

Fritz HART

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, VOLUME ONE

SONATA NO. 1 IN D MINOR, OP. 7
SONATA NO. 2 IN D MAJOR, OP. 42
SONATA NO. 3 IN G MINOR, OP. 142
TWO BACH CHORALE PARAPHRASES
PRELUDE FROM ST FRANCIS

Susan Collins, violin
Stephanie McCallum, piano

FRITZ HART: MUSIC FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, VOLUME ONE

by Peter Tregear

Born in Brockley, South London, Fritz Bennicke Hart (1874–1949) stands as one of the more extraordinary figures of the so-called English Musical Renaissance, all the more so because he remains so little known. His mother was a piano teacher from Cornwall and his father a travelling salesman of Irish ancestry born in East Anglia. The eldest of five, Hart was not encouraged to pursue a musical career as a child, but piano lessons from his mother were later complemented by the award of a choristership at Westminster Abbey, then under the direction of Frederick Bridge – ‘Westminster Bridge’, as he was inevitably nicknamed. A year earlier Bridge had been appointed professor of harmony and counterpoint at the newly constituted Royal College of Music and in 1893 Hart would join him there as a student of piano and organ.

In addition, in the years between his tenure as a chorister and his enrolling at the RCM, Hart had been introduced to both the music and the aesthetic philosophy of Richard Wagner and had also become a regular and enthusiastic audience member of the Saturday orchestral concerts held at the Crystal Palace and the RCM. It seems Hart quickly became better known at the RCM for his ardent interest in opera and music drama than for his piano-playing. Indeed, Imogen Holst credits Hart with having introduced her father, Gustav, to Wagner.¹ But unlike Holst and other contemporaries, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and William Hurlstone, Hart did not formally study composition. Even so, he could soon count all of them, along with their composition teacher Charles Villiers

¹ Imogen Holst, Gustav Holst: *The Man and his Music*, Oxford University Press, London, 1990, p. 11. Hart was Imogen's godfather.

Stanford, as friends and, soon after he graduated, he was composing incidental music for the theatre, alongside steady work as an actor and conductor.

In 1908 Hart was offered an initial twelve-month contract by the leading Australian theatrical promoter, J. C. Williamson, to conduct a tour of Williamson's Royal Comic Opera Company, and thus, early the following year, he departed for Australia, touring extensively there and in New Zealand, conducting musicals such as Monckton's and Caryl's *Our Miss Gibbs* and Leo Fall's *The Dollar Princess*. In 1913, owing to the prolonged absence of its founding director, Hart obtained the directorship of the Albert Street (later 'Melba') Conservatorium of Music in Melbourne and in 1927 he added the chief conductorship of the (then) non-professional Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to his portfolio. Changing personal and fortunes there, as well as the broader impact of the Great Depression, however, led him in 1936 to accept an offer to become the first professor of music at the University of Hawai'i and permanent conductor of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. He remained in Hawai'i until his death in 1949, his final composition, *Dedication*, a 'Symphonic Essay for Orchestra', being written in anticipation of Hawaii's accession to statehood.

Such a peripatetic professional life sets Hart apart from his better-known colleagues, notwithstanding the fact that it also reflects the geographical and cultural reach of the Empire in which they all lived and worked. In practical terms, it meant that composition was to be a particularly difficult undertaking for him: at no time in his life did he enjoy the luxury of being able to work as a professional composer. It was always something he did in addition to his commitments as a conductor, teacher and administrator – which only makes the sheer size of his compositional portfolio all the more remarkable. The extant catalogue of his music includes over 500 songs and 23 operas, as well as a substantial body of both orchestral and chamber music, including a symphony, two string quartets, four large choral works and numerous unaccompanied choruses and part-songs. The vast majority of his manuscripts are now held by the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne.

This creative work was not undertaken in complete isolation. Hart kept in regular contact with musical life in England and remained well-informed about compositional

developments. The correspondence with Holst, Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Dale and Philip Heseltine, among others, that he maintained throughout his time in Australia details robust discussions of current compositional trends, as well as critical examinations of their own works. Hart was also instrumental in arranging performances of many of the works of his contemporaries in Australia. And as a teacher of composition himself, he inspired a younger generation of Australian-born composers, mostly female, who until the (ultimately short-lived) triumph of international high modernism in Australia in the 1960s and '70s, were to become some of the country's most prominent and successful creative musical voices, among them Hubert Clifford, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, Robert Hughes, Esther Rofe and Margaret Sutherland.

Hart was initially interested in exploring the possibility of creating a uniquely Australian compositional style himself, but his aesthetic interests seem to have changed decisively after the onset of the First World War. Instead, he became increasingly devoted to the literature of the so-called Celtic Revival, a movement that appealed to him not only because of his own Irish heritage but also because of its associated interests in folklore and folk-music, and its implicitly anti-modern (if not anti-modernist) worldview, something that may well have seemed a particularly appropriate creative attitude to hold in the face of the calamity of the Great War. Hart eventually composed several hundred songs and at least ten operas to texts on Celtic themes or by Celtic authors such as 'Fiona MacLeod' (William Sharp), George Russell and William Butler Yeats; and a modality and lyricism inflected by 'Celtic' folksong is to be found across his whole *œuvre* from 1915 onwards. To the extent that a Wagnerian aesthetic also remained a defining influence on him, it was now the melancholic Wagner of *Tristan und Isolde* rather than the heroic Wagner of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.

The **Violin Sonata No. 1 in D minor, Op. 7**, dates from August and September 1911, when Hart was still working as a touring conductor of music theatre. The other major compositional influence apparent here is the music of Claude Debussy, especially evident through Hart's frequent colouring of a more traditional tonal harmonic framework with harmonies and melodies drawn from octatonic and whole-tone material. A brief, aphoristic first movement, *Allegro moderato* [5], introduces a much longer, two-part

slow movement, *Adagio – Cantabile nobilmente* [6], the opening section of which, with its rising chromatic lines, almost irresistibly evokes the Prelude of *Tristan und Isolde*. The rondo-like second section reaches a climax when its ubiquitous falling three-note motif dissolves briefly into a sea of whole tones.

The formal pattern of three-movements-in-two that he employs here is one that Hart was to repeat in his subsequent two violin sonatas. From its very opening *Allegro* [1] the **Violin Sonata No. 2 in D major, Op. 42** (1920), reveals the increasing influence of folksong material on Hart's compositional palette, with its emphasis on reel-like rhythms and stepwise melodic movement that alternates with passages drawn from the pentatonic scale. The Finale [2] is in effect a short, aria-like slow movement which, by resolving into a motif of a falling fifth, then transitions into an elegiac rondo built from that same motif.

Some 21 years separate Hart's First Violin Sonata from his last, the **Violin Sonata No. 3 in G minor, Op. 142** (1941). It is the only one of them to have a dedicatee: Frederick Holding, who was the first violinist of the Philharmonic Quartet in London. By this time both Britain and Australia were at war, and by the end of that year war would also come, and in the most dramatic of ways, to Hawai'i as well, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. There is an unmistakably sombre, reflective tone to this work: its accompanying textures are more ascetic, the harmonic turns to the minor mode are more frequent, and allusions to folk material are also more pronounced. The first movement, an *Adagio* [3], is constructed as an aria-like lament that frames livelier, more nostalgic, inner episodes, all of which share a four-note rhythmic motif. The *Allegro* finale [4] quotes (and arguably becomes in effect a set of free variations on) the Irish folksong 'The Jolly Ploughboy'.

The Prelude from *St Francis* for Violin and Piano [7] was completed at the same time as the Third Sonata, and is a faithful transcription of the short score of the Prelude from an unfinished opera that Hart had sketched out in 1937. The opera is based on an episode in the life of St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), the founder of the Franciscan monastic order. St Francis had gained renewed popular attention in the English-speaking

world through the publication of G. K. Chesterson's well-received biographical study in 1923. The opera focuses on an episode in St Francis' life in which he reputedly chastised a fellow priest for turning away a group of robbers who had come begging for nourishment. Francis commanded his colleague to go look for the men and give them some food that had been earlier donated to Francis himself. Overwhelmed by this act of kindness, the robbers decide to relinquish their life of crime and join the Franciscan order themselves. The Prelude introduces both some of the chief melodic material of the opera and the pensive, contemplative mood of the drama itself.

The two Bach chorale paraphrases were written by Hart to mark the visit to Melbourne in 1925 of Fritz Kreisler, who, as their dedicatee, gave the first performances in a concert there in July 1925. They are drawn from Bach's organ chorale preludes 'Herzlich thut mich verlangen', BWV727 [8], and 'Christ lag in Todesbanden', BWV625 [9], and are more than transcriptions because they combine what is otherwise a relatively straightforward reworking of the originals with free introductory and (in the case of 'Christ lag in Todesbanden', intermediary) passages that are decidedly more contemporary in style. Hart is able to smooth over the 'seams' between his music and Bach's by cleverly weaving the two together.

Peter Tregear is a former fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and currently a Principal Fellow of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. He has published several articles on Fritz Hart's life and music, and conducted the premiere of Hart's opera Riders to the Sea (1915). He is a former member of the Advisory Board of the Ernst Krenek Institut in Krems, convenor of the International Centre for Suppressed Music, London, and the author of Ernst Krenek and the Politics of Musical Style (Scarecrow Press, Lanham (Maryland), 2013). More recently he acted as an artistic advisor to Barry Humphries and the Australian Chamber Orchestra 'Weimar Cabaret' concerts. With Associate Professor Anne-Marie Forbes he is currently writing a monograph on Hart entitled Fritz Bennicke Hart: English Musical Romanticism and the Ends of Empire for Lyrebird Press.

At age fourteen, **Susan Collins** performed Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Patrick Thomas at the Sydney Opera House. Since that time, she has performed as concert soloist and recitalist throughout Australia, the USA and Europe. Her teachers and mentors have included Harry Curby, Joseph Gingold, Valery Klimov, Dene Olding, Igor Ozim, David Takeno, Alice Waten, Yuval Yaron, Thomas Zehetmair and Pinchas Zukerman.

She has recorded many times for ABC FM, 2MBS, 3MBS and other radio stations, in live broadcasts as well as recorded recitals. She has also appeared numerous times in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation 'Sunday Live' series, for which she has performed as recitalist, as a guest artist with both the Southern Cross Soloists and Sydney Soloists, and in duo and trio combinations with both Duncan Gifford and Sue-Ellen Paulsen as a founding member of the Kingfisher Trio.

Having been appointed Deputy Concertmaster of the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra at age 23, she has since been engaged as concertmaster with many orchestras around Australia, including the Adelaide, Canberra, Queensland and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras and Orchestra Victoria, the conductors including Richard Bonyngne, Carlo Cillario, John Fiore, Richard Hickox, Sir Charles Mackerras, Edo de Waart and Simone Young.

Upon leaving her position with Opera Australia, she was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in 2003 for her contribution to Australian cultural life through opera and ballet. Then residing in Berlin with her husband and young family, she completed a doctoral dissertation, which included a reconstructive edition of the complete works for violin and piano of the Australian composer Raymond Hanson. She recorded this collection of works with the pianist David Miller for a CD released in 2009 by the Tall Poppies label. Her recording of the Robert Schumann piano trios with the Kingfisher Trio was released by ABC Classics in 2015.

In 2017 she took on the Musical Directorship of the Riverina Summer School for Strings, which takes place each January at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, and also directs the 'Sounds of Summer' concert series, which runs parallel to the Summer School and features chamber music performed by distinguished Australian musicians.



In collaboration with her husband, the conductor Johannes Fritsch, she shares artistic directorship of the 'Twilight' concert series, established in 2019 in Battery Point, Hobart, Tasmania. She is currently Head of Strings at University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music, residing in Hobart with her husband and their three daughters.

www.susancollins.com.au

Described by Anthony Clarke in *The Bulletin* as 'one of Australia's foremost pianists', **Stephanie McCallum** enjoys an international career, appearing on over forty albums (including 21 solo albums) and also making live solo and concerto performances. Playing a repertoire from the eighteenth to the 21st centuries, she is especially noted for her performances of virtuosic music of the nineteenth century, particularly the music of Liszt and Alkan, and for her advocacy of demanding contemporary solo and ensemble scores.

Stephanie McCallum is Associate Professor in piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, a school of the University of Sydney, where she herself studied with Alexander Sverjensky and with the noted Liszt player Gordon Watson. After advanced studies in England with the Alkan authority Ronald Smith, she made her Wigmore Hall debut in 1982, when she gave what is believed to be the first performance of Alkan's *Chants*, Op. 70. She is also credited with the first complete performance of Alkan's *Trois Grandes Études*, Op. 76, in London. Her live performances of the Concerto, the Symphony and other works from Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, Op. 39, have been described by critics as 'titanic', 'awe-inspiring', 'stupendous', 'virtuosic pianism of the highest calibre' and 'one of the glories of Australian pianism'.

Stephanie McCallum has appeared extensively as a soloist in Australia, France and the United Kingdom, and has toured Europe with The Alpha Centauri Ensemble. She has made many appearances as soloist in the Sydney Festival, and performed in the Brighton, Cheltenham, Huddersfield and Sydney Spring festivals. A noted exponent of contemporary music, she was



a founding member of the contemporary ensembles AustraLYSIS and Sydney Alpha Ensemble and was joint artistic director of the latter from its inception. She has performed with such groups as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Elision and The Australia Ensemble. She appears in ensemble on many albums, and also as soloist on two discs by the Sydney Alpha Ensemble: *Strange Attractions* and *Clocks*, featuring music by Elena Kats-Chernin. In 2000 she gave the world premiere of Kats-Chernin's *Displaced Dances* with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, a piano concerto written especially for her (available with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra on ABC Classics 4816430). She also performs on historic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instruments and has recorded piano-duet music by Alkan, Meyerbeer and Moscheles on instruments from the Maison Erard with Erin Helyard, and also a solo disc on an 1853 Erard for Toccata Classics, *Alexandre Boëly: Piano Music, Volume One* (TOCC 0471). Her most recent solo album on Toccata Classics featured the piano music of her fellow Australian Roy Agnew (TOCC 0496).

Past solo recordings include a two-disc set of the complete piano sonatas of Weber; *Illegal Harmonies: The 20th-Century Piano*; *Perfume*, a best-selling disc of rare French piano music; two collections of music by Liszt, *The Liszt Album* and *From the Years of Pilgrimage*; and an album of piano works by Erik Satie, *Gymnopédies*. With the release in 2006 of a two-CD set of Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, she was the first pianist ever to have recorded both of Alkan's sets of studies in the major and the minor keys, Opp. 35 and 39. More recent releases include *A Romantic Christmas*; an album of Schumann's piano music, *Scenes from Childhood*, including the *Fantasia* in C major, Op. 17; and a Beethoven premiere recording – *Für Elise: Bagatelles for piano by Ludwig van Beethoven*. This disc contains a *Bagatelle* in F minor, probably the last piano piece that Beethoven wrote, and never previously published, performed or recorded. Her recording of the complete Alkan *Recueils de chants* for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0157 and 0158) was received with universal praise: *CD Review* on BBC Radio 3 felt that the music was 'really exquisitely played by Stephanie McCallum, who really "gets" the style' [...] if you really want to get to know what this Alkan guy is all about, then Stephanie McCallum can really show you very well indeed'. She followed up these Alkan recordings with a Toccata Classics album dedicated to the piano music of Guy Ropartz (TOCC 0326), about which *Fanfare* was equally enthusiastic: 'Stephanie McCallum has given us a close-to-ideal first hearing of these works. She has an extraordinary dynamic range, a keen awareness of harmonic tension and resolution, an expansive approach to rubato, and a sophisticated understanding of

Ropartz's large-scale structural organization.' A complete list of her recordings can be found at www.stephaniemccallum.com.

Stephanie McCallum appears by courtesy of The University of Sydney, Conservatorium of Music, Sydney, Australia.
www.stephaniemccallum.com



Recorded on 26–28 September 2017 in Recital Hall West, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Piano tuner and technician: David Kinney
Producer: Ralph Lane OAM
Engineers: Bob Scott and David Anderson
Mastering: Bob Scott
Editing: Ralph Lane OAM

This project was assisted by a grant from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music,
University of Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Thanks to Julie Simonds for her assistance in typesetting the manuscript of
Hart's Violin Sonata No. 2 *Stephanie McCallum*

Booklet text: Peter Tregear
Cover design: David Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and layout: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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FRITZ HART Complete Music for Violin and Piano, Volume One

Violin Sonata No. 2 in D major, Op. 42 (1920)	15:13
1 I <i>Allegro</i>	8:12
2 II <i>Finale</i>	7:01
Violin Sonata No. 3 in G minor, Op. 142 (1941)	19:23
3 I <i>Adagio</i> –	13:22
4 II <i>Allegro</i>	6:01
Violin Sonata No. 1 in D minor, Op. 7 (1911)	13:14
5 I <i>Allegro moderato</i>	2:12
6 II <i>Adagio – Cantabile nobilmente</i>	11:02
7 Prelude from <i>St Francis</i> for Violin and Piano (1941)	5:24
Two Bach Chorale Paraphrases (1925)	5:27
8 Herzlich thut mich verlangen	3:07
9 Christ lag in Todesbanden	2:20

TT 58:43

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Stephanie McCallum, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS