

Percy Hilder Miles



Chamber Music Volume 2

PIANO SONATA

SECHS ALBUMBLÄTTER FOR SOLO PIANO

SUNSHINE OVER THE AVON FOR SOLO PIANO

GRAND SOLO FOR VIOLA

CLARINET QUINTET IN E FLAT

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS



Ian Tindale | John Bradbury | Peter Mallinson | The Cirrus String Quartet

Piano Sonata*

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 1 | 1st movement: Allegro | 4:47 |
| 2 | 2nd movement: Andantino | 4:02 |
| 3 | 3rd movement: Molto Allegro | 8:26 |

Sechs Albumblätter for solo Piano*

- | | | |
|---|----------------|------|
| 4 | i. Elegie | 1:40 |
| 5 | ii. Lied | 1:40 |
| 6 | iii. Humoreske | 0:49 |
| 7 | iv. Reverie | 2:34 |
| 8 | v. Capriccio | 1:13 |
| 9 | vi. Duo | 3:12 |

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 10 | Sunshine over the Avon for solo Piano* | 1:16 |
|----|---|------|

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 11 | Grand Solo for Viola* | 5:16 |
|----|------------------------------|------|

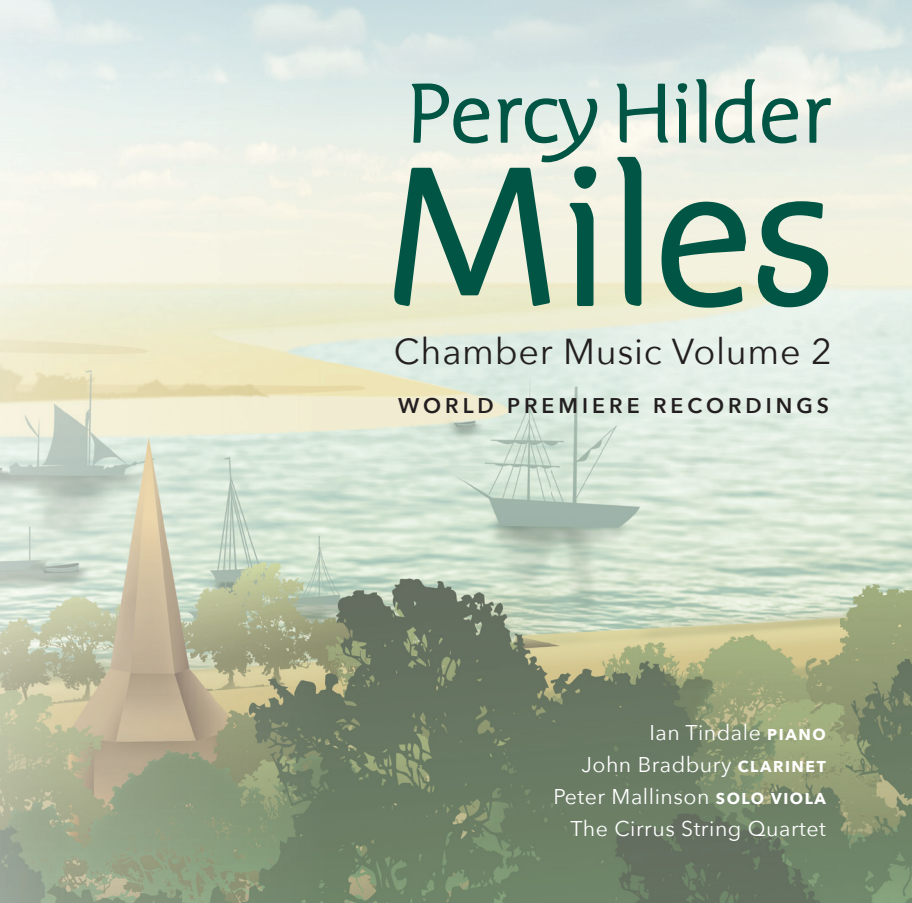
Clarinet Quintet in E flat**

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|----|-------------------------------|---------|------|
| 12 | 1st movement | ♩ = 90 | 9:05 |
| 13 | 2nd movement: Molto legato | ♩ = 150 | 4:13 |
| 14 | 3rd movement: Molto sostenuto | ♩ = 63 | 7:05 |
| 15 | 4th movement | ♩ = 84 | 6:01 |

Total Playing Time:	61:39
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Recorded at Henry Wood Hall, London, England*

The Pamoja Hall, The Space, Sevenoaks School, Kent, England **



Percy Hilder Miles

Chamber Music Volume 2

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Ian Tindale **PIANO**

John Bradbury **CLARINET**

Peter Mallinson **SOLO VIOLA**

The Cirrus String Quartet



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 8. At 13 he 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

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“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, 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 cafe). Her fearsome father withdrew her immediately from the RAM and she later went on to study at the Royal College of Music with Charles Stanford, who persuaded her to take up the viola. As far as we know, they never saw each other again.

*Percy Miles
in his garden,
Erith c.1906*



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. This included long tours abroad of up to nine months, visiting Australia no fewer than six times from 1906-15.

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.

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 18 April of that year. Fortunately Percy kept an assiduous catalogue, so we know that he wrote over 160 works, mainly chamber music and songs, half 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.

Piano Sonata in A (1920)

i. Allegro ii. Andante iii. Molto Allegro

Percy Miles often berated his own lack of piano technique, saying that his piano teacher must have despaired at his efforts. Yet in both 1894 and 1895 he composed first movements of piano sonatas, both pieces now lost. In 1918 he proclaimed "I shall never write anything major for the piano..." Yet in April 1920 he produced a thoroughly idiomatic work in three movements, played without a break. The manuscript contains many fingerings, so we can assume that it was performed, yet we do not know for whom the piece was written.

The first movement, marked Allegro, lays out a long-breathed legato melody which immediately establishes a Romantic tone to the piece. He soon introduces a rather modal second subject which is interrupted by a spiky staccato theme, but it's not long until we are plunged back into full Romantic chordal writing. The second movement is a reflective, lyrical melody and belies a strong French influence; indeed the whole sonata is unusual in Miles's output for displaying such a strong Gallic flavour. The third movement begins in a sprightly, slightly bluesy manner before recapping themes from both first and second movements. It ends with a glorious peroration of the work's opening melody, which travels through several unrelated keys (E flat minor being notable) before satisfactorily finding its way back to the home key of A major.

Sechs Albumblätter (Six Album Leaves) for solo piano (1894)

Elegie, Lied, Humoreske, Reverie, Capriccio, Duo.

Between 1832 and 1845 Schumann composed his *Albumblätter* or *Album Leaves* which consist of twenty short contrasting piano pieces, composed from music written in his youth. Percy undoubtedly would have come across these in his piano lessons and decided to write six of his own when he was 16. Schumann's influence is strong and he even gave some of the movements titles in German.

Sunshine over the Avon (1917)

The Royal Academy of Music at the start of the 20th century was still under the charge of Sir Alexander Mackenzie who was a staunch musical conservative and rather allergic to the “modern” trends coming out of Europe. He is even said to have forbidden his students to perform chamber music by Ravel. In a letter of 1918 to his brother, Percy noted: *“Mackenzie has been lecturing at the RAM on modern tendencies in music; I looked in at the last lecture just in time to hear the concluding sentence which was: “Never forget, ladies and gentlemen, that it is your proud privilege to live in the age of the greatest musical humbug that ever existed...”*

Percy Miles was also no Modernist, indeed, in his letters he was often critical of Bartok, Stravinsky and especially Schönberg and his 12-tone compositions. As if to prove how easy he thought such composing was, he sat down one day before dinner and composed this short parody piano piece, in Schönbergian style, giving it a somewhat ironic title.

Sunshine over de Avon

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Reserie

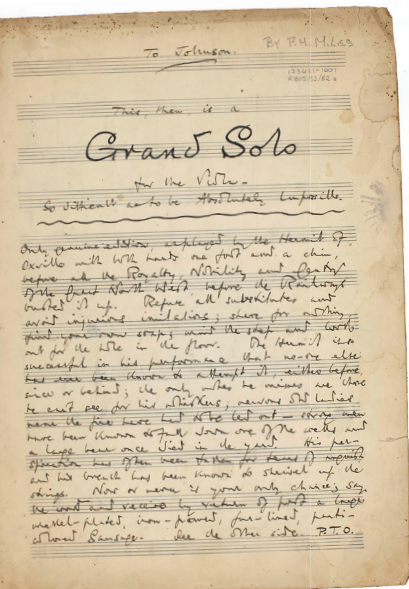
Un poco lento.

[illegible]

Grand Solo for Viola (1907)

In 1904, Percy's viola-playing brother Douglas emigrated to Canada to become a farmer. Whilst Percy did not personally rate the viola as a solo instrument (despite having encouraged the great viola virtuoso Lionel Tertis), he enjoyed composing for it in chamber repertoire. However, possibly to enable his brother to keep his hand in whilst in the Canadian wilderness of Oxville, he wrote this piece for him, dedicating it to another friend, "Johnson", who also seems to have lived in Canada. He seems to have had his tongue firmly in his cheek as he gave the score a very long and convoluted frontispiece, declaring it: "So difficult as to be absolutely impossible. Only genuine edition, as played by the Hermit of Oxville..."

The work is in fact rather straightforward and by no means impossible! It has a Ländler-like lilt and one could imagine Douglas sitting by his fire in rural Alberta playing the piece. The manuscript contains fingerings above the notes in blue pencil, made either by his brother or possibly Tertis, which belies a use of "*portamento*," popular at the time.



Clarinet Quintet in E flat (1903/4)

1st movement:	♩ = 90
2nd movement: Molto legato	♩ = 150
3rd movement: Molto sostenuto	♩ = 63
4th movement:	♩ = 84

In November 1903, Percy put on two chamber music concerts at the Erith Public Hall. According to an advertising poster, in the first of these two concerts, they performed the Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet* with clarinetist Samuel Hartley Braithwaite. Braithwaite was born the same year as Percy's youngest brother Maurice, (1883), and indeed, like Maurice, studied at the Royal Academy with Frederick Corder who also taught his friend Arnold Bax. He in fact stayed on to become a piano professor, numbering Eric Coates among his piano students.

Although the work bears no dedication it seems highly possible that Percy knew Braithwaite and looking ahead to the concerts for the autumn, started to compose a clarinet quintet in August 1903. He didn't actually finish the piece until March 1904, possibly substituting the Mozart quintet instead for the November concert. Unlike the Clarinet Quintets of Mozart (1789), Brahms (1891) or Coleridge-Taylor (1895), Percy wrote for a B flat clarinet. Unusually, for Percy, the four movements do not contain titled tempo markings to determine the speed and style, but simply metronome markings.

The first movement is in sonata form and opens with a stately violin melody which is soon taken up by the clarinet. The second subject is a long-breathed melody on the clarinet marked *sotto voce molto espressivo*.

This is played over a throbbing cello accompaniment until the viola introduces the development section with a variation on the opening theme. The movement concludes with a gentle elongation of the second subject. The second movement opens with a fast, long-breathed rather Brahmsian melody on the clarinet. The strings usher in a jaunty motif before entering a stately slower second subject in C major which contains a Scotch-snap. A passage of running triplets passed around the ensemble brings us to a third subject marked *Sotto voce molto legato*. The first subject returns and the movement looks set to end gently, but a loud final chord shuts the door. Percy thought highly of the work, particularly the slow third movement, a set of quasi variations which he counted as one of his best and "heaviest" works. Writing to his brother Maurice from Australia in 1906 he stated (in typically elaborate fashion): *"They are not variations, or rather they just are variations - I mean they are not new things based upon the old but the same over and over again - yet different. One might call them blossom, bud, fruit or perhaps child, boy, man-something which at all events insists on their identity and points to growth. They are developments rather than variations and must be seen from that point of view."* The finale is a moderate-paced movement, starting with a genial, Sullivanesque melody *sotto voce* on the clarinet. A strong unison string theme seems to announce a departure from the genial state of affairs, but soon the calm returns. A gentle bridge passage in the remote key of B major leads to the further development of the themes. A short clarinet cadenza is echoed by the first violin and the opening returns and a triumphant unison coda closes the work.

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Cirrus String Quartet

Martin Smith | Suzanne Loze | Morgan Goff | David Burrowes

The members of the Cirrus String Quartet are all leading solo and chamber music performers, and between them, they have worked with most of the top chamber orchestras in Great Britain.

Amongst their CD recordings are music for strings and wind by Mozart, a CD of string quintets by Mozart and Schubert and Tchaikovsky's sextet 'Souvenir de Florence', the two quartets of Leoš Janáček and most recently an acclaimed recording for MPR of string quartets by Elgar's friend William Henry (Billy) Reed

Cirrus has been recorded by BBC radio, appeared on ITV, and performed at the Wigmore Hall.





PHOTO: RUTH ATKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

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, 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 including Daniel Kidane's *Songs of Illumination* (world premiere), and with regular duo partner and soprano Harriet Burns at the Oxford Lieder Festival and International Lied Festival Zeist (ILFZ). Harriet and Ian have also been awarded a number of prizes as a duo, including the Contemporary Song Prize in the International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch and the Maureen Forrester Second Prize and Prize for German Song in the Concours Musical International de Montreal.

Ian's other performances have included UK appearances at the Wigmore Hall, Sage Gateshead and Snape Maltings Concert Hall with artists such as Soraya Mafi, James Newby, and Roderick Williams. Further afield, in the 2018-19 season Ian performed with baritone and ECHO Rising Star Josep-Ramon Olivé in recitals across Europe including Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Palau de la Música in Barcelona. In the 2022-23 season Ian has performed with Harriet Burns at Lewes Festival of Song and ILFZ, at the Oxford Lieder Festival with Nick Pritchard, and at Wigmore Hall for the Ludlow English Song Festival with Ailish Tynan and Robin Tritschler. Ian has also founded his own song festival, Shipston Song, whose inaugural season with James Gilchrist, Jess Dandy and Julien van Mellaerts took place in September 2022. Ian has recently recorded works for piano and strings with Ensemble Kopernikus in the first volume in a planned series of releases of music by Percy Hilder Miles for MPR.

Peter Mallinson

Peter Mallinson enjoys both modern and period viola performance. As well as being a member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra he has played with many period ensembles including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Hanover Band, Arcangelo, and Music for a While. As a soloist Peter has given premières including the UK première performance of Sally Beamish's *That Recent Earth* for unaccompanied viola, and the world première of Robin Holloway's *Suite en Saga for solo viola* - a work he later performed at the Ravenna Music Festival in its original incidental music form. Before studying at the Royal Academy of Music with Martin Outram and Jane Rogers, Peter read Music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, where he was a Choral Scholar and holder of a University Instrumental Award.



PHOTO: MELANIE STROVER



John Bradbury

John studied Natural Sciences at St John's College, Cambridge. He was awarded a Travel Scholarship to study with Larry Combs of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, then went on to the Royal Academy of Music where he won the Hawkes Clarinet Prize and the Principal's Prize.

John held the Sub-principal chairs in the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the London Symphony Orchestra, before his invitation to become Principal Clarinet with the BBC Philharmonic. He has played Guest Principal with all the major UK orchestras as well as with John Wilson's hand-picked orchestra at the Proms.

John has given many solo performances with the BBC Philharmonic, with highlights including the Mozart, Nielsen, Stanford and MacMillan Concertos. His recordings for Chandos include the Busoni *Concertino*, Malcolm Arnold *Scherzetto* (Editor's Choice in "The Gramophone") and Ben-Haim *Pastorale variée*. His celebrated Naxos disc *The English Clarinet* remains a best-seller.

John was awarded Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music in 2018.

MPR wishes to thank Robin Braham, Phil Hall, Steve Jones, Cheryl Mayes,
William Miles and Stephen Spilker for supporting this recording

MPR116 Percy Hilder Miles Chamber Music Volume 2

Artists: Ian Tindale (Piano)*, Peter Mallinson (Solo Viola)*, John Bradbury (Clarinet), The Cirrus String Quartet -
Martin Smith and Suzanne Loze (Violins), Morgan Goff (Viola). David Burrowes (Violoncello)

Venues: Henry Wood Hall, London, England*, The Pamoja Hall, The Space, Sevenoaks School, Kent, England **

Dates: 19th May 2022* 1st June 2022**

Producer: Mike Purton. Recording Engineer: Tony Faulkner. Editing: Mike Purton

Recorded at 24/96 resolution

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Erith Causeway