

# Mp3 Court Lane Music - Imogen Holst: String Chamber Music

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Beautiful pastoral music, from the eminent yet little-known British classical composer Imogen Holst. 19 MP3 Songs in this album (74:51) ! Related styles: CLASSICAL: Chamber Music, CLASSICAL: Twentieth Century People who are interested in Gustav Holst Ralph Vaughan Williams Sir William Walton should consider this download. Details: A SURVEY OF THE CHAMBER MUSIC OF IMOGEN HOLST Although Imogen Holst (1907-1984) is best remembered for her work on behalf of the music of her father, Gustav Holst, she had a remarkable career in her own right. She was the first Director of Music in the Arts Department at Dartington in the 1940s; assistant to Benjamin Britten from 1952-64; an Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival; and friend, colleague and inspirer of many outstanding musicians. But throughout her life she was a composer : a scholar in composition at the Royal College of Music, she went on to write much for amateurs and to arrange music for educational purposes. But many of her more demanding compositions in the professional field remain unpublished; presented here is a selection which covers her creative life, in recognition of and in tribute to an exceptional musician. The Phantasy Quartet which won the Cobbett Prize in 1928 is a lovely example of early twentieth century English pastoralism. The entire work is based on two motifs which occur during the first five bars, later reappearing in different guises. The opening poco adagio indulges in frequent harmonic shifts within the context of a modal glow. The second section introduces a theme based on the opening motifs but now in a more expansive framework with texture enhanced by double stopping from the second violin and viola, and underpinned by pizzicato and then cross-string arpeggios from the cello. As the music progresses, solos occur from each of the instruments in quieter, connecting passages. After much excitement and fervour, the pace and dynamic reach a final calm, and we hear comments from the first violin and the viola leading to a short Coda reminiscent once again of the opening bars. The Sonata for Violin and Cello dates from the autumn of 1930 while the composer was visiting Vienna. The first movement, allegro ritmico, concentrates largely on its opening theme of six bars, which incorporates chromatic falling thirds. A central section contains a rhythmic ostinato which adds an insistent effervescence to the mood. The second movement, adagio,

opens with a gradual build from monothematic cello to four parts, unsettled in harmony; the second section remains in three and four parts but is a little less dissonant, and has a recurring ninth which has something of Ravel. The two-part section which follows has a rocking semitonal figure, and the concluding section makes effective use of harmonics. The final movement, presto, molto leggiero is an imaginative Jig demanding a variety of effects such as glissando, and double to quadruple stopping, and towards the end there is a chord of striking Holstian chromaticism. The String Trio No 1 was written in 1944 for the Dartington Trio when they and the composer were working together there. The first movement, an andante in 5/8 might be viewed as a continually developing structure in four sections. The opening bars are significant both melodically and harmonically for their alternating and menacing minor seconds and tritones. A few bars later a viola ostinato is introduced and along with it a bitonal element the idea of two instruments working together against a third (the viola here) continues for much of the movement. The second movement, presto, continues in similar harmonic flavour with a muted flurry of musical activity, sustaining a delicacy of touch throughout. The music races on with two climactic points before dying away, and the rising minor second E to F in the cello towards the conclusion has now become a familiar hallmark. The third movement, un poco lento, is an accompanied soliloquy for the cello, with two expanded themes each heard just once the polarity of E major and C major has become another familiar trait in IHS writing by this stage. The final movement, andante, opens with a canon between violin and cello imitated more loosely by the viola. It has a mesmerising quality with a free development of the canon leading eventually to the two forces of the C and E triads once again in contention. E is victorious. Imogen Holst had less time for composition after 1952 when she went to Aldeburgh to work for Britten, but she returned to it with a number of original works in the 1960s, including *The Fall of the Leaf*, three short studies for solo cello on a sixteenth century tune from the Fitzwilliam Virginal book. The theme as heard at the outset has a guitar like accompaniment, and she had Julian Bream in mind for sound. The three studies which follow were described as follows by the Dedicatée, Pamela Hind O'Malley: The studies can be seen to represent three aspects of Autumn. 1) Vivace the rain, including that isolated drop that falls from a tree when you thought the shower was over. 2) Poco Adagio the intense colouring of the leaves. 3) Presto the scuttering of leaves in a high wind. Steven Isserlis said of this work: I am really fond of the piece its quiet poetry is magical. A little later on in the same decade comes her Duo for Viola and Piano written in 1968. The first movement, allegro molto, opens with an

urgency which is sustained within a three part texture throughout its brief two minutes. The second movement, a ponderous fantasy, is based on C as a tonal centre (common to her style by this time), where the piano focuses on C whilst the viola avoids it until the peaceful conclusion. The harmony is unsettled, but coloured by the exclusive use of a six-note scale. The third movement, vivace, with its twelve-note opening piano solo, makes playful use of seconds and fourths, and the composer continues to employ twelve-note technique to an extent. The viola enters with pizzicato quavers, taking a while before joining the piano in its more spiky rhythms, and each instrument then imitates the other with melodic fragments leading more and more towards the descending twelve-note scale which closes the work. Imogen Holst herself wrote about the String Quintet of 1982 as follows: The Prelude represents the birth of the river; clouds and mists bring moisture to the earth and hidden springs overflow, spreading into pools that reflect the sky. In the Scherzo that follows, the Thames has become a stream. It is one of Cricklades several streams, and it flows through North Meadow where the fritillaries grow. Here the muted strings move swiftly, suggesting the sudden glitter of sunlight on the water and the sudden splashes of rain. In the third movement the music has left the countryside. The Theme of the ensuing variations is borrowed from the last entry in my Fathers notebook; the fragmentary tune is dated January 26th, which was four months before his death. Most of his working life was spent in London near the Thames, and he was very much aware of the river in the background, going on its way largely unnoticed and apparently quite unconcerned. The first four variations of his theme suggest his varying moods while walking to work, either slowly along the towpath at Hammersmith or hurriedly across the bridge at Waterloo. In Variation 5 the solo instruments each offer an individual comment before joining together again for the brief coda which is the end of the journey. Copyright Christopher Tinker

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