goossens cranked up his conducting career by forming a hand-picked, virtuoso orchestra for five concerts of contemporary music. It was a venture of considerable artistic and financial audacity, and, in its espousal of new music, marked Goossens out as a champion of such repertoire; something which could always be said of him in subsequent stages of his conducting life in the USA and Australia. Stravinsky, Diaghilev and Massine were present at the first concert, on 7 June 1921, for the first London concert performance of *Le sacre du printemps* and subsequent concerts featured music by Honegger, Holst, Ravel, Bliss, Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Whilst this venture was a success, and led to conducting engagements with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes later that year and in 1925, Goossens' emergence as a major figure in British musical life weakened with an invitation to conduct the inaugural concerts of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra in upstate New York. Just as many of Beecham's ventures were funded by the wealth generated by his father's pharmaceutical products, the money behind this new American orchestra came from the Kodak photographic empire. Its founder, George Eastman, whose spare cash also set up the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and London's Eastman Dental Hospital, endowed the Eastman School of Music as part of the University of Rochester – and with it, a splendid new 3,500-seat auditorium and an orchestra.

The young Englishman's success at these concerts, in late 1923, led to his being re-engaged for the following season. The attractions of building a career in America strengthened with the commercial failure of a

second series of Goossens concerts in London in 1924. In 1925 he was appointed sole Music Director in Rochester, and he continued there with great success until 1931, when he was offered a two-year contract to succeed Fritz Reiner as Chief Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He stayed there until 1946.

During these two decades in the USA, Goossens both guest conducted other major American orchestras, in Boston, New York, St Louis, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Philadelphia, and returned to Europe sporadically for opera, ballet and symphonic engagements. And throughout this time, he continued to compose. His facility at getting notes down on the page enabled him to squeeze the production of major, large-scale works into an already tight conducting schedule (although looking at his output of nearly 80 works, close to one half of these were written in his 20s and early 30s, before his American career really got under way). His one-act opera *Judith* was premiered at Covent Garden in 1929 – to no great critical acclaim – and a second, larger-scaled opera, *Don Juan de Mañara*, was written over the next five years and presented at Covent Garden in 1937, with an equally mixed reception.

After World War II, negotiations for Goossens to return to England as the new Music Director of the Royal Opera House came to nothing, and in their protracted midst, a guest contract with the Australian Broadcasting Commission was accepted. His 22-concert tour in 1946 was a great success and, as with his first one-off engagement in Rochester, it led to a return the following year for a much longer period. As Chief Conductor of the recently expanded Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and Director of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, Goossens' influence on Australian musical life for the next decade was immense. If his aim of making the Sydney Symphony one of the best six orchestras in the world was not wholly achieved, orchestral standards, repertoire development and public profile (through a greatly expanded subscription season and recordings) were hugely increased. An enterprising series of operas was staged at the Conservatorium, including his own *Judith* in 1951, which featured the stage premiere of Joan Sutherland. It was he who first promoted the need for a major new performing arts complex in Sydney, recognising the potential of the tram shed site on Bennelong Point. At a press conference in March 1950, he said: 'I can visualise there by the harbour a building which will be an architectural triumph and an asset to the city.'

Alas, for Goossens it was to remain just a vision, for in 1956, two years after the climactic giant of his composing career *The Apocalypse* had received its premiere performances in the Sydney Town Hall, his golden time in Australia came abruptly to a close. Arriving at Sydney airport on 9 March after a long series of flights

from London, he was apprehended by customs officials. After searching his baggage, they removed seven parcels containing, according to the report at the Court of Petty Sessions the next day, 'prohibited imports, to wit indecent works and articles, namely a number of prints, a number of photographs and a quantity of film'.

Gossip, prurience and the strangely hypocritical fascination of a puritan society raged upon the break of this story in the press. The customs tip-off was, apparently, the climax of a six-month investigation by police. Goossens, it seemed, was just one of cultured, influential Sydney society involved in acts of 'plain filth'. The press speculated on Black Mass sex orgies in downtown Sydney and the Blue Mountains, and this tied up in some way with Goossens' involvement with the artist and 'daughter of Pan' Rosaleen Norton, whose weird, lewd painting drew its images from the fantastic orgies she held in Kings Cross (close to where the Sydney Symphony had its rehearsal studios in Darlinghurst Road).

The illicit Goossens material could have triggered a run of scandalous disclosures and confessions relating to other figures high up in the worlds of politics, commerce and the arts. Instead, with his professional fall from grace and return to England (he resigned from both his posts), the story ran out of steam; and many years on there seems to be no clarity or consensus on it. Was Goossens a 'fall guy', an expendable victim blackmailed and sacrificed for the sustained reputations of others? Was he set up, as some have said, by property developers keen to derail the Bennelong Point Opera House plan? Or was it simply an unfortunate case of someone's private life becoming a little too public?

Rehabilitation of his career after the Australian exit was only partially successful. Goossens was never robust physically, and the scandal had put added strain on his health. His third marriage disintegrated in 1957, and the concerts that he did give – including tours of Hungary, Canada, South America and Scandinavia – showed him to be in less than peak form. Having contracted pleurisy in January 1962, he gave his last concert, with the London Symphony Orchestra and his brother Leon, on 30 March, and died in a hospital north of London on 13 June.

If the word eclectic tends to be used frequently in reference to Goossens' music – and invariably in a sneering way – it is hardly surprising, given the exposure he had in his youth to a massive range of music, much of it brand new. On 1 February 1908 he witnessed Debussy's London debut in the Queen's Hall, with *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *La Mer*, and in the next couple of years he saw productions of *Tristan und Isolde, Samson et Dalila, Elektra* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In 1911, he was entranced by the historic performance of Stravinsky's *The*

Firebird at Covent Garden by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

All of these important musical encounters are assimilated in some way in his Opus 1, the **Variations on a Chinese Theme.** Western musical interest in the orient and the exotic was widespread in the early part of this century – though often poorly informed and patronising. The 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris had brought a gamelan orchestra to Europe and works such as Debussy's *Pagodes* reflected this cultural crossover. Goossens' work merely nods eastwards, its theme taken from a tome on Chinese music published in Paris in 1776. His lessons with Stanford had begun in 1910 with the task of writing a theme and 32 variations for piano; and this discipline clearly prepared him for these orchestral variations, which feature skilful transformations of the theme, a firm grasp of orchestral colour and textural contrast, and well characterised evocations of the march and waltz (variations 10 and 12) – apparently the set was supposed to 'depict the changing moods of a Chinese crowd on a festival day'. There may be moments that are clumsy or static, but the way in which the young Goossens fuses *faux chinoiserie* (mallet percussion and shaded cymbal strokes, as well as parallel fifths here and there) and a light Edwardian touch, with a more dreamy, luscious poise from the other side of the English Channel, is impressive.

Although his teacher regarded such piquant Frenchisms as heretical, Stanford was sufficiently impressed with the work to feature it in an end of academic year concert at the Royal College on 20 June 1912. Flanked by works such as Weber's overture to *Oberon,* Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* and Dukas' *L'Apprenti sorcier,* Stanford handed over the baton to his 19-year-old student, for the first of many instances when Goossens would conduct his own works. *The Times* critic was suitably impressed too, writing that the composer 'evidently not only knows what to do with his orchestra when he is writing for it, but is well able to get it done when it is written…there is a quantity of pleasant melody, a vein of sentiment which is not afraid of being obvious, and sufficient harmonic variety to suggest that there is plenty of interesting work to come from him in the future.' The following year, Goossens stepped out of the violin section of the Queen's Hall orchestra to conduct the work again at a Promenade Concert on 6 September 1913.

Whereas the circumstances surrounding the composition and early performances of these Chinese Variations are explicit, those for his second major orchestral work **The Eternal Rhythm** are rather more vague. It is thought to have been written a year later, some time in 1913, and the first known performance, with the composer conducting, was on 19 October 1920 at a Henry Wood Prom in the Queen's Hall. It

featured in one of Goossens' contemporary concerts in June 1921, and at an inaugural concert of the International Society of Contemporary Music in December 1922, with Goossens conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Other than that, little is known about the work – except that according to Goossens' 1951 autobiography *Overture and Beginners,* he was under the impression for many years that he had destroyed it. A copy of the score and parts turned up unexpectedly, however, at one of his publishers, J. & W. Chester.

Had Stanford set his pupil the task of creating a Franco-German tone poem, with Debussy, Ravel and Richard Strauss glowing on every page, the resulting work *The Eternal Rhythm* would have fitted the bill magnificently. And if this vast tract of dreamy impressionism was indeed written by Goossens when he was only 20, it is even more of a remarkable achievement. The manuscript score, written presumably in Goossens' own curly, old-fashioned hand, looks as spacious as the music sounds – the predominantly 6/4 bars of the first half taking up a whole page each from left to right.

The opening clarinet melody, sliding around adjacent semitones, is in essence the thematic stuff of the whole work. Goossens passes it around the orchestra, through various lush climaxes and subtle tempo changes, right through to midway, where a *Poco sostenuto* brings some change of feel, and an ensuing *Allegro moderato* section, where the texture is reduced, for the first time since the opening, to muted trombones, timpani, bassoons and lower strings. Needless to say, it grows again quite quickly! Later, a return to the glassy, mysterious opening is heralded by strokes of a tubular bell and a tentative bass clarinet melody.

It is tantalising to wonder why Goossens may have wanted to destroy this work. In the light of accusations from critics that he lacked his own individual voice, was this a piece that he felt more and more would play into their hands and prove their case? Decades on, it seems to matter less, because, rather fortuitously, we have instead a world premiere recording of a work that, whether original or derived, is an immensely attractive, assured (though perhaps somewhat prolonged) essay in orchestral colour.

Just as the first CD in this set features Goossens' first major orchestral work, it also includes the last that he completed. The three movements of the **Divertissement** were worked on in the difficult years after he left Australia, and were to have been premiered during a conducting tour of Holland in 1962. His death precluded this, and the first performance was given instead by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Joseph Post, in June 1963.

The Dance Prelude was written in 1956, the Ballet Flamenco in I960, and the central Scherzo and Folk Tune is an orchestral re-working, also

from 1960, of two studies for piano written as far back as 1926. Despite this disparate provenance, the three movements work well together, bound as they are by dance rhythms and sparkling orchestral writing. The *Divertissement* is, in effect, a dance suite.

The taut, mildly astringent Dance Prelude that begins the *Divertissement* gains its edge from a motivic preoccupation with the four-note motif heard first as B–D–C–C-sharp. The movement's driving energy subsides briefly for a *Tempo di Valse* section before a condensed, more fully scored recapitulation. The Scherzo section of the second movement emerges with Ravel-like deftness from the depths of the lower strings and bass percussion. The pervading force here, as in the first movement, is but a rhythmic dynamism forged by the constant interchange of two notes against three. The scurrying vitality of this scherzo, enhanced by a swirling diversity of instrumental colours, carries through to the emergence of a lone clarinet starting up the second of Goossens' arranged piano studies, the Folk Tune. A treatment of this quintessentially English pastoral melody appeared as the second of the *Three Pictures* for flute and orchestra, published in 1938. Entitled in that context *From Bredon in the Cotswolds,* a note in the score explains that the composer heard it from Philip Heseltine (alias Peter Warlock) whilst wandering through the Cotswold countryside shortly before the Great War. Goossens writes: 'Summer. The rays of the setting sun cast a warm glow over the elms and fields of the plain below. The hills to the north are a purple streak on the horizon; faintly a bell of a village church is heard, and a shepherd leads a flock down the hillside. The scene is one of intimate yet all-pervading tranquillity...'

Imagine the twisted charm of such a recollection many years on when Goossens turned to this tune again; a slightly broken man harking back to a time fresh out of music college when his own world seemed considerably more innocent and promising than it did in 1960. Goossens' textural and harmonic working of this tune is as adept and expressive as anything by his friends Grainger, Warlock or Delius; the chromatic sideslips of the harmonisations, the ebb and flow, the varied alloys of instrumental colour depicting so touchingly his scene of 'intimate yet all-pervading tranquillity'.

Castanets, wood blocks and side drum take us firmly away from rolling English rusticism to a sultry Spanish bar, or thereabouts. The 'Ballet Flamenco' was inspired by Goossens' encounter, through Diaghilev, with the five-year-old Gypsy dancer Carmen Amaya, whilst in Barcelona with the Ballets Russes in May 1925. Much later, in the 1943-44 Cincinnati season, he conducted her in Falla's *Ritual Fire Dance.* The rhythmic fire of the battery of percussion pervades the movement, and binds three separate melodic elements,

each successively treated. The first – exotically 'southern' (in its scalic structure of B-flat–C–D-flat–C–B-flat–A-flat–G) – exhibits a trance-like quality in its sultry monotony (shades of Ravel's *Boléro)* and thin line between melody and ostinato. A rhythmically based linking passage leads to a second, livelier tune, full of Moorish twiddles (and based around the first fifth of A major). Introduced first in the upper woodwinds and trumpet, it does the rounds of the orchestra in increasingly expansive combinations until it reaches vigorously to a *Presto* coda, with trumpets screaming and crashing above everything else into a General Pause.

Another accompanying motif is set up, this time the plucked violins and harp, evocative of a strumming guitar. The tune that enters is marked in the score 'Arbosiana', an acknowledgement that this is by one of the composer's mentors at the Royal College, the Spanish violinist, composer and conductor Fernandez Arbos. This tune is worked less than the ostinato that grows out of it in the horns – D-flat–A-flat–A–B–A-flat–B-flat–D-flat – and it is this that grows and grows to the ecstatic, almost chaotic conclusion.

The suite **Kaleidoscope** is a 1933 orchestration of eight miniatures from a set of 12 written for piano in 1917. The movements that Goossens omitted in the later version are 'The Rocking Horse', 'A Ghost Story', 'The Clockwork Dancer' and 'A Merry Party'.

As indicated by the titles, these pieces are colourful recollections of childhood occurrences and, specifically, toys. It is clever music in that it speaks on different levels to adults and children alike; for the personality of each piece and the orchestrations are brilliantly conceived and evocative. How better to enter a childish world than with the fresh, charming, tripping-through-the-daisies opening movement 'Good Morning'? 'Promenade' is an ingenious, unlikely success, strolling along as it does in a walking-challenging five in a bar, and the slightly wrong-note elements conjure well a street scene and hurdy-gurdy man. Within the generally sentimental 'Lament for a Departed Doll', Goossens works in more dreamy, tragic elements with a melancholy combination of unison clarinet and violas. Piccolo, glockenspiel, celeste, harp and upper strings bring the old musical box perfectly to life, and, after a Stravinskian scuffle of warring partners 'Punch and Judy', Goossens closes the book on our childhood visitation with a languid, blues-inflected 'Good Night'.

Goossens was already in his mid-40s when he began work on his **Symphony No. 1,** Op. 58. In a program note for its first performance in Cincinnati on 12 April 1940, he explained why he had waited so relatively long (like Brahms and others) before 'inflicting a symphony on a musically jaded world.'

'Perhaps it was that in my 25-year career as a conductor I had encountered a surfeit of

immature pomposities labelled symphonies from the pens of youthful composers with a message. Perhaps it was also because until a very few years ago I felt little urge to project my sparse ideas through the medium of a form which for its successful manipulation calls for a cunning hand and real artistic maturity. It has no "message". Neither is there any literary or other significance in it. Nor does it purport to illustrate any particular incidents of my life or times. It deals with the old abstractions, or what my master Stanford rather portentously used to refer to as "The Eternal Verities."'

According to the same note, the first movement was begun in May 1938, but work was curtailed at the time of the Munich crisis that September. He returned to it in England in June 1939, and 'in spite of alarums and excursions (mostly alarums)' completed a full sketch at his brother's house in Sussex at the end of August. The orchestration was begun on the blacked-out liner *Aquitania*, whilst sailing back to the USA, and completed in Cincinnati.

Performances in Cincinnati, Boston and New York were well received, but press comments hovered around a perceived lack of adventure and individual voice. In one of the many warm, loving letters to his parents in London, Goossens wrote (rather defensively) in April 1941: 'They would have liked me to have written something ultra-modern and full of modern clichés which would have enabled them to write that I was writing music which didn't come naturally to me.' After the sparkling early years, when Goossens the composer was a beloved, bright young thing, he was becoming used to the chill wind of press criticism that seemed mostly to appreciate the brand new and the daring. Goossens was already being perceived as old-fashioned.

The London BBC Proms premiere, in July 1943, was similarly received. *The Sunday Times* critic reckoned the work to be 'a long and laboured and rather pretentious piece of writing', *The Times* said 'the symphony, like his previous music, is a matter of skill rather than the imagination' and another writer thought 'that the ideas embedded in it were less significant than the treatment they received.'

Goossens begins the symphony with two recurring 'motto' themes, the first an agitated, menacing figure in the lower strings and bassoons, the second a gentler fragment announced by the clarinet. In this movement of strict sonata form, the first main subject appears first in the flute and oboe, accompanied by an undulating string figure, and the second in the horns and trumpets with a more declamatory figure marked by dotted rhythms and triplets.

The second movement, Andante espressivo, is set off by a warm, closely harmonised string tune and a contrastingly aery subject, dominated by high winds, glockenspiel and celeste. The Divertimento, effectively the Scherzo and Trio, is

dominated by a driving rhythmic energy – sometimes in tightly repeated patterns – and adroit handling of solo and tutti interchange. This kind of movement is arguably Goossens at his best, a rollicking, colourful dance which he did just as well in his youth with *Tam O'Shanter* as he did later on with his quasi-dance suite *Divertissement*.

The Finale is Goossens at his most expansive and prolix. The mottoes are worked into the texture as well as fresh thematic material and quotations from the second and third movements. It is a grand summation in the grand symphonic tradition, with fugato sections and moments of repose offsetting successive climaxes. For the ecstatic conclusion, Goossens specifies that three extra trumpets and organ should be used – 'to dispense with them,' he writes, 'is to jeopardise the tonal brilliance of the Finale.'

Tonal brilliance is certainly present in the rollicking scherzo on the Scottish folk tune **Tam O'Shanter**, Op. 17a, written in 1917-18. Goossens' youthful confidence in handling large orchestral forces shows itself in the build-up from a (*Sorcerer's Apprentice*-like) impish opening to a central swathe of colour and brass presentation of the tune – and again, with the subsequent reduction of material and forces to its murky beginnings. This brief work shows Goossens to be very much in control, and in touch both with his raw compositional talent and ability to assimilate the music of others for his own purposes.

Compared with the ebb and flow of Eugene Goossens' reputation as a composer and the transplantation of his reputation as a conductor from England via the USA to Australia, his brother Leon had a much more sustained, less outwardly glamorous career, solidly based around the London music scene. In 1928, however, he did travel to North America for a taste of the artistic freedoms and admiration that his brother enjoyed. Eugene had written the bulk of a concerto for Leon, but the orchestration was not yet complete for this very successful tour. Nor was it a year later when Leon returned for a rescheduled premiere of the concerto in Boston on 25 February 1929. Instead, the Goossens brothers performed the work as a duo with piano. The *real* premiere of the **Oboe Concerto**, Op. 45, with orchestra, was at a Henry Wood Prom on 2 October 1930, with Wood conducting. Eugene would conduct it for the first time on 24 May 1931 with the BBC, and the brothers performed it many times subsequently (though they never recorded it together – on EMI's 1949 disc Leon performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind).

The work was well received at these early performances, both in America and England. *The Boston Globe* wrote: 'Mr Goossens' concerto for his brother indulges in no far-fetched virtuosities; by concision it avoids tedium; the songful section has intrinsical musical quality, yet is apt

for the voice that sings it. Mr Leon Goossens, escaping both dryness and acidity, played it in smooth, rounded, moist and transparent tone, outflowing with technical skill transmuted into felicity and imagination.' The great British music critic Ernest Newman wrote that 'there is a slimness and grace about it that is very charming, and the concerto should prove popular.'

With a duration of only 12 minutes, this one-movement rhapsody is certainly concise and slim. The virtuosities may not be 'far-fetched', but it was firmly intended that the work would be a showpiece for Leon's matchless technique as well as lyrical facility. Indeed, for the Prom premiere, the soloist requested of the composer extra 'twiddles' and acrobatics in the cadenza; and the brothers subsequently joked that this passage was based on Leon's warm-up exercises.

This extended cadenza is accompanied by shimmering tam-tam and lightly booming bass drum, imparting to this section a snake-charming exoticism that is hinted at in the soloist's arabesques and whole-tone inflections of the preceding section. The cadenza finishes in pastiche-Classical mode, running into a brisk, march-like coda.

Composing again for family members – this time *three* siblings – Goossens produced one of his last works, the **Concert Piece**, Op. 65, for oboe (doubling cor anglais) and two harps. It was premiered by Leon, Sidonie, Marie, Eugene and the Chelsea Chamber Orchestra on 3 February 1958, with their 91-year-old father Eugene II in the audience. Alas, he died before the work was performed again later that year in the Proms season.

According to the composer, the three movements of this deftly scored, colourful work are 'entirely based on the pizzicato and trumpet motives heard in the two opening bars'. Whereas Goossens was resistant 20 years earlier to make concessions to modernism in his first symphony, there are hints of such influence in this later work – what he describes as 'decorative atonal figures' for the harps in the first movement. The writing for his two sisters is particularly beautiful and idiomatic, often featuring shimmering ostinati. In the centre of the opening Fantasia, a singing oboe line similar to the graceful opening of the concerto is accompanied by plucked, under-the-arm strings.

The chorale-like subject of the middle movement is first stated by the oboe, and then goes through a number of delicately scored variations before running into cadenzas, first for the two harps and then for the cor anglais. The 'perpetual motion' of the final movement once again catches Goossens in good-humoured scherzo mode, and towards the end we hear snatches of familiar symphonic works in honour of the soloists' orchestral backgrounds. And, to quote Goossens' note again: 'a final circus polka puts the whole company through its paces.'

Goossens the composer always sounds to be in command of his idiom – there is an ease and fluency in everything he did, perhaps too much so, for the heart of his musical personality remains elusive in all but a handful of major works. The two short pieces on the second disc in this set provide a vivid contrast in this respect: the *Fantasy* strives for a French lightness of colour and mood, while the *Concertino,* although in places acknowledging its indebtedness to earlier English works for strings, inhabits its own emotional world and is harmonically individual. It is one of his most involving works.

The **Fantasy**, Op. 36 (1924), for nine wind instruments, is in four sections that are played without pause. The canonic presentation of themes and the brisk tutti punctuations that characterise the first section are reminiscent of the Stravinsky of this period, and the highly syncopated final Allegro combines Classical wind sonorities with a sense of up-to-dateness that brings some of the *pasticherie* of Walton's *Façade* to mind. In the central Andante, the sinuous, Borodin-ish tune first heard *con fantasia* on the oboe is developed by a kind of varied repetition, a technique employed frequently by 19th-century Russian composers, and one with which Goossens would have been familiar from his exposure to Russian opera and ballet.

Goossens brings to these diverse elements a distinctive and serious chromatic idiom and a high technical confidence. In the first section the second, hymn-like subject is developed with great fluidity, often against the sprightly backdrop of the fanfare tune which opened the work. The solos in the slow section are apt, polished vignettes for each instrument. The transition from this section to the finale is achieved by a concise, pithy dialogue between horn and trumpet.

The **Concertino** for double string orchestra, Op. 47, is also a work of the 1920s, but is emotionally more complex than the *Fantasy.* While it might appear on first hearing to be a neo-classical exercise in reinvigorating the Concerto Grosso, the outward form of the work is transcended by an intense set of ideas that still speak with great power.

Like the *Fantasy*, it is in three sections played as one unbroken movement, but it is a work of greater internal contrasts. The motoric, toccata-like opening has tremendous energy and within two pages of score Goossens establishes his understanding of string sonorities and the subtleties of counterpoint: the two themes are played against one another with inventive assurance. The slow section is heralded by a solo viola playing a folk-like tune, which leads to an ethereal *con fantasia* passage in which the bass line is dispensed with completely. The boisterous finale includes a recollection of the slow section's main theme, this time played in octaves on the violins and cellos, to rapturous effect. The whole work has an emotional urgency unusual in Goossens' output.

The *Concertino* was written in Rochester in 1928, originally for performance by string octet. Goossens added the bass part a year later, and the work can be played by chamber ensemble or orchestral strings. In the orchestral version, the violins are divided into four parts and the violas and cellos each into two. The piece requires virtuoso playing of the highest order, and because of its origins as chamber music, the orchestral version is in some respects the more challenging.

With **Symphony No. 2**, Op. 62, we move forward nearly 20 years, for Goossens completed it in 1945. While it shares some of the characteristics of the *Fantasy* and *Concertino* – notably a richness of texture, and instrumental writing that requires virtuosic playing – it inhabits an altogether more complex, equivocal world of feeling.

If Goossens' composerly personality is elusive in his earlier works, some critics have dismissed his music post-1930 as being too eclectic to be important – his exposure to so much music as a conductor supposedly by this time having exerted too great an influence on his own music. That this view is in part a convenient excuse for not listening to his music too deeply is confirmed by the uneasy grandeur of this symphony. It is a work of large ambitions and, inevitably, is sustained by compositional techniques that, only a few years later, the international avant-garde would consider to be irrelevant.

As a work of its time, the symphony has much to say about the human condition in the years of World War II – it is tough, angry and nostalgic by turns – and speaks powerfully to us as we look back at a century of international turmoil.

Goossens wrote the following note on the piece when he performed it with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in November 1950:

My Second Symphony was begun in 1943 at Beddeford Pool, in Maine, USA. The orchestration was finished two years later in Cincinnati and the score bears place-inscriptions as far afield as Seattle and New York. The war had already lasted three years, and I suppose it must be said that this work reflects deeply the stress of its conflict.

As in the case of my First Symphony – a pre-war product – the principal subjects of the Second had obsessed me for so long that I was impelled to mould them into the only shape I felt appropriate – a full-sized symphony. This in spite of the fact that large pieces of music, unlike large paintings, often suffer the handicap of a lengthy revelatory process before the meaning is sensed by the listener. On the other hand, composers and painters only use big canvases when they feel that their subject demands spaciousness of treatment. In my own case, I waited till my fiftieth year to make sure that this was warranted, for prior to that I tended to telescope subject matter and its development to avoid excessive garrulity.

Yet the lugubrious bassoon subject heard at the outset of the work is a lengthy statement; and as a key motive is encountered elsewhere, particularly in the finale, where it undergoes a complete transmogrification. The lengthy introduction which it initiates – alternatively brooding and agitated – gives way to the (rhythmically strident) first subject proper, which is given out by unison violins, to be followed later by the slower second subject in the cellos, over an undulating clarinet figure. This material, with counter-themes, is subjected to a stormy development, and leads to a recapitulation in which a bass flute despondently reminisces over the second subject, followed by an unexpected fanfare to bring the movement to an uneasy, violent finish.

Two subjects make up the slow movement, a kind of nostalgic and climatic pastoral wherein the oboe rhapsodises on a plaintive theme and the muted trumpet sings an English folk-song called The Turtle Dove. *Enough that the setting of a Connecticut farm house and its local thrush (a ubiquitous bird in these parts) forms a background for the mingled emotions of an expatriate.*

The scherzo might be thought escapist if its machine rhythm weren't so inexorable and rather ominous. Its naive commencement soon gives way, however, to complexities which tax the resources of all the instruments. (It was originally written as a test piece for any virtuoso orchestra.)

The finale scans the progress of the original bassoon theme from a menacing unison proclamation to the sublimation of a march taken up by the whole orchestra. During this movement a kaleidoscope of introduction, fugato-like principal subject, rhythmic figuration and final reminiscence of the folk-song subject consolidate, rather than confuse, the issue. The structure of the finale will thus appear in its whole design for the listener, for whom a 'play-by-play' description of the four movements of this work would prove mostly a bewilderment and exasperation.

Meurig Bowen and Phillip Sametz

Vernon Handley on Eugene Goossens:

When I was in my teens and a would-be conductor, working hard at counterpoint and score reading, the local record library offered my only contact with some of the exotic scores which invariably attract the young musician. It was approaching the end of the war; concerts were few, and getting to them forbidden by my parents, because of the threat of flying bombs and V2 rockets. I soon came to trust the exciting but truthful performances of Eugene Goossens. Truthful because the same local library provided scores for me, and I was able to check idiosyncrasy against integrity amongst different conductors. When eventually I heard Goossens in the flesh, all my admiration was confirmed: authoritative, passionate, individual, but never

indulgent. I determined to look up this man's own compositions and found the same characteristics in evidence. Fashion has temporarily buried Goossens' works but I hope their vitality and personality have been captured on these discs, and will engage the interest of modern listeners. It has been a moving experience for me to repay in part my debt to him with these recordings.

Vernon Handley

Vernon Handley C.B.E.

For 40 years Vernon Handley's career has been unique amongst front rank conductors in that he has unashamedly championed British repertoire before that of all other countries. Recognised as Adrian Boult's protégé, he has held steadfastly to two principles that might have proved detrimental to a successful career: the undemonstrative technique and the unfashionable repertoire.

Vernon Handley has probably recorded, performed and broadcast more British music than any other conductor, living or dead. In some 150 discs, over 90 are British, including 87 works which have not been recorded before. He has given over 100 premieres. In his recorded output are all the symphonies of Vaughan Williams, Stanford, Malcolm Arnold and Robert Simpson, all the major works of Elgar and the whole of Moeran's orchestral music.

He has been outright winner twice of the *Gramophone* Record of the Year, as well as being runner up twice and nominated eight times. He has won the BPI Classical award twice and his recording of Walton's First Symphony was declared 'Collectors Choice' in *Classic CD*. He won a Grand Prix du Disque for a recording of French repertoire with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

In 1983 the London Philharmonic made Vernon Handley its Associate Conductor, in recognition of his long relationship with the orchestra. He has been Chief Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Chief Conductor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Ulster Orchestra, Chief Guest Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Chief Guest Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Chief Conductor of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and Chief Guest Conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra.

During this time Vernon Handley was Professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music and was created Hon R.C.M. & F.R.C.M. by Her Majesty the Queen Mother. He was also regularly conducting the National Youth Orchestra and the World Youth Orchestra and is widely known for his encouragement of young professional players.

Vernon Handley was appointed Musical Director to the Borough of Guildford in 1962, staying for 21 years to establish a new professional orchestra, the Guildford Philharmonic. During his tenure the Guildford Concerts Scheme was one of the most successful in the country, playing an extraordinarily wide repertoire and making several first-ever recordings of unfamiliar British works. In recognition of his great contribution to music in the South East, the University of Surrey awarded him a doctorate.

Vernon Handley is currently Conductor Emeritus of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He was appointed Conductor Laureate of the Ulster Orchestra in 2003. He was created Honorary Fellow of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 1990 and was elected an Honorary Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford in 1999. Vernon Handley was appointed Commander of the British Empire for services to music in the Queen's Birthday Honours, June 2004.

West Australian Symphony Orchestra

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra has a unique place within the Western Australian community as the State's most active arts organisation. The Orchestra has a strong and proud history of achievement and in 2003, celebrated its 75th anniversary. Its Chief Conductor is Matthias Bamert.

From its humble beginnings in 1928, the West Australian Symphony Orchestra has grown to an orchestra of 83 full-time professional musicians and, accompanied by a variety of guest performers, presents varied programs of music to a broad cross-section of the Western Australian community.

WASO performs more than 180 concerts to in excess of 175,000 people each year, and tours to remote and regional areas of the state, both as a full orchestra and with its 15-member education ensemble.

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra performs with many of the major arts companies in Perth including the Perth International Arts Festival, as regular guests at the annual Leeuwin Estate concerts, and with the West Australian Ballet and West Australian Opera in their seasons at His Majesty's Theatre.

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

The Sydney Symphony is the nation's largest and busiest orchestra with a season of some 100 concerts in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall, regular performances at the City Recital Hall, Angel Place, as well as frequent appearances in the regional centres of New South Wales.

Established in 1932, the Sydney Symphony has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's greatest cities. Many of the world's finest artists have appeared with the Sydney Symphony including such legendary figures as George Szell, Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer, Igor Stravinsky, Lorin Maazel and Charles Dutoit.

As Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony from 1993 to 2003, Edo de Waart took the Orchestra to a new level of excellence. In 2004 the baton was passed to Maestro Gianluigi Gelmetti.

With Gianluigi Gelmetti's reputation for profound musical insight and mastery of orchestra colour combined with his passionate and spontaneous performance style, the Sydney Symphony is set for an exciting new phase in its history.

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

With a reputation for excellence, versatility and innovation developed over almost 100 years, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra attracts total annual audiences of more than 250,000. This fine orchestra is renowned for its performances of the great symphonic masterworks with leading international soloists, and for its appearances with The Three Tenors, Frank Sinatra, Kiri Te Kanawa, Elton John, John Farnham, the rock band KISS, Dionne Warwick and Meat Loaf.

With Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Markus Stenz – currently in his seventh year with the Orchestra – the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has taken an even more prominent position on the world stage.

The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has received international recognition with its tours to the United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Europe, China and most recently St Petersburg, Russia.

The Orchestra's concerts are broadcast regularly on ABC Classic FM and some performances are presented through ABC TV. In addition, members of the Orchestra have featured on numerous movie soundtracks, including those for feature films such as *Babe*, *IQ*, *Hotel Sorrento*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Babe II – Pig in the City* and *The Dish*. The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra was also involved in an interactive information technology games project based on the *Jurassic Park* movies.

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CD1 Recorded in March & November 1996 at the Perth Concert Hall

CD2 Symphony No.2 and Concertino for Strings recorded live in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House (Symphony 19-20 November 1993, Concertino 30 November 1993)

Fantasy recorded 30 November 1993 at the Eugene Goossens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney

CD3 Recorded in October 1995 at the Melbourne Concert Hall

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