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RECORDINGS



# SAMUEL COLERIDGE- TAYLOR

ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLOURS

SOLEMN PRELUDE

ZARA'S EARRINGS

IDYLL

BALLADE FOR VIOLIN & ORCHESTRA

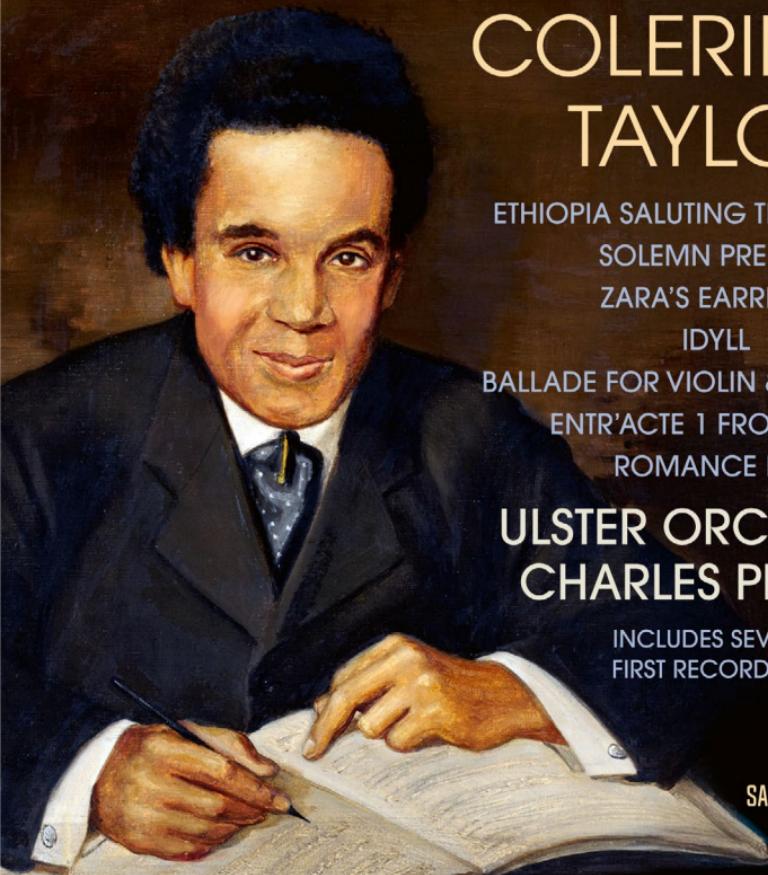
ENTR'ACTE 1 FROM NERO

ROMANCE IN B

ULSTER ORCHESTRA  
CHARLES PEEBLES

INCLUDES SEVERAL  
FIRST RECORDINGS

150  
SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR



Named after the poet Samuel Taylor-Coleridge, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in Holborn in 1875. His father, Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor, a doctor, returned to Sierra Leone not realising that the woman Alice Hare Martin, to whom he was not married, was expecting a son. Samuel was brought up in the household of Alice's father, Benjamin Holmans, until 1887, when Alice married railway worker George Evans and moved to Croydon (a recently incorporated municipal borough south of London) where they lived close to the main railway line. The family on Alice's side was musical, and when it was noticed that Samuel possessed unusual talent, he was given violin lessons. Such was his progress with the local teacher Joseph Beckwith that he entered the Royal College of Music (RCM) in the Christmas Term of 1890 to study the violin under Henry Holmes, harmony with Charles Wood and the piano with Algernon Ashton. Though he was only 15, it was not uncommon at this time for students to enter the RCM during their adolescence. However, as the compulsion to compose grew within him, his interest in the violin waned such that by October 1892 he had exchanged this first study for composition with Charles Villiers Stanford. Coleridge-Taylor revered Stanford, and for his part, Stanford was protective, firmly critical and highly encouraging. This positive chemistry led to the award of a composition scholarship in 1893 (which obviated the need for tuition fees), whereupon the College Director George Grove reminded him that he was "now before the world" and results were expected. Eager to impress Stanford, Wood and Grove, Samuel was industrious and diligent, spurred on by the comparable gifts of his fellow student at Croydon, William Yeates Hurlstone. The two were close friends, but they also enjoyed the fecund creative interaction of a larger circle of composition students – Richard Walthew, Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Fritz Hart and John Ireland – all working under Stanford.

After three years at the RCM, two of them with Stanford, the first significant products of his study began to yield fruit: performances and, in some instances, the accolade of publication. He enjoyed the work of John Gibson Lockhart (the biographer of Walter Scott), whose *Ancient Spanish Ballads* he had obtained. From this he wrote the first of his works

for solo voice and orchestra, *Zara's Earrings*, Op.7, dubbed a "Rhapsody". (Indeed, it was the composer's first encounter with the orchestra.) Probably completed at the end of 1894, the work was first performed at the RCM under Stanford's direction on 6 February 1895 with the soprano Clementine Pierpoint. Essentially a dramatic scena, *Zara's Earrings* intimates Coleridge-Taylor's encounter with opera, which he must have gained through productions at Covent Garden and at Drury Lane (under such conductors as Carl Rosa and Hans Richter) and also by way of Stanford's RCM opera productions in London's West End theatres. Daughter of Albuharez, Zara has dropped her earrings, a gift from her Moorish lover, Muça, down a well. Unable to retrieve them she frets about how to tell her beloved. Given to her as a keepsake, the pearl earrings in a silver setting were a means of remembering him; yet, will he think her fickle and capricious in his absence? A strophic construction, the scena has a number of cohesive elements that link the five verses of Lockhart's poem. The principal idea, which permeates the entire structure, is heard at the opening in E minor in the flutes and clarinets, and this *cri de coeur* is complemented by the falling seventh motive of Zara's plaintive exclamation "My earrings". Each verse, moreover, is rounded off with a variegated refrain ("And what to say when he comes back, alas! I cannot tell") except for the last, in which she resolves to tell her lover the truth ("And that deep his love lies in my heart, as they [the earrings] lie in the well"), a frame of mind affirmed by the positive presence of E major and the resolution of the final cadence.

Dedicated "to my friend, Miss Ruth Howell", the Ballade in D minor, Op.4 for violin and orchestra dates from much the same time as *Zara's Earrings* and was published in a version for violin and piano by Novello in 1895, most likely as the result of the unbridled enthusiasm of Novello's publishing agent, August Jaeger. This version was first played by Isabella Donkersley (who became Mrs Jaeger) at one of the Musical Guild's concerts in Kensington Town Hall in 1895. The work's first hearing with orchestra (the scoring of which the composer had revised for a larger band) was on 17 April 1899 at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, under Dan Godfrey (who was at that time doing much to support

performances of Coleridge-Taylor's music) and again with Donkersley as soloist. Written by a composer who (like Elgar) clearly understood the violin as a practitioner, the Ballade follows an impressive, abridged sonata structure in which the soloist and orchestra continually interact. The pseudo-modal language – like that in Coleridge-Taylor's Clarinet Quintet, Op.10, the source of the Romance in B major on this album – already betrays an indebtedness to the music of Dvořák being composed at much the same time. Much of the Ballade's emphasis (implicit in the "ballad" genre) is on narrative, elucidated by the three distinctive thematic departures of the exposition: in D minor, A minor and F major. In the recapitulation this is adeptly reworked, notably in the climactic return in D major of the third idea, in the violin's high register.

In the early 1890s Brahms's Clarinet Quintet made its way to England, where it received several performances in London, mainly at the behest of Richard Mühlfeld (principal clarinettist of the Meiningen Court Orchestra) and the Joachim Quartet. Coleridge-Taylor heard the work on 13 March 1895 at the Royal College of Music (performed in the same programme as Coleridge-Taylor's own 5 Fantasiestücke, Op.5 for string quartet) and, believing that he too might produce a work of merit with the same instrumentation, spent much of the summer term composing his Clarinet Quintet, Op.10 in F sharp minor. Stanford was deeply taken by his student's achievement and sang his praises to Joachim, recommending that he try over the work in Berlin. Though very much imbued with the pentatonic folk-song influence of Dvořák's music – one thinks of the prevalence at the time of Dvořák's Ninth Symphony, which had received many performances since its American premiere in December 1893 and its English premiere under Alexander Mackenzie in June 1894 (which Coleridge-Taylor surely must have heard) – Coleridge-Taylor's Clarinet Quintet showed an extraordinary assuredness in the idiom, and when the critics heard it at the RCM on 10 July 1895, they were astounded by its stylistic coherence and fluency. The composer later adapted and arranged its introspective second movement, a Largo affettuoso in B major, as a separate Romance in B major for string orchestra.

By 1899, Coleridge-Taylor had already made his name with the advent of his cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, and the commissions began to arrive thick and fast. Dedicated to his colleague, Nicholas Kilburn, a leading amateur musician in the north of England, the Solemn Prelude, Op.40 was written for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival of 1899 and first performed on 13 September in a programme together with Elgar's oratorio *The Light of Life* and his new (and revised) *Enigma Variations*. The Solemn Prelude adopts a big-boned, grandiose sonata structure, sharing that "nobilmente" spirit that is characteristic of the big symphonic slow movements by his older contemporaries (Parry, Stanford and Elgar). It is full of robust thematic material, stirring in its gravity and elegiac pathos and exuding the confidence of a young composer at the height of his powers.

The Idyll, Op.44 – which dates from 1901 at a time when Coleridge-Taylor's name had become legend on the success of his *Hiawatha* trilogy – was the result of another Three Choirs commission, this time for Gloucester. For this work, Coleridge-Taylor took the Lament from his earlier Symphony in A minor and reworked and re-orchestrated it for a larger band (with heavy brass and harp). A gentle, poetic essay, the Idyll gains much of its effect from its imaginative scoring, the amorous *Schwung* of the main melody (introduced in the cellos) and, as part of the elaborate development of the thematic material, the composer's effective manipulation of modulation. As the critic from *The Times* remarked after its first performance on 11 September, conducted by the composer, it was a "single, very beautiful movement in C major... giving ample room for the composer's love of original rhythm and rich and individual orchestral colouring. Whether in its original form, or in the published arrangement as a violin solo with piano accompaniment, the little work is sure of popularity and is a worthy example of the clever young author's work."

After conducting the first performance of his choral work *Meg Blane* in Sheffield in October 1902, Coleridge-Taylor travelled to Bristol to conduct his *Hiawatha* trilogy in a reconstructed Colston Hall in the city. As a preface to his cantatas, his newly-composed march *Ethiopia*

*Saluting the Colours* was played for the first time. Inspired by Walt Whitman's poem, which his former teacher Charles Wood had set as a song with piano or orchestra, widely promulgated by Harry Plunket Greene and much admired, Coleridge-Taylor prefaced the score of his instrumental march with the opening verse's first three lines. Wrongly billed at Bristol as a "coronation march" (a symptom of coronation fever during 1902), the piece paints a quite different picture. The march depicts the tramp of General Sherman's troops as they move from town to town and village to village in their liberation of the Carolinas. A soldier marvels at the brightly turbaned elderly slave, Ethiopia, as she tells him of the cruel way she had been brought to America and how, as the soldier makes his farewell, Sherman's army brings new hope. The march was dedicated to the "Treble Clef Club, Washington, USA", a society of black women. A rare example of the composer writing in the march genre, Coleridge-Taylor's opulent work for orchestra and organ did not catch on, perhaps because it was overshadowed by public approbation for the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches by Elgar, premiered at Henry Wood's "Prom" concerts in October 1901. It was, nevertheless, an interesting example of his immersion in this particular dimension of Edwardian culture and a much-neglected work in the literature of British marches of the time.

On 25 January 1906 Stephen Phillips's play *Nero* began its run of performances at His Majesty's Theatre with Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the main role. Tree had been the main influence in commissioning the incidental music for the production from Coleridge-Taylor, though many critical notices took little heed of it, preferring to comment on the play's great spectacle and Tree's commanding delivery of the major role of the Roman emperor. Coleridge-Taylor, who had already provided incidental music for plays on the subjects of Herod and Ulysses, found the play more stimulating dramatically and relished the environment at the theatre; he was also paid a handsome fee of one hundred guineas. "My work for Mr Tree has been invaluable for me as a composer", he recounted in an interview for the actor, author and journalist, Raymond Blathwayt; "it has helped to broaden, to deepen, to elevate my whole musical outlook. Mr Tree is a wonderful man.

He gave me every possible assistance, and it is to him that I owe any knowledge I possess of dramatic writing." He fully absorbed the play, attended rehearsals and discussed many details with Tree and the Austrian-born theatre conductor Adolf Schmid, and of particular joy to him was the chance to hear his music nightly rather than as one performance in the concert room. The First Entr'acte belongs to a series of seven movements of incidental music, but no clue as to its specific position within the play can be gleaned either from the autograph, from Novello's published reduction for violin and piano "First Entr'acte from the music to *Nero*", or from its concert performance at the Proms in 1907. It was probably the movement titled Agrippina (Nero's manipulative mother), which occurred between Acts II and III (and counterbalanced the movement in E major characterising Nero's wife Poppea between Acts III and IV). The Entr'acte begins in B flat major with a high violin solo accompanied by the shimmering tremolando of the accompaniment. This wistful introduction yields through modulation to a second theme in G major initially presented in the winds (and related motivically to the first), which forms the main focus of what is a powerful symphonic movement. Such passionate music, of which he was evidently proud, prepared him well for the work on his opera *Thelma*, begun in 1907.

Jeremy Dibble © 2025



Northern Irish soprano, **Rebecca Murphy**, hailed by *Opera Journal* for her “stunning delivery”, is making waves across the UK and Europe on both the concert and operatic platforms. She was a member of the Internationales Opernstudio at Oper Köln from 2020–22 and previously was a member of the Northern Ireland Opera Studio (2018–19). She is also a regular guest with the Ulster Orchestra and the Belfast Ensemble. Rebecca is the recipient of the Arts Council Northern Ireland Young Musicians’ Platform Award (2022).

She has performed on the operatic stage in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Zerbinetta with Garsington Opera and Najade with Nederlandse Reisopera) and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Blonde) and *Carmen* (Frasquita) with Oper Köln.

Also a lover of contemporary music, she works regularly with Irish composers including Anselm McDonnell, Conor Mitchell and Ian Wilson. Her debut album *Traverser* (funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland) is influenced by this style while also featuring Polish repertoire, another area of interest. Working closely with duo-partner pianist Cahal Masterson, she has also featured on Anselm McDonnell’s album *Kraina* and has given that music’s concert premiere at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris.

Along with her career in singing, Rebecca is also a vocal health enthusiast and is the director of Murphy Voice Studio. She is currently adding to her skill set by training to become a Vocal Habilitation Professional.



**Ioana Petcu-Colan** is one of the most established and versatile musicians to come from the island of Ireland. Born in Cork to Romanian violinist parents, Ioana lived and worked in England, France and Spain before calling Northern Ireland home in 2010. She now travels internationally to perform, guest lead, collaborate, teach, adjudicate and record in complement to her role as Leader of the Ulster Orchestra, and member of the String Faculty at the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

On both modern and period instruments, Ioana has performed a considerable number of solo works with orchestra – over 20 of the major violin concertos – including recording the Bruch Violin Concerto with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra on the Lyric label. She has performed, recorded, broadcast and coached on four continents as leader / violinist; including with piano trio Ensemble Avalon, as former founder member of the prize-winning Callino Quartet, and with South American folk band Lunfardía. Chamber collaborations have been with artists as diverse as members of the Alban Berg string quartet, Barry Douglas (piano), John Abercrombie (jazz guitarist), Martin Hayes (traditional Irish fiddle) and Arcade Fire (indie rock).

A committed advocate for new and current art, Ioana continues to commission, premiere, perform and record solo and chamber works by living composers. Memorable performances include *Una Santa Oscura* by Ian Wilson in Dublin (a staged, choreographed, immersive 45-minute “opera without words” for solo violin and electronics), Morton Feldman’s epic six-hour String Quartet No.2 with BCN216 and members of the Casals Quartet in Barcelona, and Luigi Nono’s *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* for solo violin and 8 magnetic tapes for broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Ioana is also a long-standing member of Musici Ireland – a flexible ensemble and production house who together create and present original, multi-artform, inter-disciplinary work in complement to their core chamber season.

Ioana plays a 1695 Cappa violin and proudly claims a very special gift made by her father and first teacher, Adrian Petcu, among her bow collection.



**Charles Peebles** studied at Cambridge University, the Guildhall and as a Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood. He has conducted, amongst others, the City of London Sinfonia, City of Birmingham Symphony, BBC Singers, English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Nash Ensemble, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony Orchestras. In 1992 he won 1st Prize in the Cadaqués Orchestra International Conducting Competition in Spain, subsequently conducting virtually every major Spanish orchestra including Orquesta Nacional de España. Engagements throughout Europe and beyond have included the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Latvian

National Symphony, Presidential Symphony in Turkey and National Symphony of Mexico. He has recorded for Hyperion and Largo records, and previously for SOMM a recording of orchestral works by Dora Bright and Ruth Gipps with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

He has conducted a wide operatic repertoire for English Touring Opera, Holland Park Opera and Broomhill, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* for the Glyndebourne Tour, a critically acclaimed series of Rossini operas for Garsington, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. He made his Far East debut in a televised concert with the distinguished tenor, José Cura.

Additional opera has included *Carmen* and *Hansel and Gretel* for the St Magnus Festival and performances with the orchestras of English National Opera and Scottish Opera. Between 2001 and 2022 Charles was Music Director of University College Opera, conducting the British Premieres of Hahn's *Ciboulette*, Dvořák's *Vanda*, Lalo's *Fiesque*, Gounod's *Polyeucte*, the first British stagings of Bloch's *Macbeth* and Smetana's *Libuše*, and the first staging since the 18th century of Rameau's *Acante et Céphise*. He was created an Honorary Fellow of UCL in 2012.

Founded in 1966, the **Ulster Orchestra** has been at the forefront of musical life in Northern Ireland for over 50 years. The Orchestra performs around 40 concerts a year in its home, the Ulster Hall, and in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast.

With a mission to enrich the lives of people living in Northern Ireland, those visiting and those who encounter it through international touring and regular radio and TV broadcasts with the BBC, the Orchestra strives for excellence in all it undertakes, be it concert performances, learning and community engagement programmes or creative collaborations across the arts. An important aspect of the Ulster Orchestra's work across Northern Ireland is its annual touring programme of concerts, which brings live orchestral music to the heart of communities across the region.

The Ulster Orchestra's recordings are gaining global critical acclaim, with a recent CD for SOMM Recordings of music by Kurt Weill with the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor Jac van Steen garnering critical praise. The Orchestra also regularly records for labels such as Hyperion (with Howard Shelley), Naxos (with former Chief Conductor JoAnn Falletta), Chandos and Toccata Classics.

The Ulster Orchestra's Learning and Community Engagement programme aims to connect the Orchestra with communities and individuals across Northern Ireland, both as audiences and participants. All the Orchestra's musicians work on activities including Relaxed Performances for people with additional needs, mentoring and coaching for players at all stages and the Crescendo project, the Orchestra's community-led residency project for children from disadvantaged areas in North and West Belfast.

[ulsterorchestra.org.uk](http://ulsterorchestra.org.uk)

## **Zara's Earrings, Op.7**

*A Moorish Ballad for Soprano Voice and Orchestra*

*Text by John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854)*

“My earrings! my earrings! they’ve dropped into the well,  
And what to say to Muça, I can not, can not tell.”  
'Twas thus, Granada's fountain by, spoke Albuharez' daughter

“The well is deep, far down they lie, beneath the cold blue water –  
To me did Muça give them, when he spake his sad farewell,  
And what to say when he comes back, alas! I can not tell.

“My earrings! my earrings! they were pearls in silver set,  
That when my Moor was far away, I ne'er should him forget,  
That I ne'er to other tongue should list, nor smile on other's tale,  
But remember he my lips had kissed, pure as those earrings pale –  
When he comes back, and hears that I have dropped them in the well,  
Oh, what will Muça think of me, I can not, can not tell.

“My earrings! my earrings! he'll say they should have been,  
Not of pearl and of silver, but of gold and glittering sheen,  
Of jasper and of onyx, and of diamond shining clear,  
Changing to the changing light, with radiance insincere –  
That changeful mind unchanging gems are not befitting well –  
Thus will he think – and what to say, alas! I can not tell.

"He'll think when I to market went, I loitered by the way;  
He'll think a willing ear I lent to all the lads might say;  
He'll think some other lover's hand, among my tresses noosed,  
From the ears where he had placed them, my rings of pearl unloosed;  
He'll think, when I was sporting so beside this marble well,  
My pearls fell in – and what to say, alas! I can not tell.

"He'll say, I am a woman, and we are all the same;  
He'll say I loved when he was here to whisper of his flame –  
But when he went to Tunis my virgin troth had broken,  
And thought no more of Muça, and care not for his token.  
My earrings! my earrings! O luckless, luckless well,  
For what to say to Muça, alas! I can not tell.

"I'll tell the truth to Muça, and I hope he will believe –  
That I thought of him at morning, and thought of him at eve;  
That, musing on my lover, when down the sun was gone,  
His earrings in my hand I held, by the fountain all alone;  
And that my mind was o'er the sea, when from my hand they fell,  
And that deep his love lies in my heart, as they lie in the well."

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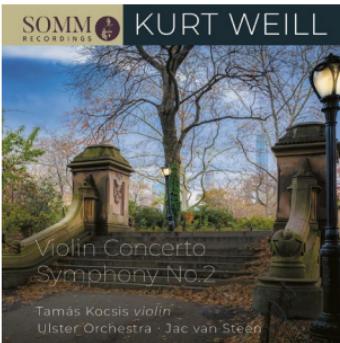
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SAMUEL  
COLERIDGE-TAYLOR  
1875-1912

<sup>a</sup> REBECCA MURPHY soprano · <sup>b</sup> IOANA PETCU-COLAN violin  
ULSTER ORCHESTRA · CHARLES PEEBLES conductor

1	Ethiopia Saluting the Colours (March), Op.51 *	9:50
2	Solemn Prelude, Op.40 for orchestra *	9:46
3	Zara's Earrings, Op.7 for soprano and orchestra * <sup>a</sup>	7:46
4	Idyll, Op.44 for orchestra	9:36
5	Ballade for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op.4 <sup>b</sup>	15:26
6	Entr'acte 1 *	9:38
	from the <i>Incidental Music to Nero</i> , Op.62	
7	Romance in B for string orchestra *	6:31
	after Clarinet Quintet, Op.10: II. Larghetto affettuoso	
<b>Total Duration:</b>		<b>68:46</b>



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