



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

**Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36**

<b>1</b>	I. Adagio molto – Allegro con brio	[33'23]	9'21
<b>2</b>	II. Larghetto	13'06	
<b>3</b>	III. Scherzo (Allegro) – Trio	3'53	
<b>4</b>	IV. Allegro molto	6'55	

RECORDED 21-22 APRIL 1952 IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

JOHN ANTILL 1904-1986

**Corroboree – Suite from the ballet**

<b>5</b>	I. Welcome Ceremony	[16'59]	2'56
<b>6</b>	II. Dance of the Evening Star	3'31	
<b>7</b>	III. Rain Dance	3'07	
<b>8</b>	IV. Procession of Totems and Fire Ceremony	7'23	

RECORDED 5 DECEMBER 1950 IN THE ASHFIELD TOWN HALL

**Eugene Goossens conductor**

PERCY GRAINGER 1882-1961

**Youthful Suite**

<b>9</b>	I. Northern March	[26'19]	6'35
<b>10</b>	II. Rustic Dance	3'54	
<b>11</b>	III. Norse Dirge	9'11	
<b>12</b>	IV. Eastern Intermezzo	1'58	
<b>13</b>	V. English Waltz	4'27	

RECORDED 1976 IN THE SYDNEY TOWN HALL

**John Hopkins conductor**

Total Playing Time 77'03

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

**Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36**

In November 1792 the 21-year-old Beethoven departed provincial Bonn for Vienna, to receive, in the words of Count Waldstein, 'Mozart's spirit from the hands of Haydn'. He arrived the inheritor of a musical language and symphonic style that was rapidly changing. Eighteenth-century musicians could claim a common musical language, but the gradual emergence in the 19th century of independent composers as free professionals resulted in a scuffle for novelty, for the establishment of a personal idiom. The implications were profound and have been sustained into our own time. First, in the absence of a common idiom sheer facility was compromised – where Mozart might have written three symphonies in as many months, Beethoven could easily wrestle for years on just one. More important, it quickly became apparent that novelty brings with it difficulties for performers and increases the demands on the listener – a composer could easily move too far ahead of public taste and understanding.

By the age of 30 Beethoven was already throwing conservative models to the wind, but the Second Symphony, like the First, gives an impression of relative caution. Its composition coincides with Beethoven's growing realisation that his deafness was both worsening and irreversible, expressed in the poignant Heiligenstadt Testament, dated 2 October 1802.

Six months later the work received its premiere. It was judged 'bizarre, harsh and undisciplined', but: 'This impression is so far overcome by the powerful, fiery spirit which is felt in this colossal work, by the wealth of new ideas and the almost total originality of their treatment, and by the profound knowledge of the principles of art, that [this symphony]... will be heard with ever-increasing pleasure when a thousand celebrated, fashionable pieces of today have long since gone to their graves.' Beethoven is inching ahead of his public, but the genius of his music cannot go unrecognised.

Like the First Symphony, the Second was Classical in spirit, but at the same time, larger, more muscular, more brilliant, more energetic and more ambitious. The slow introduction, reminiscent of Haydn, is unprecedented in its length; the main *Allegro*, while apparently optimistic, is interrupted by the same D minor 'knock of fate' that provided the climax for the introduction. The expansive and opulent *Larghetto* is followed by Beethoven's first named 'scherzo' in a symphony, a fleeting movement that lives up to its 'joking' name.

The powerful finale builds on this good humour with a sonata-rondo form in which the recurring main theme poses a question, only to receive a different answer each time. The music builds to a massive coda (or 'tail' section), occupying a disproportionate amount of the movement. Already Beethoven was moving towards an 'end-weighted' symphonic style, based on the idea of a

progression or a journey – a world away from Classical symphonies in which a substantial first movement could be complemented by a throwaway rondo-finale. Perhaps this accounts for the 1804 review that described the conclusion of the symphony as ‘an uncivilised monster, a wounded dragon, refusing to die while bleeding to death, raging, striking in vain around itself with its agitated tail’.

**Yvonne Frindle**

JOHN ANTILL

### **Corroboree – Suite from the ballet**

One Sunday in 1912, the Antill family of Ashfield took a horse-drawn bus to La Perouse, near the Sydney landing site of Captain Cook in 1770. There, for a sixpence, they witnessed a performance by a group of Aborigines, a kind of introduction to Indigenous culture for middle-class white Australians, still in the first flush of discovering a people and culture dispossessed by Federation barely a decade earlier.

John Antill, then eight years old, was mesmerized. Over the following decades, he gathered everything he could find about Aboriginal culture. By 1935, he had conceived some kind of recreation of this event. Beginning as a piano piece, it grew by stages into an ensemble piece, a work for chamber orchestra, for full orchestra, then a ballet. By 1944, there was a full score, about 45 minutes in all.

Eugene Goossens burst into Sydney in 1946 with the Australian premiere of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. Now where, thundered the British conductor-composer, are the Australian scores? A few members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra recalled having played Antill’s strange score in a studio run-through two years earlier. Goossens was overjoyed. At a free ABC Matinee Concert on 18 August 1946, Goossens and the SSO gave the premiere of a new work by John Antill, *Suite from the ballet, Corroboree*.

The response was nigh on ecstatic. At last, a *real* Australian masterpiece, something that could be displayed proudly and distinctively to the world as *Australian*. Goossens scheduled recordings and further performances: in London, with his orchestra in Cincinnati, and with the Berlin Symphony at the 1949 Edinburgh Festival.

The ballet version was premiered in Sydney in 1950, then sent on tour in 1951, the Golden Jubilee of Federation. Australian culture had come of age! The nation might celebrate – even appropriate – the culture of the Australian Aborigines, but it was still some years before they were included in the census (1971) or even recognised as ‘citizens of Australia’ (1967).

In passing, we may do well to realise that the concept of ‘appropriation’ was either ignored or thought little of at the time that John Antill conceived and wrote his work. And on a practical

A feature of Australian Aboriginal life is the dance ceremony known as the ‘Corroboree’. The Aboriginal is a master of mimicry and burlesque, and the Corroboree generally takes the form of realistic imitations of humans or animals. Any current event may furnish the theme from which the ‘tribal’ poets, musicians and actors produce the ceremony... The performances take place after sundown, in the glow of campfires, creating a most impressive atmosphere...

**John Antill**



level, to whom would he have applied for permission to 'use' this 'borrowed' material? Confronted by similar situations today, many composers have simply given up, unable to cope with the sheer *gravitas* of the issue.

Goossens recorded a *Corroboree Suite* with the SSO in 1951, by then its duration having grown another eight minutes, with the inclusion of the ballet's final section. There have been only three choreographed productions of the work since then. For the present, John Antill's music seems confined to the concert hall, but it has fewer hearings these days. A pity, because it represents a watershed moment in our musical history, an event that had no precedence or peer, and one from which no future Australian composer can escape – the largely absent Grainger notwithstanding. *Corroboree* is fundamental to our history. We can hardly ignore it, merely for the sake of current sentiment or sensitivity.

John Antill's *Corroboree* was the first important musico-dramatic work that we could present to ourselves and the world as truly Australian. 'Here it is and here we are,' it says and shouts, even after 50 years.

**Vincent Plush**

PERCY GRAINGER  
**Youthful Suite**

The spontaneity and directness of Percy Grainger's musical style made him one of the most

approachable of 'serious' (not to mention Australian) composers of his day. And the vast number of folksong arrangements and settings that he made – some of them, such as the *Londonderry Air*, wildly successful – have ensured him a place in our popular heritage.

Grainger's musical focus was texture and style, with larger structural concepts holding little interest for him. Hand in hand with this went a miniaturist approach: his original pieces and his folk music settings tend to be short, rarely more than ten minutes, and his longer works are usually suites of self-contained movements.

The *Youthful Suite* is an example of the mature Grainger drawing on material dating back to his earliest years as a composer. The two shorter movements, *Rustic Dance* and *Eastern Intermezzo*, were composed and orchestrated in 1899, and *Northern March* and *Norse Dirge* begun the same year (Grainger was 17). Early work on the *English Waltz* dates from 1901. But it was much later, in the 1940s, that Grainger revised and completed the movements, bringing these 'funny old things' together as a suite. The composer was no longer youthful, but the music retains the freshness and audacity of youth.

After all, it was a teenage Grainger who had been experimenting with the modern whole-tone scale system of *Northern March* several years before Debussy. Grainger makes this claim in his preface

to the Suite; he also believed that, to the best of his knowledge, *Rustic Dance* was the first concert piece to end with a 'blues' chord. The pastoral character of *Rustic Dance* already hints at the interest that Grainger was to take in folk music after he moved to England in 1901. There he was among the first composers to take a phonograph into the field, collecting traditional English songs. But even as a boy in Melbourne he had made expeditions into the city's Chinatown, thereby kindling a passion for Oriental music that emerges in the brief *Eastern Intermezzo*. And since boys of that era grew up with Kipling's *Jungle Book*, it can be no surprise that the rhythmic middle section of the *Intermezzo* was inspired by Kipling's description of elephants dancing.

*Norse Dirge* reflects another youthful fascination: the Scandinavian folklore that Grainger learned at his mother's knee. Its dramatic yet sombre mood evokes the *drapa* (death song for a hero) found in Icelandic Sagas. The scoring of this movement is especially rich, with harmonium and extensive use of tuneful percussion instruments. As biographer John Bird observes, 'for a 17-year-old boy without formal compositional training these pieces display a remarkably mature grasp of scoring and an assured fluency in unusual harmonic organisation.' The final movement, the popularly styled waltz in 'English-speaking melody', is attractive, energetic music. In the words of conductor John Hopkins, it represents Percy Grainger in one of his most outgoing moods.

**Yvonne Frindle**  
**Sydney Symphony**

*John Antill with Eugene Goossens and his third wife, Marjorie Foulkrod. Photo: National Library of Australia*



**Eugene Goossens** 1893-1962

Sir Eugene Goossens was the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's first Chief Conductor, holding the post concurrently with that of Director of the NSW Conservatorium of Music from 1947 until 1956. He arrived in Sydney with an ambitious two-year plan that was to put the orchestra in the world's top six, and a vision that would lead to the building of the Sydney Opera House on Bennelong Point. His musicianship, uncompromising standards and skill as a trainer saw subscriptions double and made the Orchestra attractive to first-rank soloists and conductors. He introduced audiences to major works previously neglected, and became a champion of Australian music, conducting the premieres of works such as Antill's *Corroboree*. For EMI (Australia) he conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's first commercial recordings.

Born in London into a musical family, Goossens studied at the Bruges Conservatoire, the Liverpool College of Music and the Royal College of Music. He was Thomas Beecham's assistant from 1916 until 1920, and in 1921 formed his own orchestra, which gave the first English performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. (He later conducted the Australian premiere.) In 1923 he was appointed the first conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic (also teaching at the Eastman School of Music), and he was permanent conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony from 1931 until 1946. He was knighted in 1955. The following year a scandal involving the

importing of prohibited goods resulted in his resignation from his Sydney posts. He returned to London, working freelance until his death in 1962.

**John Hopkins** b. 1927

Born in Yorkshire, John Hopkins studied cello at the Royal Manchester College of Music and conducting at London's Guildhall School of Music as well as undertaking studies at the Salzburg Mozarteum. His first conducting appointments were with the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Orchestra and Singers. In 1952, at the age of 24, he was appointed Chief Conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra and in 1957 he moved to New Zealand as conductor of the NZ Symphony Orchestra. He moved to Australia in 1963, taking up the post of Federal Director of Music for the ABC. Through his conducting work with the ABC orchestras he followed Goossens' lead in broadening the repertoire, championing new music from overseas and by Australian composers, and he played an important role in the rediscovery of Percy Grainger's music. His inauguration of Prom series in Sydney and in Melbourne transformed the concert experience for many music-lovers in the 1960s and early 70s. He also played a prominent role in the national music camps and training orchestras. In 1973 he became Dean of Music at the Victorian College of the Arts, and from 1986 until 1991 he was Director of the Sydney Conservatorium. His guest conducting engagements have included appearances in Europe, North America and Japan,

*John Hopkins with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at a Prom concert, Sydney Town Hall*



and from 1983 until 1991 he was Principal Conductor of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. John Hopkins is currently a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He was honoured with an appointment as Officer in the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1970.

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*Goossens with the Sydney Symphony  
Orchestra, Sydney Town Hall*

