

A portrait of a smiling man with light brown hair, wearing a dark grey blazer over a white shirt. He is holding a large, polished brass tuba in front of him. The background is a dark, textured wall.

**ROSS
KNIGHT**
Artist Profile ▶

**+ 2025 FALCONE
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ITEA Journal

ARTIST PROFILE: ROSS KNIGHT

New Recording of the Gregson Tuba Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

BY JUSTIN BENAVIDEZ

In November 2025, Chandos Records released a new compendium album of works by Edward Gregson entitled *A Vision In A Dream*. This album features three major concertos as well as two shorter works for piano and orchestra with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Ben Gernon. Edward Gregson is an award-winning English composer of international standing and one of the leading composers of his generation. His Tuba Concerto, one of the most performed of all of his compositions, is the first work on this album.

The soloist, Ross Knight, is the Solo Tuba player of Ochestre de la Suisse Romande and tuba teacher at the Hochschule der Künste Bern, in Switzerland. He is the International Visiting Tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and has performed with the world's top orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich. He was named Overall Winner in the Category Tuba at the 2019 Aeolus International Competition for Wind Instruments and is an artist with B&S Instruments, Melton Meinl Weston, and Besson.

Ross recently joined me for an interview to discuss his experience on this recording and the direction of his already impressive career.

Justin Benavidez: *We are nearing the 50th anniversary of the premiere of the Gregson Tuba Concerto with John Fletcher and the Besses o' the Barn Band. This new recording is a very important milestone in the history of the work, dedicated to Fletcher, recorded as well by James Gourlay with the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, and now includes your recording with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Could you tell me about your career and how you got into music and the tuba?*

Ross Knight: I actually started playing guitar, classical guitar, when I was seven. I then picked up piano quickly afterwards and none of them really stuck. I knew that I wanted to play music of some sort, and I deliberately messed up my audition for violin at school. (laughs) It was one of those things where I

knew it didn't suit me. It was funny. So I pretended I couldn't sing when I did my audition. About a half year later, my parents got in touch with the brass teacher, and I just asked if I could start early, because I was so keen to try this. I was one year early compared to the students in my grade, but one month late compared to the students a year older than me. I had to sing jingle bells along with piano with my teacher accompanying me. So I sung that and sung like an angel that time (laughs). He said, "Great! Come along next week and we'll get you an instrument." Then I turned up, and this is no lie, he said, "I'm really sorry Ross, there's only one instrument left," and he handed me a tuba. That was it.

That seems to be a pretty common thing for us in our world, yet we love our instrument anyway. So how did you get more serious about music? Tell me about your early career.

I grew up brass banding. Very much a bander. I grew up playing in our instrumental band and district youth bands from my local area. We became British Champions and second in Europe with this youth band. We really took off over a few years, and we had a nucleus of really good players. I think I was 10 years old. I started playing when I was nine, but I was 10 playing the tuba when I knew that I wanted a career in music. I had no idea what, but I really knew then this is the thing for me. Of course, as a young boy, stuff changes. There were moments where I was like, "Should I play football, should I do this?" It was in my mind; my full passion was playing the tuba.

Was there a moment or a piece of music that really spoke to you that determined that idea for you?

Funnily enough, it was probably this concerto because I was given the opportunity to perform it with symphony orchestra when I was 15 years old. Around when I was 13 or 14, I had just started playing in orchestras. I had never really done it before and I was still playing on the E flat tuba, adding flats to the key signature because I was still reading in treble



Ben Gernon, Ross Knight and Edward Gregson



CHANDOS DIGITAL **CHAN 20356**

Country of origin UK MCPS

0 095115 235621

LC 7038 DDD TT 7200

Recorded in 2-4-bus/96 kHz

A VISION IN A DREAM
EDWARD GREGSON (b. 1945)

1-3 **TUBA CONCERTO (1976-78)*** 19:41
With alternative Codenza to third movement (1994)

Interlude 1
premiere recording

4 **A SONG FOR BRAM (2022-24)*** 6:30
for Piano and Orchestra
Thomas Fountain trumpet

premiere recording

5-7 **CONCERTO 'THREE GODDESSES' (2023)†** 19:18
for Viola and String Orchestra
Zoe Beyers solo violin

Interlude 2
premiere recording

8 **A SONG FOR SUE (1966, adapted 2020, revised 2024)*** 5:33
Version for Piano and String Orchestra

premiere recording

9-15 **A VISION IN A DREAM (2019, revised 2024)‡** 20:35
Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra
Lydia Griffiths cor anglais
Paul Patrick percussion

11:72:00

JENNIFER GALLOWAY OBOE[§]
ROSS KNIGHT TUBA[§]
RACHEL ROBERTS VIOLA[†]
EDWARD GREGSON PIANO[†]
BBC PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
ZOE BEYERS LEADER
BEN GERNON

BBC RADIO 3
90-91PM

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CHANDOS

A VISION IN A DREAM
CONCERTOS BY
EDWARD GREGSON

Philharmonic Orchestra

JENNIFER GALLOWAY OBOE
ROSS KNIGHT TUBA
RACHEL ROBERTS VIOLA
EDWARD GREGSON PIANO

BEN GERNON

CHANDOS
CHAN 20356

GREGSON: A VISION IN A DREAM - soloists / BBC PO / Gernon



clef like they do in brass band. I was still getting used to that and then I got asked to do the concerto after a couple of years in the orchestra. I was given the choice of what piece I wanted to perform, so I listened to a few things and came out that this was the piece that I liked the most. So I did that, and right in that stage was when I felt orchestra was probably the thing to do.

The year after I had my first lesson with Patrick Harild of the London Symphony Orchestra. My teacher set up a lesson for me in Edinburgh. We continued with lessons every few months down in London. I would travel down on a sleeper train, arrive at stupid o'clock in the morning, have my lesson, then travel back up on the next sleeper train the next night and go to school the next day. So I did that for a few months and then got into the Royal Academy of Music to study there.

I love that you had a connection to Edward Gregson's music from such a young age. Shifting gears to the album, tell me how this recording came to be.

Eddie's known about me for a while. We've been in touch throughout the years. Even when I played the concerto the first time, I wrote to Mr. Gregson to say "Hi, I'm playing your concerto. Just wanted to let you know, and I'm really excited to play it." I played it at the Festival of Brass with Tredegar Band. I think he was there and heard that. Through that he kind of kept track of what I'd been doing. I got my job in the Orchestra de la Suisse Romande back in 2016, so he knew what I was doing. Then out of the blue one day I received an email saying, "Hey Ross, I'm going to be doing this recording with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and would you be interested?" I immediately replied and said, "Yeah, 100%."

So you hadn't worked with him before necessarily, but he knew of you.

Through the brass band world as well. For example, my wife was at the Dutch Master Brass Band Championships yesterday. It was completely dedicated to Eddie for his 80th birthday this year, and all the pieces were his. So I've known all of his brass band works throughout the years and seen him at competitions in the past. I probably introduced myself at some point as well. I've recently been teaching the last few years as international visiting tutor at the RNCM, so I see him there occasionally as well which is great.

So this incredible opportunity to play as a soloist with the BBC Philharmonic – what was that like?

I was very lucky. I have friends that have been playing there for quite a while, so I knew what I was going to be expecting in terms of standard of the orchestra, and I was still blown away. I know how good the standard of orchestra playing, especially the brass in the UK, but the strings were the ones that really... I was matched in volume entirely by the string section. It was just an envelope of sound. Every single section was wonderful. I walked in and everything worked immediately. It was spectacular actually. There's no better word for it. I was just blown away at the standard of playing.

It comes across in the recording. I was really struck by the sensitivity and the enthusiasm of the orchestra. We've heard many fine renditions of the orchestra in the past, but the orchestra is in such top form, and your solo playing is artistic and impeccable. I really enjoyed hearing the extended cadenza in the third movement especially.

I did that in two takes. The orchestra had just finished their break. And usually while they are taking the break you do the cadenza. But I just sat down, "Is it fine if we just do this quickly?" I don't know if it was just luck or I was just in good form in that moment just after the break or what, but the whole orchestra was sitting there and I was like, "Oh geez, I better get this right." It was two perfect takes, so they could just take what they wanted. Honestly, I've never ever done that in my life before.



That's amazing. A happy set of circumstances. I think this album is undoubtedly going to rise to the top of the list of recordings of this concerto. I noticed that Ben Gernon is the conductor for the project, and I believe he was once a tubist himself. Did that connection help in the process at all and what was it like to work with him?

The thing is, I hadn't met him before. I met him on the day for the rehearsal which was the day before the recording. We had a quick chat through the piece. He was like, "I know this really well. You know it really well. This is going to work." "Yeah, great. Okay." I just gave him one or two moments where I was taking a bit more time, and he was like, "Great, yeah, perfect." And that was it. It took about an hour to rehearse, and then we were done after two and a half hours in the recording session. It was really, really quick. And that helped so much from him because he knew the piece inside out, back to front. He's clearly on the upward trajectory of what I hope is going to be a very big career for him. It was really wonderful to work with him.

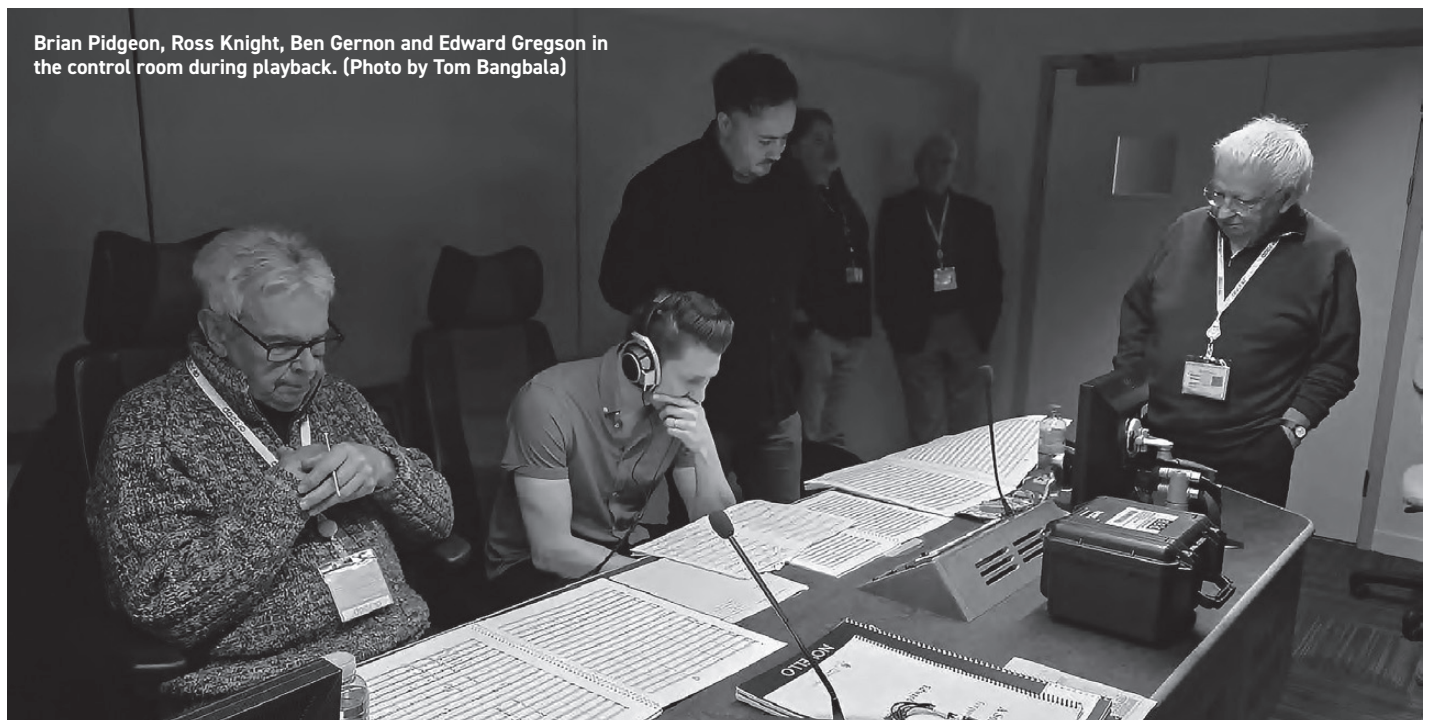
I noticed from his biography that Ben Gernon has been very active, even as such a young conductor. It seems like he has a very promising career ahead. It must have been wonderful to work with somebody that knows the piece that well. As I was listening to it, it was fresh, both in the interpretation but also in the approach. It sounded off the cuff, light and easy and fun.

It was proper British style. That's what it was.
(laughs)

You mentioned the moment of the cadenza. What were some stimulating moments in the recording or some of the challenges that were involved?

Honestly, when you are recording above an orchestra, trying to get through the texture... they created the space like we spoke a bit before. Microphone placement helps, but I was still performing as though I was doing the concert. That was what I was getting in my head from the moment I walked in the room. I find that super important. Still playing the same way as if I was in front of the full orchestra performing in the big concert hall. Same projection, the same sort of approach. That helped a lot to overcome any big barriers.

I was surprisingly calm. It's different from playing a concert because in a concert you have one chance. But in a recording, if something goes wrong, you just try again. They were so nice. The orchestra were lovely and all the sound tech guys, everybody behind the scenes, Ben. Honestly, it was wonderful. I think that does come across. This kind of connection we created in the recording session. It was quite special actually.



Brian Pidgeon, Ross Knight, Ben Gernon and Edward Gregson in the control room during playback. (Photo by Tom Bangbala)



Yeah, you said it. "Special" is certainly it. I was thinking about this concerto. Here in the United States, for students it is a rite of passage. It is such an important work of the canon that to me, it is in the very few works that every tubist must know and will perform at one point or another. How important do you feel this work is in the repertoire?

I totally agree. It's one of the staple ones. Let's put it that way. You've got the Vaughan Williams and you've got this. Not really many others. Maybe the John Williams is getting there as well, but the John Williams is a different type of concerto. These are the kind of two that, if someone says, "Well do you know a Tuba Concerto?" they're likely to say Vaughan Williams and this one. The great thing about it is that it's accessible for most players. It's not the most difficult concerto ever, but it's so easy to get it wrong. It takes a long time to perfect it. When I was preparing for this I listened back to my recording from when I was 15, with mistakes that I'd never even realized I did at the time. One of the reasons I chose the Gregson was that I wasn't sure I could have performed the Vaughan Williams at the time either which

is an interesting decision when you're that age. It shows that it is possible to play the Gregson as well. It's great that you get this accessibility, but also such a crowd pleaser. That's why I've chosen to play it so many times. I've had the choice for example with my orchestra in Geneva and I chose this, because I thought the audience would like it more than anything else. That's one of the nice things about it. Everybody loves it.

You're absolutely right. It has a little bit of everything for everyone. After hearing your recording again, in particular the second movement with the beauty of the strings, it comes across so well, and there are other spots where you can tap your foot and really enjoy the tune.

Jazz influences as well. It's got everything.

It really does. You have had other opportunities to perform the Gregson as you just mentioned and perhaps you will perform it again. Looking ahead, tell me about some other projects you have going on.

I have nothing planned right just now. I'm quite strictly an orchestral player and there aren't so many opportunities as a tuba player to perform as a soloist. But I played this last year with the Neue Lausitzer Philharmonie in Zittau which is in the very east of Germany, not too far from Dresden, and the town is in Poland and Germany. I played five or six performances then. That was my last time doing a proper stint, getting a good chance to do it over and over again, to perfect it, and getting ready for this recording. Get myself under pressure, which helps for getting in the room. For the future, I don't know if I can tell anyone about it, but I have a recording opportunity coming up next year. I can't give too many details yet, but something that is in the pipeline as well. With brass band as well.

We will look forward to hearing more about that project. As this album is released and many more people come to know your wonderful playing, many more opportunities will find their way to you, well deservedly so.

Thank you. I am always thinking of the next thing. I would love to do a CD myself. I'm actually commissioning for new works. It's in my head, but just trying to get the funds for it is the next question, but we'll see what happens with that.

Do you have any other thoughts to share?

This is one of the most exciting things I've ever done. I was actually very emotional listening to it. I hope that it's going to be very well received. I really hope that this will lead to other things as well. I think every soloist hopes to continue this kind of trajectory afterwards. I'm very proud of this recording, so hopefully it will be one of the staples of this particular piece for the future to come. We'll see what comes of it.