

## **CHARLES MARTIN LOEFFLER**

**New World Records 80332**

**La Mort de Tintagiles**

**Five Irish Fantasies**

### **INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**JOHN NELSON, Music Director**

**Jennie Hansen, Viola D'Amore**

**Neil Rosenshein, Tenor**

The music of Charles Martin Loeffler was a rarity in the United States. Much admired for its artistry, it was yet so individual and its Symbolist aesthetic so unusual that Loeffler acquired a reputation that set him apart from other American composers of his generation.

Loeffler came to America at the age of twenty. Behind him he had a cosmopolitan European background: he was born in France and had lived there and in Germany, Hungary, Russia, and Switzerland. After one year in New York, Loeffler settled in Boston, where he was the assistant concertmaster and a soloist with the Boston Symphony for twenty-one years. An extremely popular violinist in the city, he gained equal honors as a composer, and for nearly half a century Loeffler's music was a prominent and prized part of Boston's culture.

As a composer Loeffler was influenced by each culture to which he was exposed. He assimilated whatever he liked from a range of styles and eras, as well as nationalities. Combined with his modernity, this eclecticism created a highly individual style.

For good reason, however, Loeffler has been associated with the French, specifically with the Symbolist writers, from whom he drew inspiration for many works. He was drawn to texts characterized by rich imagery, particularly if melancholy, macabre, exotic, unworldly, or bizarre. He himself became known as a Symbolist, or decadent (a term used synonymously with "Symbolist") composer.

Loeffler was a tone poet. His music emphasized color, nuance, atmosphere, and fantasy; it used untraditional methods, including free forms, exotic and modern harmonies, and innovative instrumentation. A master colorist, Loeffler was considered a mystic for his evocative and iridescent musical visions.

*La Mort De Tintagiles*

(The Death of Tintagiles)

*La Mort de Tintagiles* was inspired by a marionette drama of the same title by the Belgian Symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck. Soon after Loeffler became acquainted with the play, his brother Raphael, then fifteen, suddenly died (in March 1895). The character of Tintagiles became identified with Raphael in Loeffler's imagination and inspired the symphonic poem.

"Nobody can read the play without having his soul stirred, a mood created," Loeffler wrote. "My music was my mood then."<sup>1</sup> Loeffler's *Tintagiles* was not written as a literal representation of the story in music, although Loeffler used a few specific points of the play--the opening lines, the tragedy of the

last act--and composed his themes in accord with the characters. "I meant," Loeffler wrote, "to have my music pervaded by the sadness and inevitableness of the play--all this is true. But I did not mean to...keep step with the scenes, or, still less, with the lines, of the play."<sup>2</sup> The music is, rather, a psychic reflection of the drama.

From the beginning, Loeffler thought of *Tintagiles* in terms of the viola d'amore. He had purchased a viola d'amore in July 1894 in Paris and considered it "the only instrument capable of expressing the spirit and mood of the doomed."<sup>3</sup>

Loeffler finished *Tintagiles* during the summer of 1897. It was scored for two solo viole d'amore (representing Tintagiles and Ygraine) and orchestra, and was presented on January 7, 1898, by the Boston Symphony. Loeffler and Franz Kneisel played the solo parts, with a second instrument Loeffler had acquired in 1897 (the instrument used in this recording). It was enthusiastically received by the audience, though critical reaction was divided.

*Tintagiles* was Loeffler at his most decadent. It had a strange beauty, and its harmonies were bold and startling. "Mr. Loeffler does not beat about the bush," wrote critic Louis Elson; "he plunges bodily into the brambles of the modern path...and, once launched, there are no stopping places."<sup>4</sup>

Its most controversial feature was its subject. The gloomy and macabre story, with its atmosphere of sinister forebodings and lurking horror, was thought unsuitable by some for musical setting. Yet the music undeniably created an effect. Its orchestration was particularly arresting, and the entire work was judged masterly by the less conservative.

Loeffler decided, however, to revise the score; he eliminated one solo part and reduced the other. The revised work was first heard in February 1901; in this form it was published in 1905. Subsequently, it became one of Loeffler's most enduringly popular orchestral works.

#### *Five Irish Fantasies*

Eight years after Loeffler composed *La Mort de Tintagiles*, he was attracted to two Irish tales of glamour and the supernatural. During 1906 and 1907 he set William Butler Yeats's "The Hosting of the Sidhe" and "The Host of the Air" for voice and piano. In 1908 they were published as *The Wind Among the Reeds* (title of the Yeats volume in which the poems had appeared).

In 1920 (the year the Irish Free State was established) Loeffler revised these songs and set three additional, completely different, texts: "The Fiddler of Dooney" and "The Ballad of the Foxhunter" by Yeats, and "The Song of Caitilin ni Uallachain" by William Heffernan (the Blind).

Three of the songs--"The Host of the Air," "The Fiddler of Dooney," and Caitilin ni Uallachain"--were premiered by John McCormack with the Boston Symphony on March 10, 1922. "The Hosting of the Sidhe" and "The Ballad of the Foxhunter" were first performed by Edward Johnson with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1929. The *Fantasies* won over even the most conservative of Loeffler's critics.

For the fifth song, Loeffler had hoped that McCormack would sing the original Gaelic text; but when McCormack saw it, he declared he could not sing a word of it. His performance was, apparently,

nonetheless remarkable, eliciting the comment: "When he sing this, you may be a crustacean, a crocodile, or a member of the Loyal Coalition, but you will think the hair is rising on your head, and the gooseflesh will course up and down your spine!"<sup>5</sup>

In 1934 the songs were published with piano accompaniment. The orchestral score was published the following year. At certain points the vocal parts differ between the two versions, reflecting Loeffler's predilection for revising his works. The present performance combines the vocal part of the piano songs with the orchestral score.

The *Five Irish Fantasies* represent a different era in Loeffler's stylistic development from *Tintagiles*. Yet both compositions reveal Loeffler as an artist with an unusual palette. His works are the kaleidoscopic creations of a rare American composer.

---Ellen Knight

Footnotes 1. Loeffler to Lawrence Gilman, quoted in the program of the New York Philharmonic, February 11, 1933. 2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Louis Elson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 10, 1898. 5. Olin Downes, *Boston Post*, March 11, 1922.

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*La Mort de Tintagiles*, a little drama for marionettes, is in five short acts. The characters are the tender boy Tintagiles; his older sisters Ygraine and Bellangere; Aglovale, the warrior retainer, now very old and tired; and the three handmaidens of the Queen.

Tintagiles is the future monarch of the nameless land in the strange years of legends. He and his sisters are living in a gloomy and airless castle far down in a valley; and in a tower that shows at night redlitten windows lurks the enthroned Queen. The serene ancients portrayed Death as beautiful of face; but this Queen in the nameless land is not beautiful in any way; she is fat as a sated spider. She squats alone in the tower. They that serve her do not go out by day. The Queen is very old; she is jealous, she cannot brook the thought of another on the throne. They that by chance have seen her will not speak of her--and some whisper that they who are thus silent did not dare to look upon her. 'Tis she who commanded that Tintagiles, her orphaned grandson, should be brought over the sea to the sombre castle where Ygraine and Bellangere have passed years, as blind fish in the dull pool of a craven.

The sea howls, the trees groan, but Tintagiles sleeps after his fear and tears. The sisters bar the chamber door, for Bellangere has heard strange muttering in rambling, obscure corridors, chuckling over the child whom the Queen would fain see. Ygraine is all of a tremble; nevertheless she believes halfheartedly and for the nonce that he may yet be spared; then she remembers how the Horrow in the tower has been as a tombstone pressing down her soul. Aglovale cannot be of aid, he is so old, so weary of it all. Her bare and slender arms are all that is between the boy and the hideous Queen of Darkness and Terror.

Tintagiles awakes. He suffers and knows not why. He hears a vague something at the door, and

others hear it. A key grinds in the lock outside. The door opens slowly. Of what avail is Aglovale's sword used as a bar? It breaks. The door is opened wider, but there is neither sight nor sound of an intruder. The boy has fainted, and the chamber suddenly is cold and quiet. Tintagiles is again conscious and he shrieks. The door closes mysteriously.

Watchers and boy are at last asleep. The veiled handmaidens whisper in the corridor; they enter stealthily and snatch Tintagiles from the warm and sheltering arms of life. A cry comes from him; "Sister Ygraine!" a cry as from someone far off.

The sister, haggard, with lamp in hand, agonizes in a sombre vault, a vault that is black and cold; agonizes before a huge iron door in the tower-tomb. The keyless door is a forbidding thing sealed in the wall. She has tracked Tintagiles by his golden curls found on the steps, along the walls. A little hand knocks feebly on the other side of the door; a weak voice cries to her. He will die if she does not come to him and quickly; for he has struck the Queen, who is hurrying toward him. Even now he hears her panting in pursuit; even now she is about to clutch him. He can see a glimmer of the lamp through a crevice which is so small that a needle could hardly make its way. The hands of Ygraine are bruised, her nails are torn, she dashes the lamp against the door in her wild endeavor, and she, too, is in the blackness of darkness. Death has Tintagiles by the throat. "Defend yourself," screams the sister: "don't be afraid of her. One moment, and I'll be with you. Tintagiles? Tintagiles? Answer me! Help! Where are you! I'll aid you--kiss me--through the door--here's the place--here." The voice of Tintagiles--how faint it is!--is heard for the last time: "I kiss you too--here--Sister Ygraine! Sister Ygraine! Oh!" The little body falls.

Ygraine bursts into wailing and impotent raging. She beseeches in vain the hidden, noiseless monster...

Long and inexorable silence. Ygraine would spit on the Destroyer, but she sinks down and sobs gently in the darkness, with her arms on the keyless door of iron.

---Philip Hale

The viola d'amore used in this recording was made by Tomaso Eberle of Naples c. 1775. Loeffler acquired the instrument in 1897 and gave it to Mrs. Isabella Stewart Gardner in 1903. It is now owned by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, where it is kept on display in the Yellow Room. New World Records wishes to thank the Gardner Museum for its cooperation and assistance in making the instrument available for the recording sessions.

(Photograph: Greg Heins, courtesy Gardner Museum)

Notes on the Texts

La Mort de Tintagiles

Maeterlinck's *La Mort de Tintagiles* is the third of *Trois Petits Drames pour Marionnettes*, published in Brussels in 1894. The character Ygraine bears no relation to Ygraine, wife of the Duke of Tintagel and of Uther Pendragon.

*The synopsis by Philip Hale appeared in the original published score of La Mort de Tintagiles.*

Five Irish Fantasies

The texts of the first three Yeats songs were published in his *The Wind Among the Reeds* and the fourth in *Crossways*.

The Aes Sidhe were the gods of ancient Ireland, whose chiefs were the Tuatha de Danaan, also identified in Irish legend as an invading tribe that peopled ancient Ireland.

Knocknarea is a mountain in Sligo. The grave of Clooth-na-Bare, according to a story Yeats related in *The Celtic Twilight*, would be Lough la Sligo, which she chose, after searching the world, as "deep enough to drown her faery life, of which she had grown weary." Caoilte, according to Yeats, was a companion of the legendary hero Finn, and Niamh was a beautiful woman of the Tuatha de Danaan who led Oisín, the poet, son of Finn, to the Country of the Young.

The host of the Sidhe (Sluagh Sidhe) were thought to journey in whirling winds and, if seen overlong, to turn the minds of men.

The Sluagh Gaoith, the host of the air, were air demons who lived among clouds, mists, and rocks. They hated humans and were more dreaded than the Sluagh Sidhe. They were said to steal brides just after their weddings.

William Heffernan, an eighteenth-century poet, was a native of Shronehill in Tipperary. His "Caitilin ni Uallachain" (an allegorical name for Ireland) was translated and published by James Clarence Mangan in the latter's *The Poets and Poetry of Munster* (Dublin: James Duffy & Sons, n.d.). The poem was evidently written after the first Jacobite Rebellion, since sections of the poem that Loeffler did not set refer to the failed hopes of James Francis Stuart, the Old Pretender.

I. The Hosting of the Sidhe (*Ceol-shee*--- "music of the wind")  
(William Butler Yeats)

The host is riding from Knocknarea  
And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;  
Coalte tossing his burning hair  
And Niamh calling "Away, come away:  
Empty your heart of its mortal dream.  
The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,  
Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,  
Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are  
agleam,  
Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;  
And if any gaze on our rushing band,  
We come between him and the deed of his  
hand,  
We come between him and the hope of his  
heart."

The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
Coalte tossing his burning hair,

And Niamh calling "Away, come away."

II. The Host of the Air (*Suantraige*--"music said to produce sleep")  
(William Butler Yeats)

O'Driscoll drove with a song,  
The wild duck and the drake,  
From the tall and the tufted reeds  
Of the drear Hart Lake.  
And he saw how the reeds grew dark  
At the coming of night tide,  
And he dreamed of the long dim hair  
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls  
Who danced on a level place  
And Bridget his bride among them,  
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,  
And many a sweet thing said,  
And a young man brought him red wine  
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,  
Away from the merry bands,  
To old men playing at cards  
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,  
For these were the host of the air;  
He sat and played in a dream  
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men  
And thought not of evil chance,  
Until one bore Bridget his bride  
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,  
The handsomest young man there,

And his neck and his breast and his arms  
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards  
And out of his dream awoke;  
Old men and young men and young girls  
Were gone like a drifting smoke;

But he heard highup in the air  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad  
And never was piping so gay.

III. The Fiddler of Dooney (*Geantraige*-- "music of good humor")  
(William Butler Yeats)

When I play my fiddle in Dooney,  
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;  
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,  
My brother in Moharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin:  
They read in their book of prayer;  
I read in my book of songs  
I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,  
To Peter sitting in state,  
He will smile on the three old spirits,  
But call me first through the gate;

For the good are always the merry,  
Save by an evil chance,  
And the merry love the fiddle  
And the merry love to dance:

And when the folks there spy me,  
They will all come up to me,  
With "Here is the fiddler of Dooney!"  
And dance like a wave of the sea.

IV. Ballad of the Foxhunter (*Goltraige*-- "weeping music")  
(William Butler Yeats)

"Now lay me in a cushioned chair  
And carry me, you four,

With cushions here and cushions there,  
To see the world once more.

And someone from the stable bring  
My Dermot dear and brown,  
And lead him gently in a ring,  
And gently up and down.

Now leave the chair upon the grass,  
Bring hounds and huntsman here,  
And I on this strange road will pass,  
Filled full of ancient cheer."

His eyelids droop, his head falls low,  
His old eyes cloud with dreams;  
The sun upon all things that grow  
Pours round in sleepy dreams.

Brown Dermot treads upon the lawn,  
And to the armchair goes,  
And now the old man's dreams are gone,  
He smooths the long brown nose.

And now moves many a pleasant tongue  
Upon his wasted hands,  
For leading aged hound and young  
The huntsman near him stands.

"My huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,  
And make the hills reply;"  
The huntsman loosens on the morn  
A gay and wandering cry.

A fire is in the old man's eyes,  
His fingers move and sway,  
And when the wandering music dies  
They hear him beebly say:

"My huntsman, Rody, blow the horn,  
And make the hills reply.  
I cannot blow upon my horn,  
I can but weep and sigh."

The servants round his cushioned place  
Are with new sorrow wrung;  
And hounds are gazing on his face,

Both aged hounds and young.

One blind hound only lies apart  
On the sunsmitten grass;  
He holds deep commune with his heart;  
The moments pass and pass;

The blind hound with a mournful din  
Lifts slow his wintry head;  
The servants bear the body in;  
The hounds wail for the dead.

V. The Song of Caitilin ni Uallachain  
(Caitilin ni Holahan)  
(William Heffernan, the Blind)

How tossed, how lost with all hopes  
crossed we have been!  
Our gold is gone; gear have we none, as all  
have seen;  
But ships shall brave the Ocean's wave,  
and morn shall dawn  
On Eire green, on Caitilin ni Holahan.

Let none believe this lovely Eve outworn  
or old;  
Fair is her form, her blood is warm, her  
heart is bold.  
Her songful voice that make rejoice hearts  
Grief hath gnawn,  
Prove her our Queen, our Caitilin ni  
Holahan.

We will not bear the chains we wear, not  
bear them long  
We seem bereaven, but mighty Heav'n will  
make us strong,  
The God who led through Ocean Red all  
Israel on  
Will aid our Queen, our Caitilin ni  
Holahan!

O, Virgin pure! our true and sure defence  
thou art!  
Pray thou thy Son to help us on in hand  
and heart!

O, Virgin pure! pray thou thy son!  
Our Prince, our Light, shall banish night,  
then beameth Dawn,  
Then shall be seen our Caitilin ni Holahan.

Our priests are as one man imploring  
Christ,  
Our bards are songful, and their gloom  
dispelled;  
Our souls are hopeful, our hearts know  
not fear  
When we think of our Caitilin ni Holahan!

So morn shall dawn on Eire green, on  
Caitilin ni Holahan!  
The God who led through Ocean Red all  
Israel on  
Will aid our Queen, our Caitilin ni  
Holahan.

**The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra** was founded in 1930 by Dr. Ferdinand Schaefer, who also served as its first music director. It has grown into a major symphony orchestra under the succeeding music directors Fabien Sevitzky, Izler Solomon and, currently, John Nelson. The Indianapolis Symphony recorded for RCA under Sevitzky, and, under John Nelson, can also be heard on a New World recording of orchestral works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (NW 336, CD,LP and cassette).

**John Nelson** was appointed the fourth music director of the Indianapolis Symphony at the beginning of the 1976-77 season. Acclaimed for his interpretations of Berlioz, he has appeared throughout the United States and Europe as guest conductor for leading symphonies and opera companies. He studied at Wheaton College and the Juilliard School of Music, and was later appointed to the conducting faculty at Juilliard. Mr. Nelson has recorded for Vox, Philips, Vanguard, and Louisville First Edition Records.

**Jennie Hansen** has an active career performing on viola, baroque viola and viola d'amore. She frequently appears with several chamber groups, including the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble and the Waverly Consort. She holds a degree from the University of Southern California and was professor of viola and chamber music at Ithaca College. Ms. Hansen has recorded for Vox, Columbia, and RCA Records.

**Neil Rosenshein** performs extensively with major symphony orchestras and opera companies. He has appeared with the Paris, Netherlands, San Francisco and Santa Fe Operas, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam and the New York Philharmonic. He performed in PBS telecast of *The Messiah* with the Boston Symphony and Sir Colin Davis. Mr. Rosenshein has also recorded for DGG and Telefunken Records.

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#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Two Rhapsodies, for oboe, viola, and piano. Advent 5017; Era 1011.
- Memories of My Childhood*, for orchestra. Mercury SRI-75090. Out of print.
- Music for Four Stringed Instruments*. Vox SVBX-5301.
- A Pagan Poem*, for orchestra with piano. Seraphim S-60080.
- Poem*, for orchestra. Mercury SRI-75090. Out of print.
- Quintet* for Three Violins, Viola, and Violoncello. ZRA QSD-301.
- Songs*. Northeastern 207.

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**Charles Martin Loeffler**

(1861-1935)

1- *La Mort de Tintagiles* 23:13

(The Death of Tintagiles)

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Jennie Hansen,

Viola D'Amore

*Five Irish Fantasies*

(Pub. G. Schirmer, Inc.)

Neil Rosenshein, Tenor

2- I. The Hosting of the Sidhe (2:18)

3- II. The Host of the Air (5:48)

4- III. The Fiddler of Dooney (2:56)

5- IV. Ballad of the Foxhunter (10:00)

6- V. The Song of Caitilin Ni Uallachain (7:25)

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

John Nelson, Conductor

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