

MAESTRO

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Movt.3: 2'09". Total: 10'05".

[According to Sigmund Groven this recording was "Tommy's own favourite performance". The Chandos liner notes were written by Timothy Maloney, Head of the Music Division at the National Library of Canada. In one telling sentence, Maloney identifies how Arnold creates a unique accompaniment for the soloist: "What Arnold has done here is to exploit the colour possibilities of the accompanying instruments rather than their brute

strength, thus leaving lots of sonic space around the harmonica, so that it is never in danger of being swamped by the instrumental forces arrayed behind it."]

- (c) London Sinfonietta/David Atherton on Argo ZRG 905 (coupled with concertos by Villa-Lobos and Arthur Benjamin; recorded and released in 1978, this LP record was never re-issued on CD)
Timings: Movt.1: 3.49"; Movt.2: 3.41"; Movt.3: 1.59". Total: 9'29".

[2] Searching through the BBC Genome website reveals that Tommy Reilly made several other broadcasts in the UK. These included the following:

- (a) Light Programme, BBC Concert Orchestra/Vilem Tausky, Central Hall, Chatham, 13 April 1963 (Gala Concert Hall)
(b) Radio 4, BBC Welsh Orchestra/John Carewe, Odeon Theatre, Llandudno, 2 June 1968 (broadcast on 9 November 1968)
(c) Radio 3, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ole Schmidt, 26 July 1983

2. James Hughes: playing with Arnold

Reilly, however, was not the only harmonica player to broadcast the Arnold concerto during this period. James Hughes, the Midlands-based player, did so on several occasions and with different conductors: in one memorable performance with the composer on the rostrum. [1]

In a recent letter to me Jim recalls:

"The outstanding performance for me was the one where Malcolm Arnold was the conductor. He allowed me to take a few liberties with the score where previous conductors were less lenient. It's very difficult to describe how I felt about performing this work, except to say it was both demanding and enjoyable. I will never forget the first time I rehearsed the piece: I nearly jumped out of my skin when the brass section came in at such a volume! It completely drowned the sound of the harmonica and for a while left me quite disorientated. The great thing about this concerto is its brevity: at around 10 minutes it fits beautifully into any orchestral programme.

"Looking back at my sixty-plus years as a professional musician and teacher,[2] I am delighted to have had the opportunity to perform this work. I am now retired and with failing eye-sight no longer



James Hughes

able to read books or music notation, but I have fond memories of a life in music."

[1] Performances listed on the BBC Genome website include:

- (a) Radio 4, BBC Concert Orchestra/Vilem Tausky, 21 October 1967 (Gala Concert Hall)
(b) Radio 3, BBC Concert Orchestra/Malcolm Arnold, 19 October 1971 (the second of four programmes in celebration of Arnold's fiftieth

birthday)

- (c) Radio 3, BBC Concert Orchestra/Terence Lovett, 24 February 1973 (Ernest Read Children's Concert, broadcast direct from the Royal Festival Hall, London)
(d) Radio 3, BBC Concert Orchestra/Maurice Handford, 30 November 1983

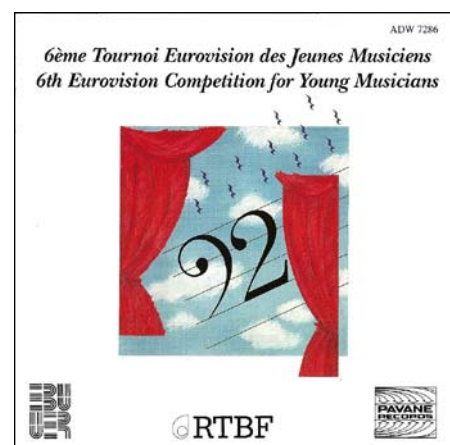
[2] A few years ago one of Jim's pupils from Solihull School in the West Midlands was the young harmonica player Philip Achille, who in 2005 had won both the National Harmonica League Player of the Year award and the World Youth Solo Harmonica Championship. Jim had also encouraged Philip to study Arnold's concerto for a concert in Birmingham: unfortunately the right opportunity never presented itself though, as Jim Hughes reminded me recently, "He would have done a great performance."

[Philip Achille also provides us with an interesting link to the subject of our next essay, Antonio Serrano. Philip was a finalist in the 2008 Eurovision Competition for Young Musicians held in Austria, as was Antonio in the 1992 event held in Belgium.]

3. Antonio Serrano: a chance meeting with Adler

Antonio Serrano was born in Spain in 1974 and began studying music at the Spanish Harmonica School at the age of six. Ten years later he began his studies with Larry Adler who, as we learn, encouraged him to hear the Malcolm Arnold concerto. Antonio went on to win medals at the first World Harmonica Championship held in Jersey in 1987 and again at the second championship in Trossingen, Germany, in 1990. We are fortunate to be able to hear his 'live'

performance of the Arnold concerto with the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Ronald Zollmann. This was recorded at the Royal Circus of Brussels in June 1992 as part of the final concert of the 6th Eurovision Competition for Young Musicians.[1] Antonio Serrano was placed second, the overall winner being Bartolmiej Niziol, a Polish violinist. Highlights of all the performances were issued on a Pavane CD ADW 7286, the Arnold concerto being short enough to



be played in its entirety.

There is another performance by Antonio Serrano which can be viewed on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qs2pP3Mksc4>.

[1] The Eurovision Competition was created in 1982 and was the result of co-operation between members of the EBU, who each selected a musician to take part: the musician had to be a solo instrumentalist born after 1 January 1973. The finalists were given the opportunity to play in a public concert with orchestra, and the entire concert was also broadcast. The inaugural competition was held in Manchester in 1982, subsequently in Geneva (1984), Copenhagen (1986), Amsterdam (1988) and Vienna (1990). The 1992 Jury President was Carlos Paiti and other members included Aldo Ciccolini and Noel Lee.

The Arnold Harmonica Concerto: an essay by Antonio Serrano

Introduction: The first time I heard this concerto was on a cassette tape lent to me by Larry Adler* on which he played works for harmonica and orchestra. For some reason, Malcolm Arnold's concerto was the track I kept playing again and again. You could say it's a miniature concerto: although it has three movements, the whole piece is only about 9 minutes long. [As is the case with so many other Arnold concertos, "less is more" – Ed.]

Here's my brief analysis of the score:

Movement 1. The concerto starts with a big suspended C chord followed by the snare drum and timpani playing four quavers which set the tempo: this rhythmic motive will be used throughout the whole movement. After four bars the main theme is presented by the solo harmonica supported by underlying tonal harmonies in a very unconventional progression [namely C9 (sus4) – E7 – C9(sus4) – F#9]. A short interlude sees the return of the main theme, leading to the second theme of the movement again presented on the harmonica. However, this second theme is more agile, indeed, more angular than the first, and it soon develops into a fast

interplay of rapid semi-quaver sextuplets between harmonica and orchestra. This material combined with various counter-melodies concludes this remarkable movement, which explores many of the harmonic and melodic possibilities of the harmonica.

Movement 2. Arnold has orchestrated the second movement with such original instrumentation that it creates a somewhat eerie atmosphere throughout, where brass, percussion and harmonica blend together to create a unique sound. The main theme is a simple melody in D minor introduced first by the harmonica in bar 5 and then played by each brass section in succession: first by the French horns, then by the trumpets, before the harmonica picks it up again, and finally the trombones play it once more. It is interesting to note that each time the main theme re-appears it is played one semitone lower.

Movement 3. The third movement has a Spanish flavour and my intuition tells me that Malcolm Arnold must have heard Larry Adler play Lecuona's *Malaguena* and that could have inspired him to write this movement in this manner: however, this is just a personal, non-scientific opinion. The construction of this movement is similar to that of the first, with rhythmic material from the orchestra introducing the main theme played by the soloist. There is not too much time for development as each contrasting theme appears successively with short virtuosic interludes between them. An exciting conclusion starts to build up from a tempo change (marked *Presto*) with an ostinato in quavers that brings back some material from the first movement leading progressively to a very lively coda.

Conclusion: In my opinion this piece is the most inspired work written for harmonica and orchestra. I've had the opportunity of playing it myself with different orchestras on several occasions and it has always been a great musical experience, especially when it comes to the second movement which is a compositional masterpiece.



Antonio Serrano

* In an article written in May 2011, Antonio Serrano recalls his first meeting with Larry Adler:

"I was only thirteen years old when I first met [him]. This was during the First World Harmonica Championship held in Jersey in 1987 ... after one of my performances as a chromatic harmonica soloist a middle-aged Latin-American woman came up to my father and me and, after introducing herself as Larry Adler's fiancée, told us that [he] had been impressed by my skill at the instrument, being so young, and that he would like to invite me to play with him at a concert in Paris. Immediately, my father said that it was a great idea and that I would be honoured to play with Larry. At the time, I didn't really know who Larry Adler was, but watching my father I could tell that something serious was going on. We went to have lunch with Larry and after a while he figured out that I didn't have a clue about who I was having lunch with! ... Looking back and thinking how fortunate I was to meet him when I was a kid, it comes to my mind that maybe music is basically about being in the right place at the right time..."

4. Robert Bonfiglio: 'The Paganini of the Harmonica'

Robert Bonfiglio was born in 1950 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After graduating from the University of Arizona with a chemistry degree, he moved to New York, where he obtained a master's degree at the Manhattan School of Music. His teachers there included John Cage,

Aaron Copland and Charles Wuorinen, who also encouraged him to take up the harmonica as a soloist. He premiered Henry Cowell's Harmonica Concerto in 1986 and recorded both the Cowell and Villa-Lobos concertos, the latter becoming his signature performance piece: a work

he has played more than 250 times with over different 70 orchestras!

Bonfiglio, however, did not abandon his first musical love, the blues, and by the latter half of the 1980s he had proven himself a virtuoso in both genres. This virtuosity in performance had earned