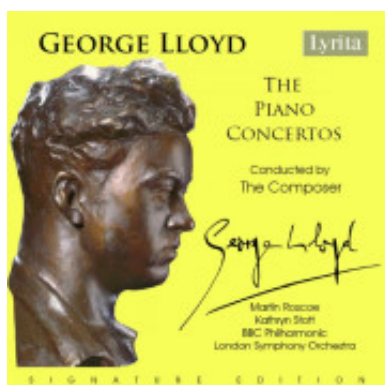


George Lloyd: The Piano Concertos



Catalogue Number: SRCD2421

Short Description

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The effort of writing his Seventh Symphony, with its predominantly tragic tone, at the end of the 1950s had taken a heavy toll on the composer's mental health and by the start of the following decade he was in a very negative frame of mind. Not for the first time in his life, the act of composing provided the key to alleviating the situation, as he explained: '... around the very early sixties, a few darker thoughts – tragic thoughts – began haunting me. With them musical ideas began to formulate and I began to wonder if this might be the time for that piano concerto'.

If the first three piano concertos have the heft and communicative power of Lloyd's larger middle-period symphonies, the Fourth has a close affinity to the Ninth Symphony, which was completed the previous year. Both pieces exhibit an impish sense of fun, tempered by profound feelings of yearning and regret. George Lloyd approached the piano concerto form with imagination and individuality. His idiomatic solo writing avoids shallow virtuosity and empty rhetoric and there are no mighty tussles between piano and orchestral forces encountered in archetypal large-scale concertante scores. Instead, the composer offers a series of deeply personal attempts to reconcile time-honoured elements of display with symphonic preoccupations of long-range tonality, rhythmic energy and melodic growth. In sum, Lloyd's four piano concertos constitute a compelling and distinctive branch of his creative legacy. © Paul Conway

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Description

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"George Lloyd cannot be accused of a lack of ideas and musical individuality. His four piano concertos, which were recorded over 30 years ago are bursting with good ideas... The interpretations are thoroughly committed. Martin Roscoe and Kathryn Scott prove to be wonderful storytellers at the piano, repeatedly creating great moods and revealing a wide repertoire of stylistic expression – from romantic virtuosity and impressionistic intimacy to exuberant jazz elements. The orchestras are also highly committed, shining with delicate string sounds, solemn tutti and dynamic rhythms." pizzicato [\[read complete review\]](#)

"After the first two symphonic boxes, the 8 CDs of which restored George Lloyd's legacy in handy form, the next release is a twofer devoted to the four piano concertos. The cycle occupied him from 1963 to 1970, begun shortly after Symphony No.8 had been written and completed very soon before he composed Symphony No.9.

Lloyd had been a violinist in his youth and was only really reconciled to the validity of the piano concerto through 'Scapegoat' but once it had been written he was soon at work on Piano Concerto 2, which followed two years later. It, too, is sectional and cast in a single movement, and was premiered by Martin Roscoe in 1984. Whether its original impetus was the 'Hitler Jig' – the dance Hitler was alleged to have done when he received the news of the fall of France – the music is surprisingly sinister with an insidious, scampering quality from the piano allied to athletic demands. It has a helter-skelter quality that conveys a decidedly uneasy mood. Lloyd's use of the percussion was, symphonically, always inventive and colourful and so it proves in the second panel of this concerto. Its March themes are distinctive – they never remind one of, say, Prokofiev – but some of the piano chording sounds strongly Rachmaninovian and the move into the third section might suggest Nielsen. The deft slow section has something of Ravel's stillness and simplicity about it, the orchestra gradually building up to the final section with its melancholy songfulness, with increasing ebullience. In this concerto Lloyd builds material from cell-like material and it's remarkable how his super-structures prove to be aggregates of these small motivic elements.

....My own favourite happens to be No. 4, at which I was at the premiere performance. In this 1970 concerto, at the apex of his accommodation with the form, Lloyd fuses vocalised melodies – he always remained an operatic composer in symphonies and concerted works – with a firm, defined sense of form... The finale offers one of Lloyd's most catchy, snappy conclusions. The orchestral writing is clean-limbed, and in the Lento section at the heart of the finale, there's yet another of those unfolding lyric themes of great beauty. Then we get a brassy, bold resumption of the hi-jinks, with a salty Latin twinge thrown in here and there. This is a memorable work, for me. Its thematic writing is elevated, it's not too long, it pays its dues and it delivers on all fronts. I may be wrong about this, but at the time of its premiere I don't remember it receiving altogether favourable reviews. Well, that was 40 years ago and we can see things more clearly now.

Martin Roscoe is the protagonist in Concertos 1 and 3, Kathryn Stott in 2 and 4. The BBC Philharmonic accompanies in all but No.4, where it's the LSO. Lloyd conducts throughout. The concertos are reissued in this Signature Edition in a slimline twofer and lovers of Lloyd's music will be delighted to know they're available in this compact form." **Jonathan Woolf, *MusicWeb International***

"However, the great revelation of this Lyritya issue is the double CD set of his four piano concertos, written during his Dorset exile in the 1960s and early 1970s. "I just write what I have to write," Lloyd said, and there is a sense in these concertos that some sort of liberation from past struggles – whether with his mental health or with the BBC – opens up a new ease of expression. The first of the concertos is perhaps the most stunning, reminiscent of the grandeur, power and musicality of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. It is subtitled Scapegoat, and was inspired by Lloyd's hearing the dramatic playing of Ogdon, which he thought would be highly suited to what he had in mind. The work, written in the arctic winter of 1962-63, radiates nothing but warmth, not least because the composer's writing for orchestra makes no concessions to the piano, and fills the listener's head with the most astonishing range of sounds. That European influence is detectable again, with touches of Rachmaninov and Richard Strauss, but fundamentally the work is pure Lloyd, written to bewitch by a sheer beauty with which the musical world had little truck when the composer wrote it. It is, unquestionably, one of the great British piano concertos.

It is played on the new disc by Martin Roscoe, who gives an equally assured performance of the Second concerto. The Third and Fourth are performed sensitively by Kathryn Stott, who gave the first performance of the latter in an exuberant Festival Hall concert in 1984. All these recordings are essential for any lover of fine classical music: and if this project propels George Lloyd's reputation up even further, then justice will have been done." **Simon Heffer, *Daily Telegraph***

"...The four works are wonderful examples of Lloyd's late flowering as a composer."

Ronald Corp, *British Music Society*

"George Lloyd approached the piano concerto form with imagination and individuality. His idiomatic solo writing avoids shallow virtuosity and empty rhetoric and there are no mighty tussles between piano and orchestral forces encountered in archetypal large-scale concertante scores. Instead, the composer offers a series of deeply personal attempts to reconcile time-honoured elements of display with symphonic preoccupations of long-range tonality, rhythmic energy and melodic growth. In sum, Lloyd's four piano concertos constitute a compelling and distinctive branch of his creative legacy." ***PrestoMusic***

"George Lloyd's first three concertos all reflect his World War II experiences. Serving on the cruiser *Trinidad* he nearly drowned, then suffering shell shock. He wrote his Piano Concerto 1, *Scapegoat* (1963) for the great pianist John Ogdon. He explained "Everyone who has lived through this century has either had his own scapegoat or has watched blocks of humanity treated with even more ferocity than the ritual goat of biblical times. The music is some of the most violent I have written; it attempts to give an impression of the feelings aroused during the period I have lived through."... Much of this music is angry and outspoken, but it has the vehemence of a man with something important to say. The album is part of Lyrita's plan to rerelease the excellent Albany CDs from the 1980s of Lloyd's music. Their sound was good to begin with, so no problems there. Paul Conway's excellent notes are the cherry on the sundae." **O'Connor, *American Record Guide***

"With great orchestras, soloists, the composer conducting, a fine informative booklet and some of the nicest recorded sounds I have heard, there is much to be gained from this set, and I always find George Lloyd a composer worth listening to." **Geoff Pearce, *Classical Music Daily***