

Arnold Serenade for Small Orchestra

MALCOLM ARNOLD b.1921 Serenade for Small Orchestra Op. 26

1. Allegretto

2. Andante con moto

3. Allegro vivace

Arnold's reputation has frequently suffered in the past from being judged on the strength of a few much-played popular works, and it is easy to forget that during the fifties he was often bracketed with such figures as Benjamin Britten and William Walton as one of the country's foremost composers.

An early enthusiasm for jazz, particularly the music of Louis Armstrong, led Arnold to take up the trumpet and eventually to the London Philharmonic Orchestra in which he played for many years, acquiring a solid grounding in orchestral technique as well as working under some of the finest conductors of the day. His formal training in composition was attained under Gordon Jacob at the Royal College of Music.

The serenade is a relatively early work, in which each of the three short movements quickly establishes and sustains its own mood. The second is a simple song like piece with few complexities, whilst the first is characterized by two Arnold trademarks; a pervasive melodic freedom coupled with little regard for the niceties of strict sonata form.

In the finale the seventh chords of the brass's preliminary call to action foreshadow the conflict that is to follow when G major themes are questioned by persistent F sharp minor harmonies.

Typically, Arnold saves one powerful theme, for solo trumpet, until late in the movement.

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