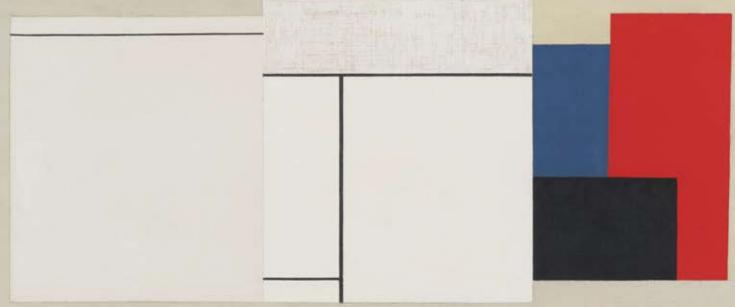


WALTON

VIOLIN CONCERTO

SYMPHONIC SUITE FROM 'TROILUS AND CRESSIDA'
PORTSMOUTH POINT



Charlie Lovell-Jones

SINFONIA OF LONDON

John Wilson



Sir William Walton, at home, in Ischia, 1955

Sir William Walton (1902-1983)

		Symphonic Suite from 'Troilus and Cressida' (1947 - 54, revised 1963, 1972 - 76) Arranged 1987 by Christopher Palmer (1946 - 1995)	28:38
		from the opera in three acts	
1	I	The Trojans [Prelude and Seascape.] Adagio – Poco agitato – Più agit Allegro – Meno mosso – Animato – Lento – Più mosso – Allegro	ato - 6:29
2	II	Scherzo. Allegretto - Meno mosso - A tempo, Adagio - Vivace, doppio movimento - Meno mosso	7:27
3	III	The Lovers. Moderato – Poco più largamente – Subito più vivo – Incalzando sempre – Molto lento, misterioso – A tempo, Lento – Lento	8:08
4	IV	Finale. Lugubre – Con moto – Allegro – Alla marcia (sempre maestoso) – Più mosso – Maestoso triomfale – A tempo, Tranquillo – Tutta Forza	6:32

		Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1936 – 39, revised 1943)* For Jascha Heifetz	29:01
5	I	Andante tranquillo – A tempo con moto – Subito molto più mosso [e] con brio – Poco a poco più agitato – [Cadenza] – A tempo con moto – Vivace subito – Poco meno mosso – A tempo I (ma assai più lento che prima)	10:39
6	II	Presto capriccioso alla napolitana – Con molto rubato – A tempo I subito – Trio (Canzonetta) – Poco meno mosso –	
		Tempo I – A tempo meno mosso e rubato – A tempo I subito	6:04
7	III	Vivace – A tempo con moto, ma flessibile – A tempo I subito – Poco più mosso – Vivacissimo – A tempo come prima [con moto] – A tempo più mosso – Vivace – Meno mosso poco a poco –	
		Cadenza – Lento – Con moto – A tempo I – Alla marcia	12:16
8		Portsmouth Point (1924 - 25) Overture	5:40
		To Siegfried Sassoon	
		Robusto	63:20

Charlie Lovell-Jones violin*
Sinfonia of London
Charlie Lovell-Jones · John Mills* leaders
John Wilson



Charlie Lovell-Jones during the recording sessions



Charlie Lovell-Jones

Walton:

Violin Concerto and other works

Portsmouth Point

William Walton (1902 - 1983) began composing his first successful orchestral work, the short overture Portsmouth Point. in 1924, the year following the first public performance of Facade - a scandalously jazzy 'entertainment' showcasing the nonsense poetry of Edith Sitwell, which had established the twenty-two-year-old as the precocious enfant terrible of modern British music. Portsmouth Point was a suitably rambunctious musical interpretation of an etching, dating from 1814, by the English caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson (1757 - 1827). Rowlandson's incident-packed picture portrayed what the music critic Frank Howes described as 'roystering, fighting, kissing, street music, goods traffic, all preparatory to embarkation of the ships in the harbour'. Given the nautical setting of the etching. Walton imbued his bustling orchestral impression of it with liberal doses of jaunty quasi-hornpipe melodies, enlivening the whole with ubiquitous and unpredictable syncopations and metrical dislocations inspired by his admiration for both the music of Stravinsky and jazz.

Portsmouth Point was completed in the spring of 1925 while Walton was staying in Spain with the Sitwells, and the influence of the sardana (Catalonia's national dance) is also to be heard in the overture's music. He dedicated the score to his friend the poet Siegfried Sassoon, as it was thanks to Sassoon's connections at Oxford University Press that the score was published by their newly formed Music Department, which had been launched, under the leadership of Hubert Foss, in 1923; this was the company's first Walton publication, and OUP was destined to remain his exclusive publisher for the remainder of his career. The overture was first performed on 22 June 1926 at Zurich's Tonhalle as part of that year's Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music, by the Tonhalle-Orchester under Volkmar Andreae. The first British performance followed six days later, when the Orchestra of the Ballets russes was conducted by Eugene Goossens, at His Majesty's Theatre, London, where Walton's score served as an entr'acte during an evening of ballet performances. By 1930, Walton was able to report to Sassoon that the overture had (in financial terms)

become a 'hardy annual', performances having been given in Chicago, New York, and Paris, as well as at several venues in England and Scotland.

Given that the overture quickly acquired a reputation for being formidably difficult rhythmically, it is amusing to recount that when Walton himself conducted it in London, in 1927, the full orchestral score fell off his music stand in the middle of the piece and he had to finish the performance from memory. 'It went down very well', he told a friend, and 'I was recalled three times'.

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

One of Walton's friends, who straddled the worlds of jazz and modern classical music, was the multi-talented bass-player Spike Hughes, and it was thanks to him that Walton was introduced to the great Russian-American violinist Jascha Heifetz, at a lunch meeting at London's Berkeley Hotel, in 1936. Over the smoked salmon and tournedos, it emerged that Heifetz was interested in commissioning a Violin Concerto from Walton, whose Viola Concerto (1928 – 29) had already shown the composer to be capable of an intense neoromantic lyricism very different from the spiky brittleness of *Portsmouth Point*.

Concerned (as always) with the need to make a freelance living as a composer,

Walton for a time vacillated over whether it would better serve his interests to accept a variety of film-score commissions instead of committing himself solely to Heifetz's concerto. The film projects which he was offered at this time would have netted him around five times the income of the concerto commission, but the latter was certainly an attractive proposition as a substantial contribution to Walton's catalogue of 'serious' works, and it brought with it the possibility of a longer shelf-life in terms of royalties and international acclaim. In the end, it was his wealthy lover, Alice Wimborne, who goaded Walton into concentrating on the concerto: he worked on it from January to June 1938 while recovering from a doublehernia operation in an apartment which she had rented at the Villa Cimbrone, Ravello, on the Amalfi Coast. Walton's passion for Alice, who was married to the Viscount Wimborne and was twenty-two years Walton's senior, was undoubtedly the inspiration behind the concerto's haunting lyricism. Walton wrote to Foss in May 1938 to report that the piece 'seems to be developing in an extremely intimate way', with 'not much show & bravura', and he felt that this might be detrimental to its potential success in America, and to his future transatlantic prospects. However, the nasty experience of

a tarantula bite spurred Walton into writing a ferocious tarantella as his virtuosic second movement, the composer commenting to Foss that the idea seemed 'quite gaga I must say, and of doubtful propriety after the 1st movement'.

Walton sought expert editorial advice on the first two movements from the Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa before travelling to the United States, in May 1939, to discuss the solo part with Heifetz himself. With characteristically mordant wit, Walton told *The New York Times* in an interview published on 2 June:

I seriously advise all sensitive composers to die at the age of 37 [his own current age]... I've gone through the first halcyon periods and am just about ripe for my critical damnation.

Heifetz was enthused by the piece, though reportedly found the finale too easy – so Walton accordingly agreed to 'jazz up' the solo part in order to give the soloist more of a challenge. The work's first performance had initially been planned to take place as part of the New York World's Fair, in 1939, possibly with financial support from the British Council, but this idea did not materialise. Walton then hoped to conduct the première himself, in Boston, but the outbreak of World War Two intervened: he was unable to cross the Atlantic, being required (as part

of his contribution to the war effort) to drive ambulances for the Air Raid Precautions service in the United Kingdom. When Heifetz attempted to send his marked-up score to the composer by sea, the convoy vessel in which it was sailing was sunk by enemy action in the Atlantic, and a further copy had to be sent to him by air.

Heifetz gave the Violin Concerto its (enthusiastically received) first performance on 7 December 1939 in Severance Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, with the Cleveland Orchestra under Artur Rodziński. Heifetz subsequently recorded the work, in February 1941, with Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. The first British performance took place in London's Royal Albert Hall on 1 November 1941, on which occasion the soloist was Henry Holst, accompanied by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Walton's baton. Lamenting the venue's notorious echo-laden acoustic (eventually to be solved by the installation of the famous ceiling-mounted 'mushroom' acoustic diffusers, in 1969), Walton wrote to the critic and academic Edward Dent to say that the sound was 'beyond words', and that 'practically all I could hear were the cellos on my right & the solo violin on my left'. (Sir Thomas Beecham liked to joke that the one good thing about the Albert Hall's echo was

that young composers were assured of at least two performances of their latest work.)

In December 1943, during a pause in the scoring of his music to Laurence Olivier's celebrated film of Shakespeare's Henry V, Walton decided to lighten the concerto's orchestration somewhat, and the revised version was given its first performance, again by Holst, in Wolverhampton, on 17 January 1944, in a concert by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent. Heifetz and Walton recorded the score (in mono) for HMV. in June 1950, with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Among the other violinists who adopted the piece, and who were particularly favoured by the composer, were: David Oistrakh, who performed it in Moscow, in January 1947, his playing on that occasion described by Walton as 'quite stupendous'; Yehudi Menuhin, who recorded it for HMV, in 1969, with Walton and the London Symphony Orchestra (Walton commenting to a friend that the recording was 'fantastically good - I can hardly believe it - and won't J. H. be cross'); and Kyung-Wha Chung ('she has to be heard to be believed'), who recorded the score with the London Symphony Orchestra under Walton's then champion, André Previn. in 1972.

Symphonic Suite from 'Troilus and Cressida' In 1941 - 42, Walton was contemplating writing an opera on the life of the notorious Italian composer Carlo Gesualdo, artistically celebrated for his (for its time) unusually chromatic style, and historically infamous for having murdered his wife and her lover in flagrante delicto, in 1590. This project did not progress beyond the libretto-planning stage, but Walton's characteristic interest in passionate subject matter would later bear fruit in the three-act opera *Troilus and Cressida*, first performed in 1954.

It was undoubtedly the phenomenal success of Benjamin Britten's opera Peter Grimes (1945) that spurred not only Walton but several other British composers into trying their hand at 'grand' opera in the following decade. Among the large-scale British operas mounted by the Royal Opera, at London's Covent Garden, were Arthur Bliss's The Olympians (1949) and Vaughan Williams's The Pilgrim's Progress (1951). Referring specifically to Grimes, Walton summed up his own motivation for writing Troilus and Cressida rather uninspiringly:

I thought it was not a good thing for British opera to have only one opera by one composer. I thought it my duty to try and write an opera.

Grimes, which had re-opened the Sadler's Wells Theatre after the end of the war, was also mounted at Covent Garden, from 1947

onwards. Although his own instincts had meanwhile been diverted into the medium of chamber opera, Britten soon returned to the grand operatic stage at the Garden with his new operas *Billy Budd* (1951) and *Gloriana* (composed to mark the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, in 1953), at a time when he was being head-hunted by the Royal Opera to become their non-executive music director.

The rivalry between Walton and Britten who was eleven years his junior - is well known. Walton had written to the younger composer what he called a 'fan letter' about Grimes in 1945, in which he declared that he felt Britten to be 'quite capable of creating English opera all on your own' - but also expressing the hope that his success might encourage others to contribute to the genre. But, shortly afterwards, Walton opposed potential funding from the British Council in support of a recording of Grimes, arguing that the piece could stand on its own two feet commercially, and that other composers were more deserving of support. Britten heard of Walton's objections and was furious, to the point where Walton wrote him a long, formal letter of apology, regretting that they were no longer 'on speaking or meeting terms'; it seems that Britten wrote a conciliatory reply (now lost), which rendered Walton 'touched to tears'. Walton also

opposed Britten's potential appointment as the Royal Opera's music director and pointedly asked the advisory committee if this meant that Britten would conduct the first performance of *Troilus*. (The curt answer was 'yes', though that eventuality was surely extremely unlikely.) Troilus, which took Walton seven years to compose, was then passed over as a potential Coronation opera in favour of Gloriana, written by Britten in the astonishingly short period of just nine months. Walton wrote to his Troilus librettist. Christopher Hassall, in June 1952: 'But there it is, we've no friends at Court so we must put on a smiling face and pretend we like it.' (Perhaps Walton had temporarily forgotten that he had received a knighthood in the previous year.)

Troilus and Cressida seems to have been inspired, as had the Violin Concerto, by Walton's love for Alice Wimborne, who was responsible (in 1947) for suggesting Hassall as a good librettist for the project. She referred to the piece as 'our child' (in his twilight years the composer ruefully adapted this to 'our lost child'), and Walton was further encouraged by the BBC, who agreed to commission the new opera. But Alice soon succumbed to bronchial cancer, and died in June 1948, by this time a widow; she left Walton a substantial legacy, including



a house. Soon afterwards, in September 1948. Walton travelled to Buenos Aires on behalf of the Performing Right Society, and precipitately proposed to the British Council's twenty-two-year-old social secretary, Susana Gil Passo, on the day after he met her. They married, and moved to the Italian island of Ischia, in the autumn of 1949, specifically so that Walton could work uninterrupted on Troilus. He dedicated the score to his young wife, who gave him the stability and long-term support he needed, and whose posthumous devotion to his works was largely responsible for keeping the music of the opera very much alive when it seemed in danger of neglect.

Writing and mounting *Troilus and*Cressida was a far from happy experience for Walton. He found much of Hassall's libretto intractable and verbose, and failed to secure for the première the soprano (Elisabeth Schwarzkopf) for whom he had specifically written the role of Cressida. A première at Covent Garden planned for the 1951/52 season had to be postponed. The first production eventually opened at the Garden on 3 December 1954, with the Hungarian soprano Magda László as Cressida and Richard Lewis as Troilus. By all accounts, the musical standard suffered from a severe lack of preparation (and poor eyesight) on

the part of Sir Malcolm Sargent, who was not experienced as an opera conductor. Ironically, the show was stolen by Britten's partner, Peter Pears, who created the comic role of Pandarus. Britten wrote to a friend: 'Peter had a bad cold (& flu really) on the first night... and only got through by drugs and champagne.' In their private remarks, both Britten and Pears were dismissive about the work's quality, and although some critics were impressed by it, Walton's arch-enemy, the critic Peter Heyworth, panned its essentially romantic idiom for being 'deeply embedded in the stagnant waters of the past'. Nevertheless, after the initial London run, productions were mounted in San Francisco and New York (both 1955), and (in Italian translation) at La Scala. Milan (January 1956). The Italian audience found it riotously funny that, at the plot's tragic climax, Cressida was on one occasion unable to locate Troilus's sword and ran around the stage - according to Lady Walton, 'like a hen looking for corn with her head close to her toes' - trying to find his weapon so she could duly stab herself with it. In 1976. Walton adapted Cressida's part to suit the lower tessitura of Dame Janet Baker, for a production given (and recorded) by the Royal Opera. Two decades later, in 1995, Opera North performed and made the première recording (for Chandos) of the complete

opera with the original dramatic-soprano part reinstated.

In 1987, the experienced orchestral arranger Christopher Palmer (1946 – 1995) was commissioned by Lady Walton and OUP to prepare a substantial orchestral suite from the opera's most memorable music. Palmer deftly reworked passages from the score into a quasi-symphonic four-movement plan, reflecting what he himself described as 'a full-blown Romantic opera in the ripe old tradition of glory and grandeur, epic romance and high tragedy'. The Symphonic Suite was first performed on 3 August 1988, at the BBC Proms, by the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra under Bryden Thomson, who also conducted its première recording (for Chandos, with the London Philharmonic) in April 1989.

The four movements follow the opera's principal events in chronological order:

1. The Trojans [Prelude and Seascape]

The Trojans, besieged by the Greeks and feeling themselves cursed, pray to Pallas Athene to save them from the enemy's aggression. As the grim mood shifts to a glittering seascape infused with Mediterranean light, Troilus pleads with the goddess Aphrodite ('child of the wine-dark wave') to bless him with the love of a mortal.

whereupon Cressida – characterised by solo oboe and solo strings – makes her first appearance. The movement ends with the glowing transformation of the amorous music of Troilus at the end of Act I, as he vows victory in love with Aphrodite's help.

2. Scherzo

The Scherzo begins with music associated with the go-between, Pandarus, whom Palmer described as 'playful, skittish and good-tempered', his arrangement here bestowing the character's light-hearted 'skirls, arabesques and roulades' on the wind instruments. Pandarus hosts Cressida and friends at a supper party, during which a storm threatens to intrude. Pandarus accommodates Cressida overnight with the intention of pairing her up with Troilus; this central ('trio') section of the Scherzo is based on her celebrated nocturnal aria, 'At the haunted end of the day'. Pandarus's music makes an understated return to round off the ternary form traditionally associated with symphonic scherzos.

3. The Lovers

Palmer intended the slow movement to bear 'the main emotional burden' of the suite. A medley of themes associated with Cressida introduces the amorous encounter between

the title characters, which is the centrepiece of Act II; this gradually builds to an intense climax. In his own programme note, Palmer wittily juxtaposed Frank Howes's florid description of this moment ('the translation into music of the rising tides, the ecstasies so acute as to verge on pain, the subsidence into tenderness and rapture of love's consummation') with Walton's own typically laconic and provocative epithet for the climax ('pornographic'). The slithering chromatic trombone writing in the storm music that finally erupts in this climactic passage is, whether by accident or design, strikingly reminiscent of the famous storm interlude from Britten's Peter Grimes. The movement ends quietly, as the lovers are compelled to part.

4. Finale

The Greeks have taken Cressida prisoner, and the melody of her heartfelt lament for the absent Troilus is played by a solo cor anglais. Trumpet fanfares greet the arrival of Diomede, who is intent on securing Cressida for himself. As in the case of his Coronation-flavoured title music for Olivier's film of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1955), Walton was dismissive of this ceremonial music, referring to it as 'the MGM bit'. (Stravinsky made a similar Hollywood quip when he said

that the trumpet fanfares in his operaoratorio *Oedipus Rex* [1927] put him in mind
of 'the now badly tarnished trumpets of
early 20th-Century Fox'.) Troilus attempts to
rescue Cressida but is killed by her father, the
Trojan high priest Calkas, who has defected
to the Greeks. Cor anglais and solo strings
depict her plea that the fallen hero might
'look back from the silent stream of sleep
and long forgetting'. More stirring trumpets
accompany her demand that the gates of
Troy be thrown open so that the doomed
lovers can re-enter their city, at which point
Cressida stabs herself with Troilus's sword to
reunite herself with him in death.

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Since making his début at a sold-out Royal Festival Hall at the age of fifteen, Charlie Lovell-Jones has soloed with major orchestras internationally, broadcasting on radio and television. As leader of the multi-award-winning Sinfonia of London, he has performed at the BBC Proms and recorded several CDs, garnering critical acclaim from magazines such as Classic FM and Gramophone. He found success in the Sendai International Music Competition, Japan, in 2019, Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in 2020,

and Joseph Joachim Violin Competition. Hannover, in 2021. In 2020, he graduated from the University of Oxford with a Gibbs Prize in Music and received a Bicentenary Scholarship from the Royal Academy of Music, from which he graduated in 2022 with the Strings Postgraduate Prize. He studied for over ten years with Rodney Friend MBE and. from 2022 to 2024, with Augustin Hadelich, at the Yale School of Music. Winner of a Hattori Foundation Award, Harriet Cohen International Music Award. John Fussell Award for Young Musicians, Drake Calleja Trust award, and Countess of Munster Musical Trust award, he has enjoyed master-classes with Ida Haendel, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Vadim Repin, Menahem Pressler, Pinchas Zukerman, James Ehnes, Leonidas Kavakos, and, most recently. Ida Kavafian at the Lincoln Center. He is also a J&A Beare Violin Society Artist. He is in regular demand as a soloist across the UK and beyond and has performed at venues such as Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Snape Maltings. Smith Square Hall and Wigmore Hall, London, and Konzerthaus Berlin. He frequently tours and records with Sinfonia of London and also enjoys performing chamber music and acting as guest leader. Charlie Lovell-Jones plays a fine violin made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini in 1777, generously loaned by a benefactor.

Sinfonia of London brings together outstanding musicians for special projects, live and recorded, under its Artistic Director and conductor, John Wilson, Described in the press as 'one of the best ensembles anywhere' (The Guardian), it includes a significant number of principals and leaders from orchestras based both in the UK and abroad, alongside notable soloists and members of distinguished chamber ensembles. The orchestra made its acclaimed live début in 2021 at the BBC Proms. Alongside subsequent annual Prom appearances, it has given live performances at the Aldeburgh Festival and Snape Maltings, as well as two concert tours of the UK, cementing its reputation for world-class excellence with 'typically exhilarating performances' (The Arts Desk) and five-star reviews. Its much celebrated recording profile on Chandos Records covers a wide range of repertoire, including works by Korngold, Respiahi, Ravel, Dutilleux. Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Walton, and Rodgers & Hammerstein. The magazine BBC Music declared that 'Wilson and his hand-picked band of musicians continue to strike gold with almost anything they turn their hands to' while The Mail on Sunday declared the album of English Music for Strings 'dazzling... some of the finest string playing ever put on disc

by a British orchestra'. Alongside outstanding reviews ('leaves music critics ready to die for joy', in the words of iNews), the orchestra has received five BBC Music Magazine Awards in five years and, in 2022, a Gramophone Award. In 2023, The Sunday Times stated that 'Sinfonia of London sets the gold standard – an orchestra of generals that takes the unfashionable, the obscure, the overlooked, and makes it unmissable'. www.sinfoniaoflondon.com

Born in Gateshead and since 2011 a Fellow of the Royal College of Music where he studied composition and conducting, John Wilson is now in demand at the highest level across the globe and has over the past thirty years conducted many of the world's finest orchestras. In 2018 he relaunched Sinfonia of London, which The Arts Desk described as 'the most exciting thing currently happening on the British orchestral scene'. His much-anticipated BBC Proms début with this orchestra, in 2021, was praised by The Guardian as 'truly outstanding' and admired by The Times for its 'revelatory music-making'. They are now highly sought-after across the UK, the 2024/25 season notable for performances at major

UK venues including the Barbican Centre. Bridgewater Hall, and Glasshouse International Centre for Music, as well as a return to the BBC Proms. Their large and varied discography having received near universal critical acclaim, in the autumn of 2024 they released their twenty-fourth album since 2019. Their CDs have earned several awards, including numerous BBC Music Magazine Awards: for recordings of Korngold's Symphony in F sharp (2020), Respighi's Roman Trilogy (2021), Dutilleux's Le Loup (2022), Rodgers & Hammerstein's Oklahoma! (2024), and works by Vaughan Williams, Howells, Delius, and Elgar, a disc which won the Orchestral Award and was chosen Recording of the Year. The Observer described the Respighi recording as 'Massive, audacious and vividly played' and The Times declared it one of the three 'truly outstanding accounts of this trilogy' of all time, alongside those by Toscanini (1949) and Muti (1984). In March 2019, John Wilson was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Musician Award of the Incorporated Society of Musicians for his services to music and in 2021 was appointed Henry Wood Chair of Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music.



John Wilson

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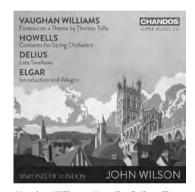


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Suite from *Troilus and Cressida*) and 29 – 31 July 2024 (other works)

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CHSA 5360

Symphonic Suite from 'Troilus and Cressida'

(1902 – 1983)

5-7 Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

8 **Portsmouth Point** (1924 – 25)

5:40

TT 63:20

Charlie Lovell-Jones violin* SINFONIA OF LONDON Charlie Lovell-Jones · John Mills* leaders John Wilson

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