



**CHANDOS**

# RUTH GIPPS

ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 3

Symphony No. 1

Horn Concerto

Ambarvalia

Cringlemire

Garden

Coronation

Procession

Martin Owen horn

Rumon Gamba

**BBC** *Philharmonic*



Courtesy of the Ruth Gipps Collection

Ruth Gipps, October 1940, aged nineteen

**Ruth Gipps** (1921 – 1999)

**Orchestral Works, Volume 3**

*première recording*

- 1 **Coronation Procession, Op. 41** (1953) **7:45**  
Allegro moderato – Poco meno –  
Maestoso – Andantino – Poco meno –  
Allegro moderato – Poco meno –  
Coda. Tempo I ma Pomposo

*première recording*

- 2 **Ambarvalia, Op. 70** (1988) **7:08**  
A Dance  
For Adrian Cruft  
Andantino leggero – Poco meno – Tempo I –  
Coda – Appassionato – Poco meno – In tempo al fine

	<b>Concerto, Op. 58</b> (1968)* for Horn and Orchestra	<b>17:11</b>
3	1 Con moto – Meno mosso – Tempo I – Tranquillo – Cadenza – Tutti	7:10
4	2 Scherzo. Allegretto – Meno mosso – Andante – Tempo I	4:04
5	3 Finale. Allegro ritmico – Poco meno mosso – Tempo I – Poco meno mosso – Tempo I – Meno mosso – Tempo I – Meno mosso – Tempo I	5:49
6	<b>Cringlemire Garden, Op. 39</b> (1952) An Impression for String Orchestra Andante – Allegro moderato – Poco largamente – Tempo I	<b>6:23</b>

*première recording*

**Symphony No. 1, Op. 22** (1942)

**36:35**

in F minor • in f-Moll • en fa mineur

For George Weldon

<b>7</b>	I Allegro moderato – Meno mosso – Tempo I	12:32
<b>8</b>	II Adagio – Poco più mosso – Con fuoco – Tranquillo – Con fuoco – Tempo I	7:43
<b>9</b>	III Allegro – Meno mosso – Tempo I	5:44
<b>10</b>	IV Adagio – Più mosso – Moderato – Allegro – Tempo di marcia (poco meno mosso) – Moderato – Tempo di marcia – Moderato – Allegro – Tempo di marcia (poco meno mosso) – Meno mosso	10:23
		<b>TT 75:23</b>

**Martin Owen** horn\*

**BBC Philharmonic**

**Yuri Torchinsky** leader

**Rumon Gamba**

Martin Owen



Daide Cerati Fotografia



BBC Philharmonic, in the studio at MediaCityUK, Salford

## Ruth Gipps: Orchestral Works, Volume 3

Ruth Gipps (1921 – 1999) made her first appearance on the musical scene in the years before the outbreak of War, in 1939, as a regionally celebrated child pianist. At this time local music schools or 'conservatoires' played a significant part in providing opportunities (notably for girls) to gain entry to the music colleges in London. They existed along the south coast of England, in particular, in the 1930s. Ruth Gipps came from the seaside resort of Bexhill-on-Sea which then had a high profile for the modernist De La Warr Pavilion which had opened in 1935. Her mother was ambitious for her daughter and urged on Ruth's musical progress. As a notably young student, at the age of sixteen, in 1937, having won the Caird Scholarship, she was accepted by the Royal College of Music, in London. Studying composition with Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob, and later oboe with Leon Goossens, she developed almost as quickly as a concert pianist and is known to have given a remarkable student performance of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto at the College.

She was still a student when war was declared, but she found herself in a group

of gifted young women composers and was able to create a variety of chamber works and songs. It was her second study at the College, of the oboe, which enabled her to join the City of Birmingham Orchestra, doubling on the cor anglais, and this was doubtless an opportunity that would not have been available to her in peacetime, in those days of all-male orchestras.

Gipps's tone poem *Knight in Armour*, composed in 1940, was first heard at a concert at the Royal College of Music in July 1941, and when it appeared on the last night of the 1942 Proms, on 22 August, Gipps began to earn a national reputation as a rising composer. That performance was soon followed by another, of her orchestral variations on William Byrd's *Non Nobis*, which was heard at Buxton a week later. There followed airings of her Oboe Concerto, and later her Violin Concerto, at London's Northern Polytechnic. In November 1943, George Weldon premièred her short orchestral piece *Death on the Pale Horse*, and her success, and the good reviews she received from Eric Blom, in the *Birmingham Post*, must have generated some feelings of resentment



among certain members of the orchestra. Gipps reported that she experienced feelings of persecution.

She had finished a Symphony in 1942, which she sent to George Weldon. She recalled that he

had written me a letter of such length and astonishing enthusiasm about this 'very lovely music' that I had carried it in my handbag ever since.

However, there was an inevitable delay before it could be scheduled and it was not performed until 25 March 1945, at a concert in which Weldon conducted the City of Birmingham Orchestra at Birmingham Town Hall, and in which the composer herself played cor anglais. In the very same concert, she also appeared as the soloist in Glazunov's Piano Concerto in F minor.

While she delighted in her success, she also later remembered the atmosphere of antagonism which she once again experienced from a disapproving orchestral colleague. She wrote:

George [Weldon] genuinely loved the work as music, and gave a most dramatic and moving performance of it. Only one thing marred it. In spite of the very thorough rehearsals, half-way through the first movement the player who disliked me started playing his part one bar out. It was

a section where he and another player had answering phrases in alternate bars... I was hearing something that I have never heard before or since - a musician playing wrong *on purpose*.

However, she also recalled that

Eric Blom ended a 'smashing notice' with the words 'When in musical history has such a symphony been written by a girl of 21 - or for that matter, by a boy?.'

She sent the score to the BBC, which rejected it. Not one to give up easily, she queried the rejection in person, but her interlocutor was unimpressed: 'He answered "An audience will applaud anything if a young girl is taking a bow"', adding, 'you see Dr Gipps... you are simply not a composer at all'. To her response (referring to Eric Blom) that 'at least he had heard the work', he had no reply. However, her Second Symphony was already well underway and George Weldon conducted the première of it at Birmingham in October 1946. Still, neither work would achieve a wider reputation for many years, until they were recorded - the First Symphony for the first time on the present disc.

In 1942 she had married the clarinettist Robert Baker, and while he was away on war service, she pursued her career as a full-time orchestral musician in the City of Birmingham Orchestra. In fact, during the

1940s Birmingham was a centre of musical creativity in the UK. But when peace returned, her career took Gipps to London where obtaining orchestral performances was more difficult. She found herself earning her living as a conservatoire teacher. First appointed to Trinity College of Music (1959–66) to teach composition and harmony, she moved to the Royal College of Music in 1967, where she filled the vacancy that followed the retirement of her composition teacher Gordon Jacob. But by the summer of 1977 she found herself in an unsympathetic climate at the College where teaching took account of more *avant-garde* styles, of which she disapproved, so she left the College and accepted an appointment as Senior Lecturer in Music at Kingston Polytechnic (now University) instead.

As London proved resistant to her orchestral compositions, Gipps turned her attention to chamber music. Over time she developed a portfolio of activities which included choral conducting, musical journalism, and university extra-mural lecturing. Throughout her life she was a byword for industry and no-nonsense integrity; encountering the evident wide-spread resentment towards women musicians in the 1940s and 50s, she attempted to establish herself by

professional discipline and academic excellence, and was awarded an external Durham BMus in 1941, and a Doctorate in 1948 for which her composition exercise was the cantata *The Cat*, described by one conductor as 'great fun, full of vitality'.

Gipps was celebrated for her work with the London Repertoire Orchestra, which she founded in 1955 and which filled an enormous gap in musical opportunity in London. Here, in an activity which she continued for thirty-one years, every week she provided students and good amateurs a chance to play through an enormous range of music. This included new works as well as the classical repertoire. For many years aspiring musicians found this a way, on first entering the profession, of acquiring orchestral experience. With the LRO she also gave young soloists the opportunity to try through their concertos, and many leading names made their first exploratory steps on the concert platform under her baton. As the RLO rehearsed a different programme every week, it was quite a feat for Gipps not only to prepare all that music but also to audition and work with a new soloist. Later she also founded and conducted the Chanticleer Orchestra, which gave many pioneering programmes in London. Her many good works for the music profession in the UK were wide but went largely unsung, though

she was eventually, grudgingly, recognised by the award of an MBE.

#### **Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 22**

The Second World War was a time when many British composers wrote 'war' symphonies. This stood in striking contrast to the First World War, when very few such works were performed, though they later became identified with those dark times. During World War II British composers as varied as Stanley Bate, Arthur Benjamin, Christopher Edmunds, Alan Bush, Richard Arnell, Edmund Rubbra, and Hubert Clifford wrote works in overt response to the hostilities, and one must not forget Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* and Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony as opposite poles of the same concern. Dated 17 September 1942, the First Symphony by Ruth Gipps is notable for its personal voice and what, on first acquaintance, seems a lack of overtly wartime musical imagery, which is revealed only gradually and builds as the work proceeds. At times it is sufficiently vivid not to have been out of place in a wartime film.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, opens with a variety of lightly stated motifs and lyrical moments, all generating momentum; a dancing theme appears constantly in the woodwind, the colours

changing as a succession of solos fly by. Massed strings playing a repeated note to underpin the woodwind generate the unfurling of wide-ranging melodic lines. Eventually Gipps pins her colours to the mast as, Brahms-like, the timpani start an insistent repeated C, the brass soaring heroically above.

The slow movement, *Adagio*, is notable for the wonderfully open textures and extensive writing for solo woodwind – if we think of Gipps's teachers, the influence is probably more that of Gordon Jacob than RVW. The opening long oboe tune reappears later on cor anglais, both of them instruments which Gipps had played in the first performance. The pastoral, almost romantic mood is elaborated over a wide span. The movement builds to two powerful climaxes, *Con fuoco*, which momentarily flare up in the summer landscape, but the occasional distant trumpet or horn call reminds us of the time when the music was written.

The rhythmic, light-footed scherzo could almost be a stand-alone piece of light music of its period. Its clear, transparent textures and driving rhythms are coloured from the start by trumpets and muted horns, a simple rhythmic motif, and the lightly played *pizzicato* strings. A pastoral lyrical interlude on the flute launches an extended cor anglais



Courtesy of the Ruth Gipps Collection

Ruth Gipps, early 1950s

tune, subsequently taken by the strings. The fast music returns, both trumpets and horns muted. Gipps's use of *ostinati* – apparent throughout the symphony – takes us forward to a last cor anglais solo; and the climax comes as the full orchestra is heard for almost the only time.

The finale opens with quietly brooding music on cellos and basses as a bassoon takes a solo. The marking is *Adagio* but the music is characterised by a rapidly changing succession of episodes of varied mood. The opening tempo quickly accelerates: *Moderato*, with cor anglais again in evidence, before we arrive at the main *Allegro* and soon find ourselves launched on an extravagant march coloured by side drum and tambourine. Gipps uses repeated notes – here simple crochets – to drive the movement forward to a big climax. Eventually the march returns for a big, heroic statement, but the end is quiet: the driving repeated notes in the cellos and basses, a distant horn call, and a long fade-out.

#### **Cringlemire Garden, Op. 39**

The Lake District was the inspiration for the 'Impression' *Cringlemire Garden*, for string orchestra, a pastoral miniature. We are close to Troutbeck, near Windermere, where the Garden was designed as an arboreal museum

on rising ground west of Langdale Chase. Guides refer to the stone-built summerhouse, dating from 1897. The music is in two parts. First comes a succession of solos, from violin, cello, and viola, which toy with a phrase that seems to possess a folksong flavour – is it 'The Raggle Taggle Gypsies'? A change of time signature to 7/8 then leads to a faster section, in 3/4, before the folksong fragment returns – never clarifying its identity – and a muted viola brings the quiet close.

The piece was first heard, at Birmingham Town Hall, in 1952, when the New Midland Orchestra was conducted by the composer; its London première had to wait until 1960, when the Merritt String Orchestra performed it at Wigmore Hall.

#### **Coronation Procession, Op. 41**

The *Coronation Procession* is a quite personal evocation of the accumulating of crowds for the Coronation Ceremony, on 2 June 1953, perhaps as viewed from the royal coach. In fact, the work is dated 22 January 1953, so was composed long before Ruth Gipps could have had first-hand experience of what she was depicting. Although the work passes through a succession of episodes, the composer leaves it to our imaginations to conjure what stages we have reached,

but after the repeat of the opening section, we eventually arrive at the Coda and the entrance to Westminster Abbey, Gipps greeting us with a *Pomposo* statement of her 'big tune'.

The first performance appears to have taken place only on 27 September 1954, in Melbourne, Australia, where Walter Susskind conducted the Victoria Symphony Orchestra. Much later, in March 1959, the composer herself conducted it in New York, and later still, on 4 May 1965, she conducted it with her London Repertoire Orchestra, an occasion for which Prince Philip is reported to have been present during the rehearsal. We leave it to readers to imagine what he might have said. The tune of the middle section was later used by Malcolm Arnold in his *Variations on a Theme of Ruth Gipps*.

#### **Horn Concerto, Op. 58**

Gipps wrote the Horn Concerto in 1968 for her son, Lance Baker, who first performed it, with the London Repertoire Orchestra conducted by the composer, at Duke's Hall, at the Royal Academy of Music, on 15 November 1969. Later, in 1982, it was broadcast by Frank Lloyd with the BBC Welsh Orchestra conducted by the French conductor Georges Tzipine. The first movement is largely reflective but with *scherzando* episodes framing a slower

middle section. The closing Cadenza does not depend on virtuoso display and reinforces the overall mood.

The lively Scherzo second movement might best be described as 'thistledown', the fast music embracing an expressive middle section but concluding with sparkling fairy textures. The Finale is the high point of the concerto, the rhythmic material of the opening returning and, again, framing romantic writing for the horn. There is an exquisite passage of enchanting duet between muted horn and celesta towards the end, before the full orchestra quickly brings the concerto to its close.

#### **Ambarvalia, Op. 70**

*Ambarvalia* is a memorial tribute of 1988 to the composer and colleague Adrian Cruft, who had died in February 1987. It was first performed, at Kingston Parish Church, by the Kingston Polytechnic Orchestra conducted by John Bate. The composer wrote the work for a small orchestra – just double wind and strings, adding a colourful bell-like part for the celesta.

The *Ambarvalia* was a Roman agricultural fertility rite which took place at the end of May. Here, Ruth Gipps sets her 'Dance' in motion with a swinging repeated phrase in 12 / 8, reminiscent of a playground game. She



Courtesy of the Ruth Gipps Collection

Ruth Gipps, early 1960s

keeps the motion up until reaching a brief interjection in 9/8. The momentum eventually reaches a climax, marked *Appassionato* and *fortissimo*, but this quickly subsides to a quiet fade-out, accompanied by the chime of the celesta.

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Sincere thanks to Victoria Rowe for kindly supplying writings of Ruth Gipps and granting permission to quote from them in these pages

Regarded as one of Europe's leading horn players, **Martin Owen** appears as a soloist and chamber musician all around the world. He currently holds the position of principal horn at the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, and Haffner Wind Ensemble, having served as principal horn of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and, on a temporary contract, as solo horn of the Berliner Philharmoniker. He has performed concertante works by Britten, Elliott Carter, Oliver Knussen, Messiaen, Mozart, Thea Musgrave, Schumann, Richard Strauss, and Weber with the BBC Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Aalborg Symfoniorkester, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Trondheim Symphony Orchestra,

Staatsphilharmonie Nürnberg, Ensemble Modern, Orquesta Nacional de España, George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra, Bucharest, and New World Symphony, under conductors such as Jiří Bělohlávek, Martyn Brabbins, Edward Gardner, Oliver Knussen, Sir Roger Norrington, Sakari Oramo, David Robertson, Dalia Stasevska, Michael Tilson Thomas, and John Wilson. He has recorded concertos for many labels, and for Chandos Records, following two critically acclaimed releases of romantic concertos and trios, will record Mozart's horn concertos with Manchester Camerata under Gábor Takács-Nagy. Martin Owen is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, where he is Alfred Brain Professor of Horn, and is French horn tutor to the European Union Youth Orchestra. He has appeared on hundreds of film and television soundtracks, among them the Star Wars, Harry Potter, James Bond, and Pirates of the Caribbean franchises, as well as a plethora of Marvel movies! He lives in the Surrey Hills with his wife, Anna, a violinist.

The **BBC Philharmonic** is reimagining the orchestral experience for a new generation – challenging perceptions, championing innovation, and taking a rich variety of music to the widest range of audiences. Alongside a flagship series of concerts at Manchester's



Bridgewater Hall, the orchestra broadcasts concerts on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds from venues across the North of England, annually at the BBC Proms, and from its international tours. It also records regularly for Chandos Records and has produced a catalogue of more than 300 discs and digital downloads. Championing new music, it has recently given world and UK premières of works by Anna Appleby, Gerald Barry, Erland Cooper, Tom Coult, Sebastian Fagerlund, Emily Howard, Robert Laidlow, James Lee III, Grace-Evangeline Mason, David Matthews, Outi Tarkiainen, and Anna Þorvaldsdóttir, the scope of its output extending far beyond standard repertoire. Its Chief Conductor is John Storgårds, with whom the orchestra has enjoyed a long association. The French conductor Ludovic Morlot is its Associate Artist, Anna Clyne, one of the most in-demand composers of the day, its Composer in Association.

In May 2023 the orchestra performed at the Eurovision Song Contest, both at a free concert with the previous Ukrainian winner, Jamala, and in the final itself with the Italian artist Mahmood for a rendition of John Lennon's *Imagine* during the Liverpool Songbook medley. The orchestra continues to deliver a programme of engagement with children and young people. At the end of 2023

it released *Musical Storyland*, a major new ten-part series featuring the musicians of the BBC Philharmonic, which brings famous stories from around the world to life using the power of music. This was the first time an orchestra has been commissioned to make a series of films for UK network television. Through all its activities, the BBC Philharmonic is bringing life-changing musical experiences to audiences across Greater Manchester, the North of England, the UK, and around the world. [www.bbc.co.uk/philharmonic](http://www.bbc.co.uk/philharmonic)

Chief Conductor of the Oulu Sinfonia since January 2022, the British maestro **Rumon Gamba** has previously served as Principal Conductor and Music Director of NorrlandsOperan (2008 – 15), Chief Conductor of Aalborg Symfoniorkester (2011 – 15), and Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra (2002 – 10). He regularly leads the BBC orchestras and has appeared at the BBC Proms on a number of occasions. A champion of new music, he has conducted several high profile premières, including the world premières of Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*, at English National Opera, and Brett Dean's Viola Concerto, with the composer as soloist and the BBC Symphony Orchestra; the national premières of Poul Ruders's *Dancer in the Dark* and Mark-Anthony Turnage's

*Blood on the Floor* and *Scherzoid*, with NorrlandsOperan; and the Australian première of the original version of Sibelius's Symphony No. 5, with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. To celebrate the status of Umeå as European Capital of Culture, he conducted NorrlandsOperan in a critically acclaimed epic outdoor production of *Elektra*, with the Spanish theatrical group La Fura dels Baus. In 2016 he conducted Mats Larsson Gothe's *The African Prophetess* with the orchestra of NorrlandsOperan and Cape Town Opera Chorus as part of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra's Composer Week.

Rumon Gamba is a sought-after guest conductor by orchestras such as the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Brussels Philharmonic, Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, Romanian Radio National Orchestra, Göteborgs Symfoniker, Kristiansand Symfoniorkester, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic, WDR Funkhausorchester Köln, and Münchner Rundfunkorchester. Most recently he has

conducted a successful Stravinsky ballet double bill for Finnish National Opera and Ballet and a production of *Die Zauberflöte* at Oulu City Theatre, for which, in 2026, he will conduct a new commission celebrating the European Year of Culture in Oulu. He has recorded exclusively for Chandos Records for over twenty years, his projects including a series devoted to orchestral works by d'Indy with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the first of which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His Chandos discography also includes, as well as more than a dozen albums with the BBC Philharmonic, recordings of works by the Swedish composer Dag Wirén, British overtures and tone poems with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Finnish overtures with the Oulu Sinfonia, and works by Malcolm Williamson, Sir Malcolm Arnold, Miklós Rózsa, and Ruth Gipps. He is about to launch a new recording project with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The Royal Academy of Music recognised his contribution to music by making Rumon Gamba an Associate, in 2002, and a Fellow, in 2017.



Courtesy of the Ruth Gipps Collection

Ruth Gipps, 1979

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Kati Leinonen

Rumon Gamba

GIPPS: ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOL. 3 – Owen/BBC Philharmonic/Gamba

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Martin Owen horn\*  
BBC Philharmonic  
Yuri Torchinsky leader  
Rumon Gamba

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GIPPS: ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOL. 3 – Owen/BBC Philharmonic/Gamba

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