



Percy Hilder Miles

Chamber Music Volume 1

CELLO SONATA IN C • VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2 IN G
PIANO TRIO IN B MINOR



ENSEMBLE KOPERNIKUS

Kasia Zimińska | Alice Purton | Ian Tindale

Sonata in C for Pianoforte and Violoncello 1916

Alice Purton: Cello, Ian Tindale: Piano

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | 1st mvt. Allegro | 7:07 |
| 2 | 2nd mvt. Adagio | 6:31 |
| 3 | 3rd mvt. Allegro molto | 6:40 |

Sonata for Pianoforte and Violin No. 2 in G 1894

Kasia Zimińska: Violin, Ian Tindale: Piano

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------|
| 4 | 1st mvt. Allegro | 9:04 |
| 5 | 2nd mvt. Intermezzo – Allegretto | 4:06 |
| 6 | 3rd mvt. Moderato affettuoso | 8:21 |

Trio for Pianoforte, Violin and Cello in B minor 1901

Kasia Zimińska: Violin, Alice Purton: Cello, Ian Tindale: Piano

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 7 | 1st mvt. Energico | 9:15 |
| 8 | 2nd mvt. Slowly and solemnly | 7:24 |
| 9 | 3rd mvt. Fast | 4:01 |
| 10 | 4th mvt. Non troppo allegro | 8:00 |

Total Playing Time: 70:45

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Percy Hilder Miles

Chamber Music Volume 1

ENSEMBLE KOPERNIKUS

Kasia Zimińska **VIOLIN**

Alice Purton **CELLO**

Ian Tindale **PIANO**

Cover and this page: Erith riverside

Percy Hilder Miles was born in Crayford, Kent in July 1878. His father was a successful building contractor and his mother came from a musical family of local bakers. He showed astonishing musical prowess as a young boy, learning the violin from the age of 6 and composing violin pieces from the age of 8, including (rather precociously at 9 years old) an instruction book for the violin. At 13 Percy performed Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* at the St James's Hall, Piccadilly, with the Royal Academy of Music Orchestra under their director, Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Two years later Percy entered the RAM studying violin with Hans Wessely and composition with Walter Battison Haynes.

That the name of Percy Miles is known at all is thanks to a footnote in the autobiography of the great viola virtuoso Lionel Tertis. Viola players across the globe owe Percy a huge debt of thanks, for in 1895, Tertis, then a fellow violin student at the RAM, was convinced by Percy to take up the viola in order for them to play string quartets. Two weeks later they performed to Mackenzie who encouraged Tertis to "stick at it". He achieved legendary status on the viola, commissioning more solo works for that instrument than anybody previously.

Percy succeeded in winning many prizes at the RAM, both for composition and violin playing, including the Sauret Prize, the Lucas Prize, the Silver Medal from the Worshipful Company of Musicians and finally, in 1899, the Mendelssohn Scholarship, one of the highest musical honours, enabling 3 years of musical study abroad.

Upon his return in 1903, he was made a full Professor of Harmony and Counterpoint at the RAM and one of his students was Rebecca Clarke. He had befriended the Clarke family some years before and would travel from his home in Erith, Kent to theirs in Harrow for musical soirées, as Clarke's parents and siblings were all keen amateur musicians.

Two years later, Percy suddenly proposed marriage to Rebecca, (over rhubarb and custard in a Baker Street café). Being only 17 she was somewhat taken aback and later told her mother. Unfortunately, her fearsome father withdrew her immediately from the RAM. She went on to study at the RCM with Charles Stanford, who persuaded her to take up the viola. As far as we know, they never saw each other again.

Percy continued to teach harmony and counterpoint, composing all the while, mainly chamber music and songs to be performed at home in Erith with his parents and brothers, also putting on concerts in the Erith Public Hall. These concerts included some of his own works, notably piano quartets and quintets.

In 1906, he was recommended by his old violin teacher Wessely to become an examiner for the Associated Board, travelling not only nationally, but all across the Empire to examine violinists. This included long tours abroad of up to nine months, visiting Australia no fewer than six times from 1906-15.

One casualty of these long trips was his *Cello Concerto* of 1908, which was to have been performed at the Proms by Henry Wood, with Herbert Withers as soloist. Percy finished the work and played it through on the piano with Withers who "raved about it". Sadly, Percy left for Australia in May 1908 and couldn't finish the orchestral parts in time for the September performance. Withers performed the *Dvorak Concerto* instead.



Percy Hilder Miles, aged 6

The financial recompense for examining abroad was, however, quite substantial and in 1909 Percy was able to purchase a grand piano and a Stradivarius violin, known as the *General Kyd*. In 1912, after the death of his father and prior to another trip to Australia, Percy made his Will in which he bequeathed the violin to Rebecca Clarke.

Although aged 36 at the outbreak of World War 1, Percy was keen to enlist. Indeed, despite his age he was called-up several times and presented himself at Woolwich. However he failed the medical examination on each occasion, either because of his eyesight or weakness of the lungs.

He was reluctant to have his works published although a handful were. His biggest success came in 1920 when his *String Sextet*, (alongside works by Dyson, Holst and Stanford) was selected from 64 entries for the Carnegie Collection of British Music award, the prize being publication of the score by Stainer & Bell.

In 1922 Miles went blind in one eye and also caught pneumonia which took his life on the 18th of April that year. Fortunately Percy kept an assiduous catalogue, so we know that he wrote over 160 works, (mainly chamber music and songs), most of which his mother sent to his brothers in Canada after his death. Some are now deemed lost but there are over 100 manuscripts still with relatives in Canada and around 40 survive in the RAM Archive. He never married and lies buried with his parents in Brook Street Cemetery, Erith. His obituary in *The Strad* magazine praised the “divine harmonies” he produced from his violin and stated that he associated with such notable musicians as Sir John Stainer, Sir Arthur Sullivan and Sir Henry Wood.

CELLO SONATA IN C (1914-1916)

i Allegro • ii Adagio-Vivo-Adagio-Vivo-Adagio • iii Allegro molto

Percy's youngest brother, (William) Maurice Miles, (1883-1958) studied cello and composition at the RAM from 1899-1903 and was a direct contemporary there of Arnold Bax. He emigrated to Canada in 1905 and whilst earning a living playing in various theatres, he also composed. In 1914 he sent Percy a copy of his own *Cello Sonata*. Percy was very forthright in his criticism of his brother's compositions and Maurice's sonata was no exception – “It all sounds so self-satisfying and smug...” he wrote in a letter in November 1914. Percy himself had composed a sonata for cello in his student years at the RAM in 1894, but later felt that although it wasn't bad for somebody aged 15 and a half, it was all “Mendelssohn and water...” Maurice may have inadvertently kick-started Percy to prove he could do better as that month – on November 11th 1914 – he began work on the *Sonata in C*. Usually Percy wrote quickly but it took him a while to finish, not being completed until October 12th 1916. The delay would have been partially caused by having had 9 months examining in Australia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1915. Percy thought highly of it, saying: “The most closely-knit and “classical” thing I have ever written is the *Cello Sonata* (in C), and I doubt whether I shall ever beat it in that respect”. The piece is constructed in Sonata Form and despite being composed during the horrors of the First World War, it is remarkably serene, nowhere more so than at the gentle opening and closing of the first movement, although passions do stir to an almost Rachmaninov-like level. The second movement is a series of contrasting slow and fast sections, and the Finale a fast movement alternating between 4 and 6 time. In this last movement he established a theory that it was possible to establish a tonic by

means of just using the nearly-related keys without actually touching the tonic itself. It is possible to hear the ghosts of Percy's early influences – Brahms, Dvorak and Grieg – but he had found a more “English” voice by 1916, perhaps more akin to Elgar who he deeply admired. Certainly this work smacks of the fresh air and very long walks he used to take in the Kent countryside with his dog, sometimes covering up to 30 miles in a day.



Percy (left) aged around 28 in the garden at Erith with his father, mother, Donny the dog and niece Vera

VIOLIN SONATA IN G (1894)

i Allegro • ii Intermezzo-Allegretto • iii Moderato affettuoso

As a very accomplished violinist it is little wonder that Percy produced no fewer than four violin sonatas – two in 1894, one in 1910 and another in 1918. 1894 – his second year as a student at the RAM – was Percy's most productive year, with a total of 18 works. Whether they were as a result of composition lessons or for his personal pleasure is difficult to determine but many of them are dedicated to friends of his and the *G major Sonata* is dedicated to one Bernard C Flanders, a piano student at the RAM. Composed in strict Sonata Form, it begins with a graceful Allegro movement in triple time with a theme belying his debt to Schumann. Indeed his influence (together with that of Brahms) is evident throughout this work, altogether not surprising, given his tender age of 16. The rather nostalgic theme develops out of a falling four-note cell heard at the outset leading to a second subject which resembles a lullaby. Both of these subjects are put through the mill during the Development section and the first subject opening returns, ending the movement as serenely as it began. The second is a graceful Intermezzo with a stirring central section which melts back into the first subject. The Finale begins with a searching but introspective theme, reminiscent of Grieg – another great influence on the young Miles – which develops into a more confident melody. A free-sounding bridge passage takes us back to the first subject and into the Development section. The piece ends with a rather grand peroration of the opening statement with the violin playing in octaves, one of Percy's favourite devices.

PIANO TRIO IN B MINOR (1901)

i Energico • ii Slowly and Solemnly • iii Fast • iv Non troppo Allegro

The Miles household was a very musical one; his mother played the piano, his two younger brothers the viola and cello and his uncle “Willie” the violin. Thus chamber music options were plentiful and Percy wrote much of it with the family in mind. Indeed both his own and his brother Maurice’s compositions would often be tried out at home before anywhere else. In 1899, Percy was awarded the Mendelssohn Scholarship – a Scholarship which still exists, enabling the winner to spend 3 years studying abroad with various masters of the day. Percy began his studies in Vienna, then Berlin, Milan, Paris and Karlsruhe. Unfortunately we have no idea with whom he studied over the 3 years though a letter of introduction exists from Alexander Mackenzie to Hans Richter in September 1899 – then conductor of the Hallé Orchestra – who resided in Vienna, asking if he would introduce Percy to appropriate people. From October 1901 Percy spent a few months in Milan where he composed this *Piano Trio* (his sixth and final work in this medium). It begins with a passionate, stormy opening first movement which contrasts with a haunting *sotto voce* slow movement in the Dorian mode, composed on the white keys of the piano. The two string instruments play entirely in octaves throughout (save for one bar), creating a contemplative sound-world. The third movement is a fast-moving Scherzo and the gentle Finale sees a return to the opening theme of the first movement, transformed “*sotto voce*”, before ending serenely in B major.

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Alice Purton

Alice Purton is a London-based cellist, specialising in chamber music. Alongside her work with Ensemble Kopernikus, Alice performs regularly with Distractfold and Ensemble Plus Minus – both groups renowned for their performances of experimental electronic, acoustic and hybrid contemporary repertoire. With her groups Alice has performed at festivals and given broadcasts nationally and internationally, and recorded projects released on labels including Kairos, Another Timbre, All That Dust and NMC. Alice also records regularly for film and television, collaborating with composers and recording in studios including Abbey Road, Air Lyndhurst, Maida Vale and Air-Edel.

Alice is a dedicated teacher, with a basis in Kodaly method; she works with individuals and groups teaching instrumental performance, musicianship and composition from beginner to degree level. She holds regular workshops and residencies at universities both in the UK and abroad, at institutions including Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, McGill, Oxford, Edinburgh, Huddersfield and Manchester Universities; the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Northern College of Music.

Ian Tindale

Ian Tindale has performed across London, the UK and Europe. Following studies at Selwyn College, Cambridge and the Royal College of Music, London, Ian was awarded the Pianist's Prize in the Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation Song Competition in 2017 and he has been the recipient of accompaniment prizes at the Kathleen Ferrier Awards, the Royal Overseas League Music Competition and the Gerald Moore Award. Ian is a Britten Pears Young Artist and a Samling Artist.

Concert highlights have included a recital in the Leeds Lieder Festival with tenor Nick Pritchard to give the world premiere performance of Daniel Kidane's *Songs of Illumination* and performances with regular duo partner and soprano Harriet Burns, the Albion Quartet and flautist Adam Walker at the Ryedale Festival. Other highlights include performances at the Wigmore Hall, Sage Gateshead and Snape Maltings Concert Hall with artists such as Soraya Mafi and BBC New Generation Artist James Newby, at festivals including the Oxford Lieder Festival, the Buxton Festival, and the Petworth Festival.

In the 2018-19 season Ian performed with baritone and ECHO Rising Star Josep-Ramon Olivé in recitals across Europe including at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the Palau de la Música in Barcelona, as well as in Luxembourg, Cologne and Stockholm. Over the past year he has been performing and recording for English Touring Opera as part of their 'Lyric Solitude' programme of Britten, Tippett and Shostakovich songs, as well as appearing again at the Leeds Lieder Festival with tenor Laurence Kilsby and a sequence of song recitals recorded with singers including Robin Tritschler and Julien van Mellaerts.

Kasia Zimińska

Kasia Zimińska is a versatile violinist and violist committed to exploring repertoire ranging from early to contemporary experimental music. She completed her Bachelor studies with Stephanie Gonley and Krzysztof Chorzelski at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London; she received guidance from celebrated pedagogues Pavel Vernikov and Svetlana Makarova at the Accademia Santa Cecilia, Bergamo and has recently completed her Masters degree at the Royal College of Music, London with Maciej Rakowski. Kasia has performed in a series of masterclasses for the legendary violinist Maxim Vengerov. Her recent solo highlights include Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* as soloist with the Silk Street Sinfonia and Shostakovich's *Viola Sonata* at the Milton Court Concert Hall. Kasia is passionate about improvisation in historical performance and likes to write her own concerto cadenzas. She has received mentoring from experts in early music and improvisation such as Rachel Podger and David Dolan and is currently studying baroque violin with Lucy Russell. As founding member of the Chagall Piano Quartet and Salomé Quartet she has been successful in competitions such as the St Martin-in-the-Fields Competition (London), the Johannes Brahms Competition (Gdańsk), the RCM String Quartet Competition (London) and has received awards such as the Ivan Sutton Chamber Music Prize, the Helen Just & Susan Connell Prize and the Sacconi Quartet Prize. Kasia's debut in the iconic Kammer Klang new music series led to her collaboration with acclaimed contemporary ensembles such as Distractfold Ensemble and Plus-Minus Ensemble. Kasia has performed in concert halls in Europe and Asia and her performances have been broadcast on television and radio including BBC Radio 3, WQXR New York, and Classical Planet.

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Ian Tindale and Alice Purton



Philip Hall (left) with Ian Tindale and Alice Purton



Ensemble Kopernikus (left) with Mike Purton and Tony Faulkner (right)

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MPR111 Percy Hilder Miles Chamber Music

Ensemble Kopernikus: Kasia Zimiriska: Violin, Alice Purton: Cello, Ian Tindale: Piano

Venue: Henry Wood Hall, London, England

Dates: 12/02/21 (Tracks 1-3) 18/05/21 (Tracks 4-6) 27/05/21 (Tracks 7-10)

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Erith Yacht Club, photo courtesy of Brad Jones