

SOMMCD 0644

Peter Dickinson *piano*

Peter Dickinson (b.1934)	Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)
1 Freda's Blues 2:48	10 Pastourelle (L'Éventail de Jeanne) 2:21
Edward MacDowell (1860-1908)	Erik Satie (1866-1925) <i>Trois Gnossiennes</i> [6:51]
2 To a Wild Rose 1:15	11 I. Lent 2:47
(Woodland Sketches, Op.51 No.1)	12 II. Avec étonnement 1:46
Peter Dickinson	13 III. Lent 2:18
3 Blue Rose 2:17	George Gershwin
Constant Lambert (1905-51)	14 Who Cares? 1:16
4 Elegiac Blues 2:45	Eugene Goossens (1893-1962)
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5 Lockdown Blues 2:41	(Kaleidoscope, Op.18)
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	Erik Satie: <i>Trois Gymnopédies</i> [6:27]
6 Nocturne in C minor, 'Bal fantôme' 1:21	16 I. Lent et douloureux 2:27
(Huit Nocturnes, Fp56)	17 II. Lent et triste 2:05
Samuel Barber (1910-81)	18 III. Lent et grave 1:55
7 Canzonetta (arr. Peter Dickinson)* 5:31	Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington (1899-1974)
Lennox Berkeley (1903-81)	19-30 Twelve Melodies arr. Peter Dickinson* [21:32]
8 Andante (Six Preludes, Op.23 No.6) 1:45	John Cage (1912-92)
George Gershwin (1898-1937)	31 In a Landscape 7:38
9 Three-Quarter Blues (Irish Waltz) 1:04	Total duration: 68:37
	_____ *First recordings _____

Recorded at Potton Hall, Westleton, Suffolk, on April 16-17, 2021

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Lockdown Blues

Peter Dickinson
piano

Peter Dickinson (b.1934)

[1]	Freda's Blues	2:48
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Edward MacDowell (1860-1908)

[2]	To a Wild Rose (Woodland Sketches, Op.51 No.1)	1:15
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Peter Dickinson

[3]	Blue Rose	2:17
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Constant Lambert (1905-51)

[4]	Elegiac Blues	2:45
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Peter Dickinson

[5]	Lockdown Blues	2:41
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Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

[6]	Nocturne in C minor, 'Bal fantôme' (Huit Nocturnes, Fp56)	1:21
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Samuel Barber (1910-81)

[7]	Canzonetta (arr. Peter Dickinson)*	5:31
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Lennox Berkeley (1903-81)

[8]	Andante (Six Preludes, Op.23 No.6)	1:45
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[9]	Three-Quarter Blues (Irish Waltz)	1:04
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[10]	Pastourelle (L'Éventail de Jeanne)	2:21
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Erik Satie (1866-1925) Trois Gnossiennes [6:51]

[11]	I. Lent	2:47
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[12]	II. Avec étonnement	1:46
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[13]	III. Lent	2:18
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Lockdown Blues

Peter Dickinson

George Gershwin

[14]	Who Cares?	1:16
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Eugene Goossens (1893-1962)

[15]	Lament for a Departed Doll (Kaleidoscope, Op.18)	1:13
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Erik Satie: Trois Gymnopédies [6:27]

[16]	I. Lent et douloureux	2:27
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[17]	II. Lent et triste	2:05
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[18]	III. Lent et grave	1:55
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Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington (1899-1974)

Twelve Melodies arr. Peter Dickinson*		[21:32]
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[19]	It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got That Swing)	0:46
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[20]	Solitude	1:32
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[21]	Don't Get Around Much Anymore	1:23
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[22]	Lost in Meditation	1:29
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[23]	I Never Felt This Way Before	1:23
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[24]	Sophisticated Lady	2:05
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[25]	In a Sentimental Mood	2:02
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[26]	Azure	2:31
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[27]	Do Nothin' till You Hear from Me	1:41
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[28]	Mood Indigo	1:42
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[29]	Day Dream	1:53
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[30]	Prelude to a Kiss	2:05
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John Cage (1912-92)

[31]	In a Landscape	7:38
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Total duration:	68:37
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**First recordings*

We owe something of a debt to Peter Dickinson. While everybody has been 'locked down' and many of us have been grumbling and depressed about lack of music in our lives because of the dreaded epidemic, Peter took himself to a handy recording studio (Potton Hall, just a few miles up the road from his Aldeburgh home) and there recorded a handsome recital consisting of the piano pieces he knows and loves. And here's the cunning of it: most listeners will find the selection largely unfamiliar and yet full of familiar friendly sounds.

The whole thing is entitled *Lockdown Blues*, and it's with blues music that Peter sets the mood, a composition of his own, entitled *Freda's Blues*, dedicated, in 2016 after her death, to the widow of Sir Lennox Berkeley. He follows that with *To a Wild Rose* by Edward MacDowell, a 'woodland sketch' potentially so sentimental that I used to blush when I dared to play it. But Dickinson's sense of humour is soon apparent: the next number is called *Blue Rose* and is Peter's charming bluesification of the MacDowell piece.

The CD's repertoire is forever pleasing: Constant Lambert composed a blues back in 1927 in memory of the popular American singer Florence Mills; this *Elegiac Blues* is a genuine classic. Adjacent is Peter's transcription/adaptation of a late piece for oboe and piano by Samuel Barber. Not for nothing has Peter been a tireless torchbearer for American music in the concert hall and radio studio, in print and academia.

It's a repertoire he loves, and he gives us some completely unguessable Gershwin – an Irish waltz called *Three-Quarter Blues* – and an extra-fascinating half-hour-long selection of popular songs – using the original sheet music – for which the great Duke Ellington is rightly renowned, among them classic numbers such as *Sophisticated Lady*, *Solitude*, *Mood Indigo* and *In a Sentimental Mood*. This is a real find and will surely be much anthologised long after Lockdown has been forgotten.

Peter has also long championed the music of Erik Satie and doesn't disappoint in his selection here, containing three early *Gnossiennes* and the three much-loved *Gymnopédies*. Another favourite composer from the same stable is Francis Poulenc, represented by *Pastourelle* and Nocturne No.4. A curiosity is a piece entitled *Lament for a Departed Doll* by the conductor and composer Eugene Goossens – it is *not* a parody of Ravel's Pavane.

The CD ends with a work by another of Peter Dickinson's *causes célèbres*: John Cage. But there is nothing in Cage's gentle 1948 pastorella *In a Landscape* to ruffle the feathers of anti-Cagers. It makes a perfectly peaceful end to a delightful hour of discovery. Bravo Peter Dickinson!

Humphrey Burton © 2021

During Lockdown I was well aware of the difficulties being experienced by everybody. I wondered what sort of repertoire might interest music lovers in these conditions and I decided on an easy-listening collection of short piano pieces, including some of my own favourites. Most of my career as a pianist has been as an accompanist to my sister, mezzo Meriel Dickinson, but I've also recorded a CD of my piano music and chamber music with other performers. This recital has been designed to be a gentle relaxation as we all come out of repeated pandemic-enforced lockdowns. I hope it may serve equally well far beyond memories of Covid.

It contains familiar masterpieces by Satie, Poulenc, MacDowell, Gershwin and Lambert alongside 12 famous tunes by Duke Ellington in the versions he published as sheet music – pure Ellington, as it were, the product of a sophisticated composer rather than a songwriter. Most of them were used by his band and recorded by a veritable Who's Who of great jazz singers. There is also a curiosity by John Cage – arguably his best tune – and another by Eugene Goossens, as well as some of my own blues, based on works by other composers.

Peter Dickinson: *Freda's Blues* (2016)

I wrote this piece in memory of Freda, Lady Berkeley, widow of Sir Lennox Berkeley (1903-89), one of the most prominent British composers of the mid-20th century. I gave the first performance at a memorial concert for Lady Berkeley at the Tabernacle Theatre in London's Notting Hill, on October 11,

2016. The piece is based on Berkeley's short song *How Love Came In*, which was published in 1936. Quotes from the song are heard in single notes interspersed with the blues.

Edward MacDowell: *To a Wild Rose* (1896)

MacDowell (1860-1908) was regarded as America's first great composer until Charles Ives came into the picture in the mid 20th century. MacDowell trained in Paris and Frankfurt, where he met Clara Schumann and Liszt, who supported him. He returned to the US in 1888 and, at the time of his premature death, the influential MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire had been established in his memory. This is the first, and most popular, piece in his *Woodland Sketches*, Op.51.

Peter Dickinson: *Blue Rose* (1978)

It was common for ragtime and jazz performers to help themselves to classical tunes and I have transformed *To a Wild Rose* into a blues with a climax on Scriabin's 'mystic chord', which seems suitable for the mystical blue rose. My *Blue Rose Variations* for organ uses both rag and blues versions of the MacDowell.

Constant Lambert: *Elegiac Blues* (1927)

Lambert (1905-51) was one of the first British composers who really understood jazz. In 1923, he attended *Dover Street to Dixie* at the London Pavilion where Florence Mills sang with Will Vodery's Plantation Orchestra in the capital for the

first time. The jazz idiom of the black performers had a tremendous influence on Lambert who heard Mills again in *Blackbirds* in 1926. Having become a sensation, she died tragically young in 1927 and Lambert wrote this eloquent piece in her memory.

Peter Dickinson: *Lockdown Blues* (2020)

For a long time, I had toyed with the idea of putting a blues melody above the harmony of the First Prelude in Book I of Bach's '48' – *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. This, borrowing from my earlier *Bach in Blue* from 2004, is how it came out.

Francis Poulenc: Nocturne in C minor, *Bal fantôme* (Huit Nocturnes, No.IV) (c.1934)

The score is headed *The Ghost Ball* with a dedication to Julien Green, the American novelist and diarist who lived in France. The Nocturne is in Poulenc's most ecstatic melodic style and the opening is very close to the short seventh of Chopin's Twenty-Four Preludes (1838-39).

Samuel Barber: Canzonetta (1977-78)

The Canzonetta was Barber's last work. It was meant to be the slow movement of a concerto for oboe and orchestra, but Barber was not well enough to finish it. The climax in this piece may well reflect his grim state of mind at that stage, less than three years before his death in January, 1981. His friend and colleague, Charles Turner, arranged the work for oboe and strings, in which form it has been performed and recorded.

When I was invited by the Samuel Barber Foundation to give a lecture at First Presbyterian Church, West Chester, on October 12, 2005, I played the Canzonetta in my own arrangement as a piano solo. In 1982 Charles Turner had given me a copy of a manuscript oboe and piano score, which I used when Sarah Francis and I gave the first UK performance for BBC Radio 3 on May 1, 1982. That score contains details not in the 1993 publication for oboe and piano, so I have included some of them here. See my own *Samuel Barber Remembered: A Centenary Tribute* (2010).

Lennox Berkeley: Prelude VI (Six Preludes, Op.23, 1945)

Sir Lennox Berkeley's Six Preludes were dedicated to BBC radio producer Val Drewry who said they were commissioned by the Corporation for interludes between programmes but never used in that way. This last piece of the set is vintage Berkeley in an especially personal way. He played this piece himself but the set has suffered from containing two Preludes of considerable technical difficulty. See my own *The Music of Lennox Berkeley* (2003) and *Lennox Berkeley and Friends* (2012), and Tony Scotland's *Lennox and Freda* (2010).

George Gershwin: *Three-Quarter Blues* (c.1925)

This short snippet by George Gershwin (1898-1937) became widely known in the UK as the signature theme for Simon Brett's domestic sitcom *After Henry* on BBC Radio 4 (1985-89) and then on Thames Television (1988-92). The 'Three-Quarter' title is American usage for what the British know as 3/4 or waltz time.

Francis Poulenc: Pastourelle (1927)

The Pastourelle – quintessential Poulenc (1899-1963) – was written in 1927 for *L'Éventail de Jeanne*, a one-act ballet for children with contributions by nine other composers. It's typical of his technique with one catchy tune following another. In 1932 Vladimir Horowitz's recording publicised the piece so that by 1950 it had sold over 31,000 copies, a substantial quantity.

Erik Satie: Trois Gnossiennes (1890)

- I. Lent
- II. Avec étonnement
- III. Lent

The title of these three pieces by Erik Satie (1866-1925) is mysterious. It may have been related to Knossos in Crete where excavations had been in the news at the time of composition. But there could also be Eastern European musical influences. This is the original set, published in 1913; three more appeared in 1968. The first, **Lent**, is dedicated to the composer and critic Roland Manuel. Satie introduced him to Ravel, and he became the younger composer's biographer; the second, **Avec étonnement**, to Count Antoine de La Rochefoucauld, who came from an ancient noble family and became a painter and patron. There is no dedication for the third, **Lent**. The score is written without bars and contains eccentric remarks, which became a defining feature. The most famous is: 'like a nightingale with toothache'. These three pieces are the basis of my orchestral work *Satie Transformations* (1970).

George Gershwin: Who Cares? (1931)

Who Cares? was first published in the 1932 compendium *Eighteen Song Hits*. The lyric is by Gershwin's brother, Ira, and the song was written for the 1931 Broadway musical *Of Thee I Sing*, which ran for 441 performances. Gershwin said he made his arrangements for the better pianists who could play more than just sheet music. This is perhaps the most ruminative of this hyperactive collection.

Eugene Goossens: Lament for a Departed Doll (Op.18, No.10; 1917)

This short piece comes from a set of pieces called *Kaleidoscope* by the British composer and conductor Sir Eugene Goossens (1893-1962). He orchestrated the set in 1949. Goossens held prominent conducting posts in the US and Australia and left a substantial catalogue of works, now neglected. There is no reason given for the doll's departure, but the sadness comes through.

Erik Satie: Trois Gymnopédies (1888)

- I. Lent et douloureux
- II. Lent et triste
- III. Lent et grave

These are Satie's best-known pieces – especially No.1 – widely performed, ubiquitously used for films and appropriated by pop groups. In 1968, Blood, Sweat and Tears topped the pop charts with a recording that contained variations on the First *Gymnopédie* and sold four million albums in the US alone. *Gymnopédies* may refer to ancient Greek rituals with naked dancers

and the term appears in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Musical Dictionary* as early as 1767. The similarities between the three pieces have been compared to looking at a sculpture from different angles.

Duke Ellington: Twelve melodies (1932-43)

Most of these Ellington tunes are familiar as the basis for his big band numbers, and as songs they have been recorded by some of the greatest jazz singers, such as Ella Fitzgerald in *The Duke Ellington Songbook* (1957). All those performances involved improvisation. Less familiar are the versions of the melodies published as sheet music of songs when lyrics had been added. This recording provides an opportunity to get to know these incomparable melodies in their own right, before going back to their more familiar incarnations as jazz classics.

Although Gershwin said that sheet music was only for little girls with small hands, Ellington's sheet music has a flavour of its own. The scores show Ellington and his arrangers in fastidious form exploiting sophisticated harmonies. I have left out the introductions which belonged to the pop-song format and stuck to the main melodies. I have mostly played what is written – unlike my recordings of Ellington on *Blue Clavichord* (Heritage, 2013) – encouraged by the fact that Ellington's own piano recording of *Prelude to a Kiss* is almost entirely the sheet music with one flourish and a reluctant double bass. The popularity of these songs took many of them into the charts on both sides of the Atlantic.

It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got That Swing) (1932)

Introduced by Ivie Anderson with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, this boisterous number was in the charts with them alongside a rival recording by the Mills Brothers in 1932. The title of this song coincided with the launch of the Swing era and accumulated iconic significance. Blue notes – often a minor third in a major context – are a feature of many Ellington melodies. The blue note comes early here.

Solitude (1934)

Ellington said he wrote this tune in 20 minutes standing up when an extra number was needed for a recording session. It was his most successful song at that time, recorded twice by him. The initial seventh chord conditions the introspective mood of what follows.

Don't Get Around Much Anymore (1940)

Originally conceived as the instrumental *Never No Lament*, as *Don't Get Around* it hit the charts in 1943, with lyrics added by Bob Russell (whose last song, *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother*, was a signature hit for British pop group The Hollies in the late 1960s). The main sections are conditioned by the missing first beat.

Lost in Meditation (1938)

Ella Fitzgerald's 1957 recording with Ellington is unusually straightforward. The mood of this suave and particularly memorable melody settles with an

early blue note. Fitzgerald started her recordings singing this tune without words, other recordings had given it a trombone.

I Never Felt This Way Before (1940)

At least two of Ellington's band versions are close to the harmony and melody. The harmony is adventurous, with the melody actually starting on a dissonant ninth and followed by three semitone descents. The second half moves to an imposing climax.

Sophisticated Lady (1933)

This number began as a band recording that entered the charts coupled with Harold Arlen's *Stormy Weather* on the disc's other side. It became a top earner for Ellington, who said it was a tribute to three school-teachers who 'taught all winter and toured Europe in the summer. To me, that was sophistication'. This angular but beautiful melody springs from parallel chords in the harmony.

In a Sentimental Mood (1935)

Recorded by Ellington, this number entered the pop charts and was widely popular during the 1930s, regularly used as a radio signature tune. It opens with a pentatonic rise followed by harmonies far away from anything in popular song. The jazz commentator James Lincoln Collier has claimed that some of these melodies, such as *In a Sentimental Mood*, *Sophisticated Lady* and *Prelude to a Kiss*, may have drawn on ideas by others, but this must have been a natural process in Ellington's close-knit band community.

Azure (1937)

One of Ellington's most harmonically adventurous tunes, which he called 'a little dulcet piece which portrays a blue mood'. Most of his songs in this recital are marked 'slow' but this is intended to be played 'very slowly'.

Do Nothin' till You Hear from Me (1943)

This was a rhythm and blues hit in 1944 and appeared in pop charts with recordings by Woody Herman and Stan Kenton as well as Ellington himself. It was originally from the 1940 classic *Concerto for Cootie* (Williams, Ellington's trumpeter), with lyrics added by Bob Russell later. There's some odd syncopation in the accompaniment.

Mood Indigo (1930)

This tune was originally in a radio broadcast under the title of *Dreamy Blues*, but public approval of it was so great that Irving Mills, Ellington's manager, added the lyric and called it *Mood Indigo*. It remained popular and hit the charts in 1931, 1934 and 1952. Ellington extended it with variations in 1950. The opening melody shifts from major to minor in a mesmeric way. Ellington's clarinetist, Barney Bigard, is also credited.

Day Dream (1939)

The credit for this piece is shared between Ellington and his protégé, the composer, arranger and pianist Billy Strayhorn, who wrote it for alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges and recorded it, directing a small band in 1941,

and again on his own with background voices in 1961. David Schiff (*The Ellington Century*, 2012) identified four outstanding recordings of this tune, suffused with blue notes, all by the Ellington Orchestra.

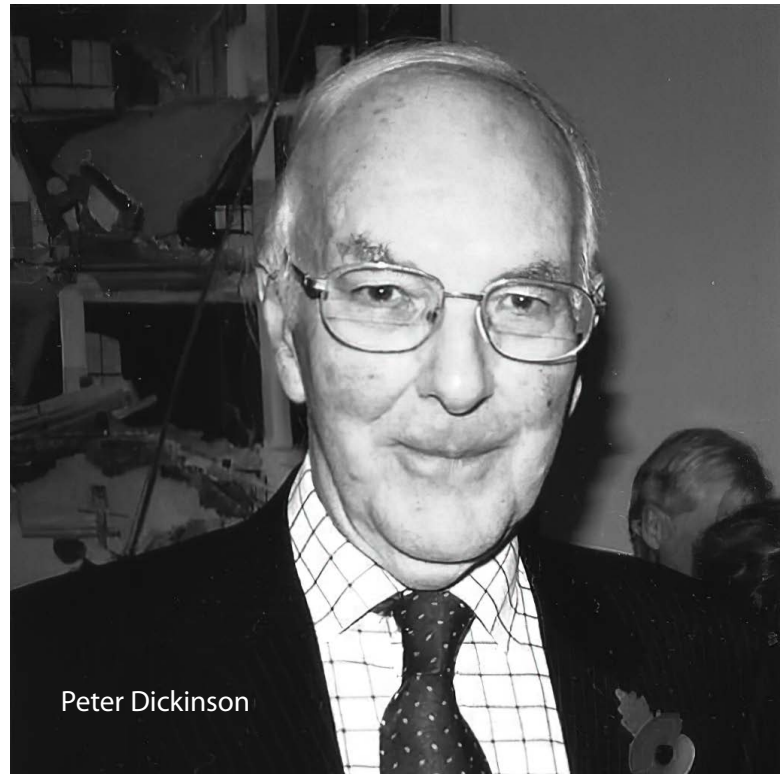
Prelude to a Kiss (1938)

Ellington recorded this number twice with his band, once as an instrumental and once with lyrics. There is also Ellington's piano solo version. The harmony is in his most adventurous style. Gunther Schuller (*The Swing Era*, 1989) regarded the song version as difficult to sing and the harmonies too sophisticated for the average listener. He concluded that Ellington's 'finest songs are much more in the realm of art song than pop tune, their jazz antecedents notwithstanding'.

John Cage: In a Landscape (1948)

John Cage (1912-92) is notorious for his silent piece, *4'30"*, as well as for large public extravaganzas such as *Music Circus* with masses of concerts under one roof. *In a Landscape*, for piano or harp, is dedicated to the dancer Louise Lippold. Both piano pedals are sustained throughout. The opening melody appears twice more in gentle textures that are not typical of Cage, but it emerged at a time when he was involved with the work of Satie. This was when Cage caused a scandal in a lecture by denouncing Beethoven in favour of Satie and Webern. The première, with dance, took place at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, on August 20, 1948.

Peter Dickinson © 2021



Photograph: Francis Dickinson

PETER DICKINSON is a British composer of the senior generation: there are many recordings of his music by leading performers. Dickinson had a 25-year recital partnership with his sister, the mezzo-soprano Meriel Dickinson. They gave recitals and broadcasts in the UK and Europe, and they made first recordings of works by American and British composers, including Dickinson's own song cycles. He is an Emeritus Professor of two universities – Keele and London; has given many BBC broadcasts; and has always written widely with books on Lennox Berkeley (two), Billy Mayerl, Aaron Copland, John Cage, Lord Berners and Samuel Barber. A collection of Dickinson's writings over a 50-year period was published as *Words and Music* in 2016. He is chair of the Rainbow Dickinson Trust. Dickinson's music is published by Wise Music and Good Music.

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I am particularly grateful to Howard Pollack for discussions about the Samuel Barber Canzonetta at a time when he was immersed in his book on Barber. He kindly introduced me to John Howland at the Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology, who has been helpful about Ellington issues. Barber's publisher, G. Schirmer Inc, New York, has given permission for this recording. I am grateful to Peter Newble for looking after another of my recordings so expertly. And to my wife Bridget for advice and incomparable support. Also to the late Kenneth Rattenbury (*Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*, Yale 1990) whose MA thesis at Keele University I supervised and who taught me much about Ellington. I have valued further advice from Siva Oke.



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