

George LOUGHLIN

PIANO AND CHAMBER MUSIC

INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO FOR STRING QUARTET

SONATINA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

DIVERSION FOR PIANO TRIO

FOLK TUNE FOR ANNE

STRING QUARTET IN C

STRING TRIO

TOCCATA

Gladys Chua, piano
Darlington String Quartet

GEORGE LOUGHLIN, FORGOTTEN ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN COMPOSER

by Michael Loughlin

George Loughlin – my father – was born in Liverpool on 7 July 1914, later attending Quarry Bank High School for Boys. He was always pleased to say that it was later John Lennon's school (it is now called Calderstones School). Awarded the Liverpool Scholarship to the Royal College of Music (RCM), he moved to London in 1933. His teachers during his time there included Arthur Benjamin for piano and Gordon Jacob for composition. He completed an all-round music education at the RCM between 1933 and 1936 and was awarded the ARCM.¹ He was engaged as a solo pianist by the BBC on several occasions, and in the late 1930s he began studies on the organ at Wells Cathedral and undertook a Bachelor of Music (B.Mus.) at Durham University, his main teacher being Edward Bairstow, composer and organist at York Minster and Durham Cathedral.

Composition was a constant but intermittent thread through his life – his professional duties generally absorbed the time he might have spent writing music and his first two major works were generated by external requirements. His String Quartet in C was composed as a requirement for the B.Mus., which he was awarded in 1939. Ten years later, as part of his Doctor of Music (D.Mus.) degree, he wrote a substantial choral work, *Saint Cecilia's Day*, which has only recently come to light and now been performed in Australia. It is a 25-minute work for soprano and baritone soloists, double chorus and orchestra – and, unusually, the first fifteen are for the orchestra alone. I had no idea about the existence of either piece until I found them in the archives of Durham University Library, both in manuscript. Between the composition of these larger-scale works, he wrote a *Folk Tune for Anne* for piano, for his wife (my mother) in 1943.

¹ Associate of the Royal College of Music.

His teaching posts in the 1930s and 1940s were as Director of Music at Sidcot School, Somerset, and then at Cheltenham College, Gloucestershire. On 21 January 1944 he graduated as a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, having been awarded the Turpin Prize. In 1950, he was appointed Associate Professor of Music at Toronto University, followed by the post of Lecturer in Music at Glasgow University from 1954 to 1957. His next appointment he held for 21 years: he was Ormond Professor of Music at Melbourne University from 1958 to 1979, where he became renowned for his Music Language classes. A particular distinction came in 1961 when he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal College of Music, a recognition reserved for no more than 120 living musicians.

His time for composition continued to be limited, but during these years he was able to produce a textbook, *Diatonic Harmony*,² as well as a string trio, performed at the Adelaide Festival in 1960, a toccata for piano (1964), the *Diversion* for piano trio, performed in the early 1960s, a *Recitative for Cello and Piano*, written for John Kennedy (father of Nigel) in the 1970s, *Three Short Pieces for Piano* (1978) and a Sonatina for Violin and Piano (1976). The last three of these works were recorded and broadcast by the Australia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Before the sessions for this recording by Gladys Chua and the Darlington String Quartet, most of the rest of his compositions had never been heard. *Cities of Departure*, an autobiography he completed shortly before his death – which came on 12 June 1984 – was published privately by my mother in June 1985.

George Loughlin was an all-round musician – a gifted pianist/organist, talented teacher/lecturer, conductor, composer, examiner; D.Mus. (Dunelm), MA (Melb), FRCM, FRCO, FRSA – and my dad. He was a caring, devoted father, always interested in what my brother and I were doing (or not doing!) in our lives, from our early years right through until his early death at the age of 69. He was a warm-hearted man who loved his family. There were holidays at the beach, cricket at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (he was a fan all his life), and long journeys to the UK and back by ship. He was self-effacing and never advertised his own achievements, which explains why his compositions went

² Allans Music, Melbourne, 1966.

largely unheard and unknown. He always accompanied me on the piano for violin exams, competitions and concerts. I think I took it for granted that he would do so, as well as giving me advice on interpretation. I do remember watching and admiring him as he played the piano, and when I was older, he often asked me to turn pages for him when he was on the concert platform or in the recording studio. I distinctly recall being absolutely mesmerised when he sat at the piano and played from a full orchestral score. It is a remarkable skill, but he thought nothing of it and apparently made regular use of this talent in his Music Language classes at the Faculty of Music. It was unfortunate that most of his time as professor was taken up with administration and dealing with staff issues: he should have been composing, conducting and playing the piano, even teaching, much more.

As for his compositions, his focus, as I discovered since his death, was on chamber music. Several of the works recorded here have never been published and are given their first performances in this album.

My father's largest composition, the choral *Saint Cecilia's Day*, from 1949, was written in his spare time while he was Director of Music at Cheltenham College – a demanding teaching role. Moreover, he and my mother would travel north to York or Durham, to meet his teacher, Edward Bairstow, and there would then be lessons on the organ in York Minster or Durham Cathedral. My mother told us that in mid-winter Bairstow would play the organ wearing mittens, and had a bottle of whisky or brandy next to him to help ward off the chills. This was wartime (Dad was assessed as unsuitable for military service), travel was difficult and rationing meant all kinds of sacrifices. His choral work, on successful completion, disappeared into the University archives, where the manuscript gathered dust for some seventy years. In keeping with my father's modesty, none of the family (including my mother) had any knowledge of this work, nor of his B.Mus. work, the String Quartet in C. But then my father was never one to shout from the rooftops about his considerable achievements. He was highly regarded and respected professionally, was always fair in his dealings with people and formed many friendships. He was a wonderful father with a lively sense of humour who loved his wife

and two boys unreservedly – and his considerable talent as a composer is at last apparent from the varied works recorded here.

Michael Loughlin is George Loughlin's younger son. He learned violin, and attended Melbourne Grammar School, where he was made Captain of the School in 1969, was captain of cricket, a member of the school football team, leader of the school orchestra and prefect of the chapel choir for its weekly Sunday services. After taking a B.A. at Melbourne University, followed by a teaching diploma, he began a teaching career, in government secondary schools for several years, before a ten-year stint at Methodist Ladies College in the suburbs of Melbourne as Assistant Director of Music. During all this time, he was always involved in musical activity, playing in various orchestras as a freelance violinist, singing in stage musicals and beginning to conduct orchestras and musicals such as West Side Story, Les Miserables, Miss Saigon, Chess and The Scarlet Pimpernel. A two-year graduate diploma in conducting, studying with Robert Rosen, honed his skills. He undertook further conducting study in both the Czech Republic and England during the 1990s. Back in Melbourne, he formed the Loughlin Chamber Orchestra, a semi-professional group, which presented concert series for several seasons. In 2009, with his wife, the singer Fiona Wake, he moved to Darwin, Northern Territory, where he has conducted the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, the Arafura Wind Ensemble and the Darwin Chorale. In 2018, Michael and Fiona formed Vocalective, a 30-voice chamber choir, which has become the elite choir in Darwin. It has performed major choral works by Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Handel, Mozart, Rheinberger, Schubert and, of course, the first performance of George Loughlin's Saint Cecilia's Day, all with orchestra.

GEORGE LOUGHLIN'S CHAMBER MUSIC

by Sally Boud

This album presents all of George Loughlin's known chamber music, with the exception of a *Recitative for Cello and Piano* dating from the 1970s, which has been recorded for future release. The five works presented here – two written in England and three in Australia – show the evolution of his music language from an early fondness for English pastoralism to a mild modernism owing more to European models.

String Quartet in C (1939)

The String Quartet in C, composed in 1939, was the examination piece with which Loughlin earned his degree from Durham University. As George's son Michael explains above, he found the manuscript in the archives of Durham University library, where it had lain forgotten for more than 70 years.

The Quartet is an accomplished and confident work that shows that the young composer had learned well from his studies with Gordon Jacob at the Royal College of Music. Jacob's music was often praised for its clarity of structure and for its sensitivity to the qualities and capabilities of each instrument – qualities that also feature in this quartet and, indeed, in Loughlin's compositions throughout his career.

This quartet displays an unmistakably English character which can be heard from the outset in the noble and upright principal theme of the first movement, *Allegro con brio* [12]. The *Presto* second movement [13] is a fleetfooted scherzo, where the theme is tossed between instruments, before a middle section featuring a robust folk-like theme accompanied by an earthy drone. The richly harmonised first section of the lyrical third movement, *Andante con moto* [14], gives way to a middle section accompanied by swinging syncopations, in which all four instruments take a more

soloistic role, before the opening theme returns in the cello. The finale, marked *Allegro molto e giocoso* [15], opens with the quartet in good-humoured conversation. This alternates with a broad and lyrical folksong-like theme which appears in a final glorious version before the opening music returns to bring the work to a spirited close.

Introduction and Allegro for string quartet (1953)

The *Introduction and Allegro* for string quartet from 1953 opens [1] with a tender and lyrical theme in the violin, in which it is hard not to hear the influence of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. The whole introduction maintains this pastoral mood, with modal melodies coloured by harmonies tinged with chromaticism.

The Introduction is followed by a rollicking *Allegro* [2]. The four instruments keep up a lively dialogue, passing motifs between one another, following one another in canon and often working in opposing pairs. Contrast is provided by syncopated passages in close harmony and rhythmic unison, a texture used to sombre effect by Vaughan Williams in his String Quartet No. 2 (1944). In Loughlin's work its character is more of uneasy tenderness.

String Trio (1957)

The String Trio of 1957 received several performances: in Melbourne for the Camerata Society and during the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1960; the performers on both occasions were Sybil Copeland, John Glickman and Henry Wenig. These players and other Melbourne musicians of the time championed new music, and the enthusiasm of such accomplished and sympathetic performers contributed to a flourishing of new compositions for chamber ensemble. Those concerts also included works by other eminent Australian composers, among them George Dreyfus, Meta Overman, Margaret Sutherland and Felix Werder.

In his review of the Melbourne performance, the composer Dorian Le Gallienne described the Trio as 'an impressive work, elaborate yet lucid in texture, the outer movements distinguished by a vital rhythmic drive and the central slow movement

by considerable eloquence.¹ John Horner of *The Adelaide Advertiser* wrote rather patronisingly that ‘the Professor’ in this work succeeded in being ‘neither stuffily academic nor preciously arty-arty’² – perhaps a predictable response in the Australia of those days.

In this work Loughlin displays a wonderful understanding of string-writing. The music, though often technically challenging, both individually and for the ensemble, is always playable, even in the final movement, a headlong, virtuosic Tarantella [18] featuring nearly constant triplets and extended unison passages. His characteristic clarity of texture is also evident in this work, strikingly so in the *Allegro con brio* opening movement [16], where he contrasts busy contrapuntal writing with more static block-chords in rhythmic unison to create moments of stillness or drama. The central slow movement, *Andante con moto* [17], is reminiscent of Bartók in the searching, expressive intervals of its melodies, and sees Loughlin exploring a wide range of instrumental colour in the middle section with scurrying tremolos, harmonics and *sul pont.* effects.

***Diversion* (early 1960s)**

The *Diversion* for piano trio [3] was written in the early 1960s and dedicated to the Melbourne Trio. It is a short piece, contemplative in mood in the outer sections with a more agitated middle section. The main theme, first heard in the cello and echoed in the violin, is derived from a tone-row, although the work is by no means strictly serial, and the tone-row itself has a decidedly lyrical emphasis.

***Sonatina for Violin and Piano* (1976)**

Its reductive title notwithstanding, the *Sonatina for Violin and Piano* (1976) is a substantial work, in which the first two short movements seem almost like preludes to the long and inventive Theme and Variations.

The *Allegro molto* first movement [5] sees the instruments in a dialogue which is alternately playful and abrupt, but always shows Loughlin’s characteristic sensitivity to

¹ ‘Chamber Music by Local Composers’, *The Age*, Melbourne, 1960 (precise date unknown).

² ‘Australian Music Pleases’, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 25 March 1960.

the expressive potential of melodic intervals. The second movement [6] bears the title 'Antiphon', a term used in church music to describe a short chant sung as a refrain. This ancestry is evident in the modal flavour of the opening piano motif, followed by block chords where their parallel movement gives them a solemn, archaic quality. The violin entry, marked *dolce*, introduces a more personal, human voice. After a more dynamic middle section, a violin cadenza leads back to the mood of the opening, and the violin completes the refrain alone.

The Theme and Variations is the most substantial movement, in which Loughlin takes his theme, first stated in the piano left hand [7], through a myriad of different guises. The first variation ('Ostinato') [8] is played *pianissimo* throughout. The $\frac{5}{8}$ metre and the hesitant rhythm in the piano gives the music a kind of awkward elegance, over which the violin plays the theme. The second variation ('Bagatelle') [9] is a bagatelle only in length – it is a fierce little character piece, marked *Molto allegro*, in which the theme is interrupted by jabbing accents. The solemn third variation ('Cortege') [10] begins with a plaintive solo violin. The following processional is one of hesitant steps in the piano, over which the violin sings an increasingly passionate lament, only to finish alone, as if finding no consolation. In the final variation, 'Carillon' [11], the theme is hidden in rippling semiquavers. Bell-like chords in the piano add to the carillon effect. After a final cascade of semiquavers, the work ends on an emphatic C major chord.

Sally Boud is the violist of the Darlington String Quartet.

GEORGE LOUGHLIN'S PIANO MUSIC

by Gladys Chua

As with George Loughlin's chamber music, the progression of his compositional style through time can be heard in his piano music – even though there would seem to be only three works, the two heard here and a suite of *Three Short Piano Pieces* probably from the late 1960s (they were published in 1975) and, like the *Recitative* for cello and piano, also recorded for later release. The title of the *Folk Tune for Anne* proclaims its stylistic allegiance openly enough, and, indeed, Vaughan Williams can be heard over Loughlin's shoulder. The harmonic language of the two later piano works stands in stark contrast: it is far from diatonically tonal, and takes a rather Prokofievan approach to the keyboard, though its free dissonances go well beyond anything found in Prokofiev.

***Folk Tune for Anne* (1943)**

Loughlin's *Folk Tune* [4] was written in Cheltenham, in 1943, for his wife-to-be, two months before their wedding. This charming and simple piece in ternary form exudes gentleness. In spite of some modal shifts in the harmonies, there is never a hint of uncertainty or darkness. The middle section (although marked *Un poco più mosso*) is still unhurried; brief diversions and sweeping arpeggios in the left hand in more distant keys from the original tonal centre of G major provide harmonic richness and nostalgia. A return to the main theme and its sweet lilting mood suggest a deep contentment and satisfying tenderness.

Toccata for Piano (publ. 1964)

Loughlin's Toccata for piano [19] is dedicated to the English pianist Eric Harrison, a piano teacher at the Royal College of Music in London. This Toccata lives up to the expectations of the genre by exploring the entire span of the keyboard and every

dynamic range. The opening section, *Maestoso*, introduces a brief six-note motif which recurs throughout the piece; punctuating it are octaves and chords either in unison or opposing patterns, which declaim a grand statement. A quieter, more introspective interlude intones a bell-like melody over a set of chords. The second section, *Animato*, re-introduces the six-note motif in semiquavers, which is to be the main driving rhythm. A middle section uses the main motif in canonic fashion, with three distinct voices building up a contrapuntal texture. The main motif returns in octaves, before the music explodes once more, traversing the range of the piano to an abrupt octave and chordal finish – a D major chord, the only non-chromatic harmony in this entire piece.

The pianist **Gladys Chua** studied music and economics, undertaking her training at the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM). She has performed in projects with the West Australian, Melbourne and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, and at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (Townsville), Perth International Arts Festival, Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, Blackwood River Chamber Festival and Synaesthesia at the Museum of Old and New Art (Hobart). She co-curated 'A Single Day' at the 2017 Fremantle Festival, has been nominated for a Freedman Fellowship and toured with Ensemble Peregrine as an ANAM Artist across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. She has recently performed chamber-music recitals for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO), Melbourne Digital Concert Hall and Musica Viva.



As an educator, she has tutored at the Southern Cross Soloists Winter Music School in Rockhampton in Central Queensland and the Tutti World Youth Music Festival in Beijing. She currently is the Accompanist at Penrhos College in Perth, Western Australia, Associate Lecturer and Répétiteur at the Conservatorium of Music of the University of Western Australia and Répétiteur for the WASO Chorus. Additionally, she maintains freelance activities in performing, teaching and coaching, and as a collaborator across an adventurous range of repertoire.



The name of the **Darlington String Quartet** – Semra Lee, first violin; Zak Rowntree, second violin; Sally Boud, viola; Jonathan Tooby, cello – came about through its association with the highly successful Darlington Chamber Music Series, which celebrated its twentieth year in 2023. Darlington is a small village in the Perth Hills in Western Australia known for its artists, writers and musicians. Having played together for decades, the members of the Darlington String Quartet officially formed the ensemble in 2016, uniting their passion for classical repertoire with strong friendship. The Quartet frequently plays to sold-out audiences and has firmly cemented its place in the classical-music landscape of Western Australia. As well as performing much of the standard quartet repertoire, the Quartet musicians are also strong advocates for new music

and have close associations with a number of West Australian composers. They commissioned James Ledger's Third String Quartet, *Menace and Appeal*, in 2018 and the string trio *Classic Album Covers*, in 2020, premiering them in 2018 and 2022 respectively, and recording both for ABC Classic in 2022. They also recorded *Bell Birds Suite* by Emma Jayakumar in 2020, commissioned by ABC Classic as part of the Fresh Start Fund and featuring on the soundtrack to the film *Breath*, based on Tim Winton's novel. In 2021 they performed at the Perth Concert Hall for Musica Viva with pianist Graeme Gilling, and again during the 2022 Perth Festival with guitarist Jonathan Paget. All the members are highly accomplished musicians with extensive performance histories across all aspects of classical music—as soloists, chamber musicians, orchestral section principals and mentors. The ensemble has strong community ties, having worked with Churchlands Senior High School in mentoring and performance capacities and touring to the south-west of Western Australia and to Darwin in the north to work alongside local performers and students. In 2022, the Darlington Quartet was appointed Quartet in Residence at the Western Australia Academy of the Performing Arts and its members are joint heads of the string department.



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