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NOEL

MEWTON-WOOD

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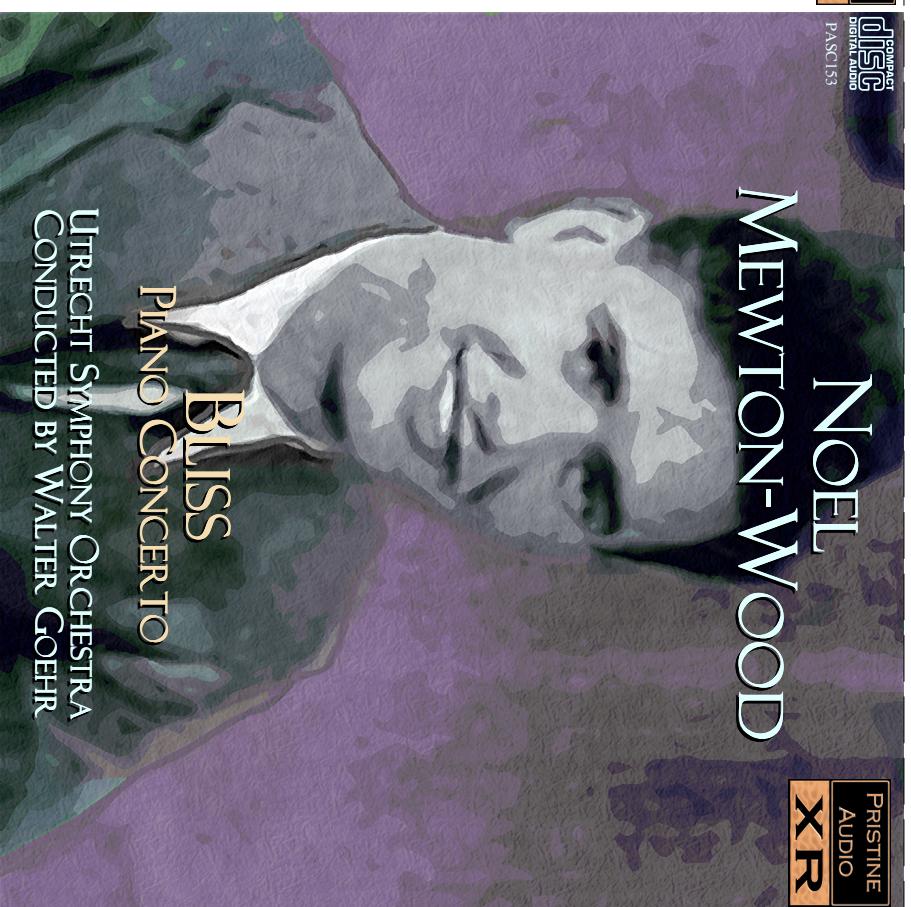
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1 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio (16:20)

2 2nd mvt. - Adagietto (9:55)

3 3rd mvt. - Andante maestoso (11:13)



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SIR ARTHUR BLISS

CONCERTO FOR PIANO & ORCHESTRA

NOEL MEWTON-WOOD, PIANO

UTRECHT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTED BY WALTER GOEHR

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BLISS - PIANO CONCERTO
MEWTON-WOOD, UTRECHT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, GOEHR

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BLISS - PIANO CONCERTO
MEWTON-WOOD, UTRECHT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, GOEHR

Sir Arthur Edward Drummond Bliss, CH, KCVO (2 August 1891 - 27 March 1975) was a British composer. Born to an American father and English mother, Bliss attended Bilton Grange Preparatory School and Rugby before entering Cambridge University. He was destined to display characteristics of both nations, his profound romanticism balanced by an unquenchable energy and optimism. He began studies at the Royal College of Music under Charles Villiers Stanford, but First World War broke out shortly after his first term and he left school to serve as a Grenadier Guards officer in the field.

With the return of peace, Bliss's career took off rapidly as a composer of what were, for British audiences, startlingly new pieces, often for unusual ensembles. Among these are a concerto for wordless tenor voice, piano and strings, and *Rout* for soprano and chamber orchestra, in which the soloist sings phonetic sounds rather than words. Much of his early music shows the influence of Stravinsky and Debussy. A landmark was his *Colour Symphony* of 1922 which explores the idea of the musical associations of different colours.

From the late 1920s onwards Bliss moved more into the traditional English musical scene with choral works such as *Pastoral* and *Morning Heroes*; in the 1930s he wrote the music for the film *Things to Come* and the ballet *Checkmate*. Bliss was always an ambitious, prolific composer, and some of his works were clearly intended for a wider international audience than they actually received. The *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Piano Concerto* are examples, the concerto being premiered by Solomon at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

During the Second World War Bliss became Director of Music at the BBC, and formed ideas which led to the division of music broadcasting into categories after the war, such as the present day Radios 1 and 3. In 1950 he was knighted and in 1953 he was appointed to succeed Arnold Bax as Master of the Queen's Musick. By this point in his career, though, it was becoming apparent that Bliss had not attained the level of success he had been aiming for. His opera *The Olympians*, despite a full-scale production at Covent Garden, was not popular, his oratorio *The Beatitudes* was forgotten beside Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* at the 1962 Coventry Festival, and his cello concerto, written for the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, was overshadowed by those of Benjamin Britten, Henri Dutilleux and Witold Lutoslawski. The concerto received its first London performance from the British cellist Julian Lloyd Webber. Bliss recorded fine interpretations of several of his major works, but they were not taken up widely by other conductors. His swansong, *Metamorphic Variations*, a large orchestral work, was first performed in 1972, but not by Leopold Stokowski as Bliss had hoped.

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra worked with Sir Arthur Bliss when he conducted them in a performance of his *Piano Concerto* at the 1970 Cheltenham Festival with Frank Wibaut as soloist. An earlier concert performance of the concerto was also given at Loughborough, again with Sir Arthur Bliss conducting. Later that year, Bliss recorded his *Introduction and Allegro* with the orchestra for the Argo label. The relationship with the LSSO continued well into 1975 with a new production of his ballet *The Lady of Shalott* being staged at the Leicester Haymarket Theatre. This occasion was also featured in the television programme *Girl in a Broken Mirror*.

Since his death Bliss's music has undergone a modest revival on radio and recordings, but his reputation remains insecure despite the personality of his output.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM