

# Pieces after Childhood

composed by Geoffrey Tozer

Lachlan Redd | piano



"Tozer belonged to a small and rarefied stratum of world pianists. In terms of musical comprehension, intellectualism and facility, Geoffrey's talent was simply off the scale. He could arrange, orchestrate, compose and improvise; indeed, improvisation was one of his specialties."

PAUL KEATING

# Pieces after Childhood

composed by Geoffrey Tozer (1954–2009)

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Although Geoffrey Tozer was known as a brilliant performer during his lifetime, he was unknown as a composer. These compositions were virtually unheard prior to this recording. They demonstrate that Tozer was a mature, unique, eclectic composer.

## **Sonata in C** (1978)

- 1 Dolce 6'48"
- 2 Andante 3'48"
- 3 Allegro 3'45"
- 4 Prelude in C sharp major (1978) 6'06"
- 5 Fugue in C sharp major, 4 voices (1978) 8'06"

## **Two Part Inventions** (1972)

- 6 Andante 1'37"
- 7 Allegro 2'24"
- 8 Largo 2'04"
- 9 Andante 1'08"

## **Suite for Ben** (Benjamin Britten) (1988)

- 10 Prelude 2'00"
- 11 Minuet 2'08"
- 12 Gigue 0'35"

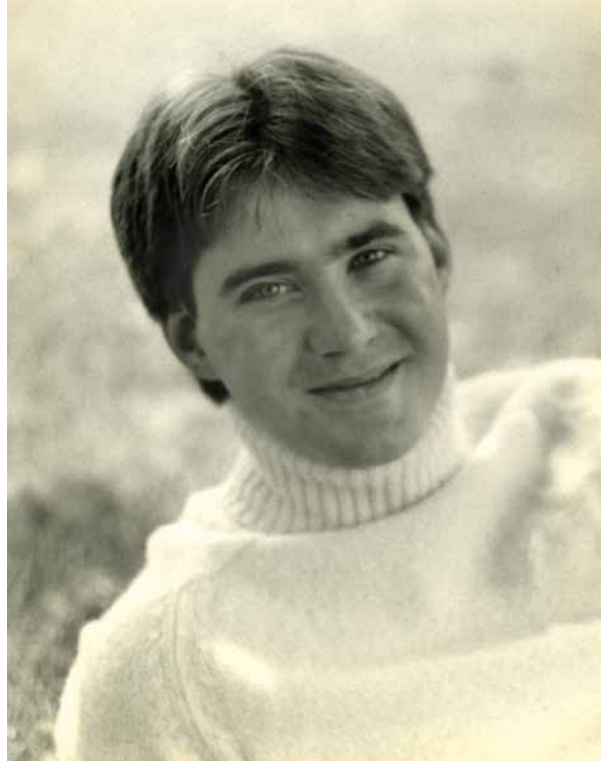
## **Citrus** (1978)

- 13 Praeludium and Fughetta in C 3'24"
- 14 Praeludium and Fughetta in B flat 3'00"
- 15 Lemon Tree Fugue 2'10"
- 16 Invention and Fugato 4'31"
- 17 Tripos 4'51"
- 18 Heimweh (*Homesickness*) (1978) 4'06"
- 19 Reuben (1974) 2'53"
- 20 Arpeggionata (1988) 0'42"

The compositions of Geoffrey Tozer were almost entirely unknown and unpublished at the time of his death in 2009. Today, over 150 of his original, hand-written manuscripts are housed in the Tozer Archive. Some of the piano pieces composed between 1963 and 1969 were recorded in 2014 and published in the volume *Pieces from Childhood*. Now, this recording of *Pieces after Childhood* and accompanying volume of scores, features nine works for piano composed during the years 1972-1988.

The growth in musical maturity and originality is evident in these works, as is the influence of Tozer's travels, study and performances both in Australia and overseas. The maturity of Tozer, the musician was apparent at a very early age, but unknown as a composer, who was in 'hibernation' while the concert artist blossomed and succumbed to the demands of an international career. Fortunately, Tozer did on occasion, commit his music to paper and we can now share what he had to say through his own music.

Tozer had a life-long fascination with counterpoint. This is clear in the *Two Part Inventions*, the Fugues composed for his *Citrus Suite* and more especially in the *Fugue in C#* written for the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1978. The *Fugue* and the *Prelude* (also in C#) takes the listener and any performer with the technical skills necessary to play it, (a stretch of least a 10<sup>th</sup> in the left hand is pre-requisite) on a contrapuntal and harmonic journey of intrigue and excitement, as it weaves the four voices throughout the



entire range of the keyboard. The *Prelude* with its score demanding one complete system per bar could attract the same idiosyncratic criticism as Mozart's music: "too many notes". Tozer's *Prelude* is even more virtuosic than the *Fugue*, and like many works of Nikolai Medtner, who Tozer championed, it is relentless from the first bar to the last in the full five minutes and forty seconds its performance requires.

The *Sonata in C*, the last of his nine piano sonatas, in my opinion, is the most inspiring and appealing. It begins with an unforgettable melody that should be dedicated to Mozart, for its simplicity and beauty and for the way Tozer develops and ornaments it. In the three movements of the *Sonata*, one hears the journey Tozer has made both harmonically and melodically

– sometimes quite predictable, but often unexpected and unique in the twists and turns it takes.

Whereas many of his childhood pieces reflect the influence and respect Tozer had for the great composers, this volume of pieces after childhood introduces us to Tozer as a more mature, unique, eclectic composer in his own right. The soul-searching *Heimweh* composed in Jerusalem in 1978, draws us into some of the pain he has already felt and is yet to confront; *Reuben* is more of a light-hearted joke, a musical evocation of Reuben Fineberg, the Jewish impresario who was to influence and guide much of Tozer's life and performing career right up to Fineberg's death in October 1996. The *Arpeggionata* and *Suite for Ben* were written during Tozer's extraordinary sojourn as a part-time music teacher in Canberra in 1988. Tozer composed *Arpeggionata* to express to teenage schoolboys the sheer joy and brilliance of playing arpeggios all over the piano. He composed *Suite for Ben* as a lovely tribute to his own musical hero Benjamin Britten, whom he met and by whom he had been mentored when he himself was a teenager.

Lachlan Redd, is the first pianist to perform these pieces and fortunately has a span of a tenth! I again acknowledge Lachlan's invaluable assistance. It has been a delight to ponder Tozer's compositions with Lachlan, to ensure complete accuracy and to discover more of Tozer as a composer, one whom we now recognise as a composer of considerable worth.

PAMELA FREEMAN February 2017

**O**n 28 December 2004 on the beautiful island of Gulangyu in China, Geoffrey Tozer gave the last great recital of his career. In a performance lasting three hours, he played some of the most difficult music ever written for the piano: from Scarlatti to Scriabin, Bach to Bartok and Mozart to Medtner. The entire recital was filmed and Tozer rose magnificently to the occasion although he was suffering from illness, compounded by the long term effects of a near-death bout of hepatitis, contracted during his tour of Asia in 1974. When Tozer died on 21 August 2009, his untimely passing brought to a premature end the most extensive and honoured career of any Australian pianist to that time.

In 1992, Tozer had been nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Classical Performance. He was not yet forty, was at the peak of his powers and the Grammy nomination, along with the Diapason D'Or awarded to him in France, recognized him as one of the world's leading pianists. Commenting on Tozer's nomination, the LA Times asked 'Geoffrey who?' It was an understandable question given the unfortunate mismanagement of Tozer's international career, even though audiences around the world had witnessed Tozer's performances for decades and

were well aware of his abilities.

At the time of Tozer's Grammy nomination, his manifold achievements as a child prodigy and during the transitional years of his career, were either forgotten or unknown to the wider public. Tozer had given his first recital at five (a recording of which still exists). He performed his first concerto, a televised performance of Bach's *F Minor Concerto*, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at the age of eight. During the next five years he composed a sizeable body of music and built



a substantial repertoire, giving numerous recitals and concerts with leading orchestras in Australia. At the age of ten he composed a piano concerto and was broadcast on ABC Radio playing one of his compositions, *The Frank Bridge Suite*. At thirteen, he became the world's youngest recipient of a Churchill Fellowship. Shortly afterwards, in 1969, he moved to London where, later that year, Tozer was the youngest ever semi-finalist in the Leeds Piano Competition. In 1970 he won first prize in the Alex de Vries Piano

Competition in Belgium and first prize in the Royal Overseas League Competition. He was invited to play for the Royal Family and was presented to the Queen. In August 1970, aged just fifteen, he made his debut at the Albert Hall in London, performing Mozart's *Piano Concerto No 15*.

Important engagements followed in the United Kingdom and Europe, including playing EM Forster's favourite Beethoven Sonata at Forster's Memorial Service, appearances with Daniel Barenboim's English Chamber Orchestra and, at the invitation of Benjamin Britten, performances with Rostropovich at the 1971 Aldeburgh Festival.

During Tozer's transitional years in Australia (1972–1978) he performed constantly throughout Australia and periodically overseas. He continued to compose, made

numerous recordings for ABC radio, was awarded a second Churchill Fellowship (1973) and distinguished himself in the world's leading piano competitions: Van Cliburn (1973 and 1977), Leeds (1977), Rubinstein (1977) and Tchaikovsky (1978) in which he audaciously played his own *Fugue in C#*. By 1978, when he decided to focus on performance, rather than composition, he had already composed at least 150 pieces of music for piano and other instruments, including the haunting *Sonata in C* (1978) and the extraordinarily difficult *Prelude in C#* (1978). In 1979, he moved to London and, in 1980, won the Gold Medal in the Third Rubinstein Piano Competition in Israel. He was just twenty-five and his win marked the pinnacle of his achievements in competitions and propelled his career as a major concert pianist.

Tozer's Rubinstein Gold Medal provided the impetus for an extensive touring schedule in Australasia, Europe, Asia and many parts of the Americas, and the beginnings of his adult recording career. In 1981, at the invitation of Maria Curcio, he travelled to Venezuela to give Master Classes with her. The following year he became Artist-in-Residence at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1982-1983), still returning annually to Australia for concert tours. In 1981 the ABC filmed complete recordings of Tozer performing Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* and Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 16* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In 1982, Tozer's concert tour of Australia concluded with four performances



of Medtner's stupendous *Piano Concerto No. 2* at the Sydney Town Hall and at Sydney Opera House. Tozer's final performance of the Medtner concerto at the Opera House was filmed by the ABC and broadcast on national television in February 1983. His halcyon days began the following year when he re-located to Australia's national capital, Canberra where he would live for the next decade.

In 1986, the ABC released Tozer's first classical LP, the John Ireland *Piano Concerto* which he performed with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and this was followed by three other Australian

commercial releases of Tozer at the piano. Also in 1986, Liszt's centenary year, the Hungarian Government awarded Tozer the Liszt Centenary Medal. It was a rare honour presented to just ten of the world's leading musicians and he travelled to Hungary for the first time to accept it.

In 1987 in Budapest Tozer made his debut at the Vigado, where Liszt himself had performed. By then he had returned briefly to composition and built a vast repertoire of concertos, solo works, chamber music and vocal music that was one of the largest of any pianist.

In 1988, Tozer met Paul and Annita Keating following a fund-raising concert at St Edmunds College in Canberra.

Keating, then Treasurer of Australia and renowned for his knowledge of classical music, immediately recognized Tozer's abilities and needs as an artist. In 1989, Tozer was one of seven recipients of the first series of Australian Artists Creative Fellowships. Tozer's Fellowship enabled his career achievements to rise to new heights. Keating introduced Tozer to Brian Couzens at Chandos in England. Soon afterwards, Tozer signed a long-term contract with Chandos, beginning a period of remarkable output that produced thirty-four CDs in twelve years. Tozer's very first Chandos recording, the *Complete Piano Concertos* of Nikolai Medtner, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, was immediately recognized as 'a landmark in recording history' and he was honoured with a Grammy nomination (1992) and won the Diapason D'Or.

In 1993, Tozer was described by the leading French critic, Alain Cochard, as 'a grand master' of the piano and, in recognition of his abilities and achievements, and especially so he could continue to fulfil his potential, he was awarded a second AAC Fellowship (1993). Throughout the 1990s, despite his constant international touring and recording commitments, Tozer adamantly refused to re-locate overseas.

1997 was one of the pinnacles in Tozer's career. He performed concertos of Tchaikovsky and Brahms in America, Chopin rarities for piano and orchestra with the Malvern Symphony in Australia, the London premiere performance of the Roberto Gerhard *Piano Concerto* and, while giving numerous recitals in several countries, made five compact discs for Chandos including music of Percy Grainger for piano and orchestra.

By 2001, Tozer had performed in China on numerous occasions and was invited to play the renowned patriotic piece, the *Yellow River Concerto*. His performance was broadcast on live television and seen by an estimated 80 million people. The same year, Tozer opened the piano festival En Blanco Y Negro in Mexico City; performed the Schnabel piano sonatas for the Berlin festival celebrating Artur Schnabel himself in the presence of dozens of Schnabel's descendants; and gave

one of the finest recitals of his career, an all-Medtner programme at the Assembly Hall in Melbourne, Australia. Tozer made his final recording with Chandos in 2003. Entitled *Medtner Goethe Lieder*, the recording was the realisation of a dream that he had harboured for decades: to record Medtner's two wordless vocalizes for soprano, music that he described as 'beautiful and satisfying' and as



'the best of Nikolai Medtner'. The recording earned Tozer some of the best reviews of his career in Gramophone.

In January 2005 in Sydney, Tozer performed one of Miriam Hyde's two piano concertos (with Christine Edwards playing the orchestral part). Soon afterwards, he was invited to give a Master Class in Queensland.

There he met the young Jayson Gillham, who would later champion the music of Medtner. Tozer recognised Gillham's unique gifts. In a letter to David and Pamela Freeman (9 May 2005) Tozer wrote, 'Jayson turned pages for me in Queensland, and when I announced that I was "honoured to have such a distinguished page-turner" the place erupted in applause. He is capable plus, and super intelligent. I've never heard a greater talent in Australia, ever'.

Later that year Tozer continued his engagement with students, playing the Rachmaninoff *Concerto No. 2* in Perth with a student orchestra. After that he gave numerous recitals, often for charity and, occasionally, gave recitals on ABC live radio, most notably with Alison Lavaroff-Somssich playing music of Enescu at Federation Hall in Hobart in 2007. In March 2009, Tozer performed at three variety concerts at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, playing music of Gershwin and Liszt, for a total audience of 30,000 people. It was a brief reminder of his glory days and his last major

engagement.

Geoffrey Tozer gave everything to music and asked little in return. His vast musical legacy includes a large body of compositions and hundreds of recordings. Only now, is it beginning to be understood.

PETER WYLLIE JOHNSTON

© 5 November 2017

The question has been asked of me many times, would Geoffrey want 'his compositions' to be heard in public? This is an interesting tease, for it assumes that Geoffrey only wanted to play these pieces for himself. This may also be part of the picture in raising the issue of personal (private) musical reflections, as opposed to public and overt displays of virtuosity in performance.

What we do know, on examining these more mature works, is that they range in both style and sophistication. (We note the *Pieces from Childhood* likewise demonstrate the composer's mastery and acknowledgement of style.)

The actual texts reveal different stages in the artistic process for Geoffrey: some experimental and 'sketchy'; others neatly revised in several versions. (The complicated *Prelude and Fugue* is one notable example.) Did the fact that Geoffrey performed the *Fugue* in Russia, indicate he endorsed public performance of his works for future generations?

What will be interesting to the listener (and the curious student) is that these *Pieces after Childhood* display the complex characteristics of the pianist/composer, in the various stages of his performing life and career. Be it the expression of an artist away from home, or the artist at home in preparation for a series of competitions or tours, or the output, perhaps, as a measure of his much needed 'downtime'. Whatever the verdict, these works reflect a release for such an artist, who in demand, found composition a reprieve from the rigours of the concert platform.

The virtuosic demands in most of the *Pieces After Childhood* may be beyond the technical reach of many pianists, but the challenge of following the scores and gaining some insight into this interesting and diverse music is here for the curious listener as well.

LACHLAN REDD  
September 2017

Lachlan Redd is, unarguably, among the finest musicians resident in Australia today. In recent years, he has become the first pianist to perform the compositions of Geoffrey Tozer, both in recital and on recordings.

On 2 September 2011, he gave the premier performance of Tozer's *Arpeggionata* in Federation Hall. In January 2016, as part of the Peninsula Music Festival, he became the first pianist to perform Tozer's beautiful *Sonata in C* in public. In the meantime he had recorded Tozer's *Pieces From Childhood*, a series of Tozer's childhood compositions that was released by Move Records in 2014. Now, with *Pieces After Childhood*, Lachlan has recorded Tozer's most difficult works for the piano, offering the musical world new insights into Tozer's musical genius and considerable challenges for those who wish to perform the music. Lachlan's repertoire is wide and he is equally at home with the virtuosic music of Rachmaninov as he is with the music of Bach or Mozart, all of whose music embodies stylistic and musical features that are present in Tozer's works for the piano.

As Lachlan celebrates the 21st anniversary of his career as a concert pianist, he has reaffirmed his commitment to contributing to the musical life of the nation by remaining in Australia, while maintaining an annual presence on the international concert stage.

From the outset, as a student and as a young artist, Lachlan distinguished himself. He studied piano at the Australian National University where he was the University



Medallist (1996). In 1997 he was awarded a Queen's Trust scholarship to study at the Manhattan School of Music, and two years later completed his Masters of Music there under Philip Kavin. In Australia, he received the inestimable benefit of musical guidance from Ronald Farren-Price and Rita Reichman while gaining musical honours in competition, including the ABC Young Performer of the Year (Keyboard), First Prize in the Young Virtuoso of the Year Competition, when he 'astonished the musical might of Russia' (1995) and First Prize (twice) in the Bach Competition.

During the first decade of his concert career, Lachlan performed for lengthy periods overseas as well as at home. By 2007, he had performed throughout Australia and in Belgium, England, Germany, Russia, Scotland and the United States with leading conductors including Nicholas Braithwaite, Janos Furst, Michael Halasz, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Vladimir Verbitsky. 2008 was a turning point in his career. First, he received glowing reviews for his performance of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 2* in Melbourne. Geoffrey Tozer was present at Lachlan's

performance and was greatly impressed by it. Soon afterwards, when Lachlan was engaged as soloist by the Australian Ballet to play Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 2* for the revival of Balanchine's Ballet Imperial (sixteen performances under the baton of Nicolette Fraillon) Lachlan began to work with Tozer who, Lachlan later recalled, 'solved every technical and interpretive problem in the concerto'. Lachlan's successes during this period convinced him that he could make his best musical contribution by remaining in Australia.

Since then, he has been constantly in work as one of the country's busiest artists. While touring nationally, he has continued to perform annually in Europe and England, most notably with regular performances of different Mozart concertos at St Martin in the Fields, under the baton of the internationally respected English conductor and Baroque specialist, Peter G. Dyson. Lachlan has also worked as an adjudicator for leading piano competitions, a teacher and as Assistant Organist at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne, while learning new repertoire for recital and concert appearances and continuing his recording career.

Lachlan's early recordings include Richard Meale's extraordinary *Coruscations* and the live ABC recording of the *Third Concerto* of Rachmaninov from Hamer Hall (1996). His two recordings of Tozer's piano works are a testament to his unique qualities as a pianist. With *Pieces After Childhood*, Lachlan Redd scales new heights of achievement and reveals the continued growth of his artistry.





**Pamela Freeman peruses the original Tozer scores with Lachlan Redd**

Recorded on 21 September 2016 and 27 February 2017 in Move Records studio

*Recording engineers:* Martin Wright and Vaughan McAlley

*Editing:* Vaughan McAlley

*Mastering:* Martin Wright

*Photographs:* Geoffrey Tozer archive

*Front cover photograph:* Geoffrey Tozer in 1986

*Photographs:* page 3 – 1983, page 4 – 1987, page 5 – 1981, page 6 – 1986

Go to [move.com.au](http://move.com.au) for details of a new series of remastered Geoffrey Tozer archive concert recordings from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, available for the first time

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