



Gerard SCHURMANN

CHAMBER AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND SONGS VOLUME FOUR

TWO BALLADES FOR PIANO: HOMAGE TO JANÁČEK
CHUENCH'I: SONG-CYCLE FROM THE CHINESE
FOUR PASTORAL PRELUDES FOR PIANO
SONATINA FOR FLUTE AND PIANO
SIX SONGS OF WILLIAM BLAKE
MOONBIRD FOR SOLO FLUTE

Randall Bills, tenor
Maxim Rubtsov, flute
Mark Robson, piano
Mikhail Korzhev, piano

GERARD SCHURMANN: CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

by Paul Conway

Although this Toccata Classics Gerard Schurmann series has been billed hitherto as 'Chamber Music', the definition has been expanded here to include two song-cycles. John McCabe once wrote 'that Schurmann is an outstanding instrumental and orchestral writer is well-known – that he is equally an inspired song-writer is perhaps becoming familiar only gradually'.¹ The two contrasting cycles featured on this album offer text-setting of rare sensitivity and invention, substantiating McCabe's advocacy of Schurmann as a distinguished composer for the voice.

Gerard Schurmann was born on 19 January 1924 in Kertosono, Java, which was then part of the Dutch East Indies. During the 1950s and '60s, he was best known for his music for the cinema, from the Ealing classics *The Long Arm* (1956) and *Man in The Sky* (1957) to the Disney adventure romp *Dr Syn, Alias the Scarecrow* (1963), *The Ceremony* (1963) and *The Bedford Incident* (1965), as well as for such fantasy titles as *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959) and *Konga* (1961) for the American producer Herman Cohen, and *The Lost Continent* (1968), a Hammer Production. Other projects included orchestrating two Oscar-winning scores: Maurice Jarre's *Lawrence of Arabia*² and Ernest Gold's *Exodus*. Practising the strict discipline required to create vividly imaginative film scores for very specific forces to tight deadlines proved advantageous when he subsequently began to focus on writing pieces intended for the concert hall.

¹ *The British Music Society Newsletter*, No. 84 (December 1999), p. 1.

² Schurmann has written a substantial article on his involvement with this score at: www.mvdaily.com/articles/2009/01/lawrence.htm.

Anyone surveying Schurmann's current catalogue of works³ might be forgiven for thinking he was a late developer and that the formal mastery evident in his early acknowledged scores sprang up fully formed. In fact, although his official canon admits only one score – the *Bagatelles* for piano (1945) – dating from his years as a fledgling composer, Schurmann wrote a number of works during this formative period of his career which he later suppressed, including music for theatre and ballet, chamber pieces and a song-cycle setting poems about Java entitled *Pacific*, which enabled him to indulge his fascination with gamelan music. The first work of his to have a public airing in Britain, it was performed by the soprano Joy McArden and pianist John Wills in a concert supported by the Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM).

Schurmann's concert works, though comparatively few, take in a variety of genres and demonstrate formidable technical skill. They also defy easy classification into distinct musical traditions: though traces of his part-British heritage remain, there are also multicultural influences, such as the subtle Magyar inflections of the choral cantata *The Double Heart* (1976) and, more overtly, in *Chuench'i* (1966), song-settings of Chinese poetry featured in this album, and the nine *Slovak Folk Songs* of 1987. Such eclecticism, far from resulting in a ragbag of conflicting styles, has helped to foster and nourish an authentic, original voice. Schurmann is his own man. He has learned to trust his instincts. Although his harmonic language has absorbed aspects of serialism, he has never confined his material inside strict tone-rows, preferring instead to adapt some of the discipline of a restricted palette to very personal artistic ends.

In addition to concertos for piano and violin, Schurmann's orchestral pieces include *Six Studies of Francis Bacon* (1968), *Variants* (1970) for a Classical-sized group of players, *The Gardens of Exile* (1989–90), a one-movement work for cello and orchestra partly inspired by memories of semi-wild tropical gardens in Java, a Concerto for Orchestra (1996) commissioned by Lorin Maazel and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and *Gaudiana* (2000–1), a set of Symphonic Studies for Orchestra inspired by the work of the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí. His substantial opera-cantata *Piers Plowman*

³ As listed on the composer's official website: www.gerard-schurmann.com/works.htm.

(1979–80) draws freely upon the lyricism that forms an integral part of all his works, whether featuring the voice or not.

All these orchestral compositions notwithstanding, it is arguably in his songs, instrumental works and chamber music that his most personal statements reside. Schurmann has observed that ‘when I write I listen intensely, and try to respond emotionally in the most direct way possible.’⁴ That concentration and involvement is experienced in its purest and most immediate form in his scores for small combinations of instruments. His suppression of several early pieces has helped to obscure the fact that chamber and instrumental music was at the core of his *œuvre* from the very beginning of his creative life: among the withdrawn works may be found a piano sonata, a cello sonata, a wind quintet and, most tantalisingly of all, two string quartets dating from the 1940s. The first of them was dedicated to the exiled Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands and premiered in her presence in 1943 by the Hirsch String Quartet, who subsequently played it at the popular National Gallery lunchtime concerts founded by Dame Myra Hess, and at the Wigmore Hall, among other venues; the second, performed by both the Dutch Sweelinck Quartet and the Hungarian Quartet, was a short piece, composed in response to competition guidelines that required it to be a prelude to Bartók’s Third String Quartet (Schurmann later reworked some of its ideas in his chamber-orchestral piece, *Variants*).

Works that Schurmann does acknowledge include a *Fantasia* for cello and piano (1967),⁵ a Serenade for solo violin,⁶ a duo for violin and piano (1984),⁷ *Ariel* for solo oboe (1987), two piano quartets (1986, 1998)⁸ and a Trio for clarinet, cello and piano (2003).⁹ In the 21st century, he has turned once again to the string quartet, resulting in two quintessential examples of his craft (2004 and 2012).¹⁰ Other recent works

⁴ ‘Gerard Schurmann in conversation with Francis Routh’, *Composer*, No. 92 (Winter 1987), p. 13.

⁵ Recorded on Gerard Schurmann, Chamber Music, Volume 2 (Toccata Classics TOCC 0220).

⁶ Recorded on Gerard Schurmann, Chamber Music, Volume 3 (Toccata Classics TOCC 0336).

⁷ Recorded on Gerard Schurmann, Music for Violin and Piano (Toccata Classics TOCC 0133).

⁸ Recorded on TOCC 0336.

⁹ Recorded on TOCC 0220.

¹⁰ Recorded on TOCC 0220.

include *Two Violins* (2015),¹¹ written for members of the Lyris Quartet, *Romancing the Strings*, a nonet commissioned by the Tucson Winter Music Festival in Arizona and first performed on 20 March 2016, and the poignant and deeply felt piano piece, *Memento*, featured in a Rawsthorne Society memorial concert for John McCabe on 29 October 2016, at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

*Chuench'i*¹² (1966), a cycle of seven song-settings for voice and piano of Chinese poetry, was a landmark in Schurmann's development as a creative artist. It was written in response to a commission from the American soprano Marni Nixon. Fellow composer and conductor Gerard Victory wrote that this piece 'combines a fiercely intense and almost intrusive passion with an unmistakably contemporary technique and highly polished craftsmanship'.¹³

The seven poems chosen by Schurmann represent the emotional progress of the singer, symbolised by recollections and experiences of spring from childhood ('Plucking the Rushes'), through adolescence ('Shang Ya!'), to maturity. Unifying the cycle and pervading each poem is the 'spirit' or 'atmosphere' of spring ('Chuench'i'), and the songs which frame the cycle ('New Corn' and 'At the End of Spring') reflect the beginning and end of that season. The various Chinese texts by different poets were translated by Dr Arthur Waley, whose adaptations also provided the texts for, among other works, Britten's *Songs from the Chinese* (1957), three of Lennox Berkeley's *Five Chinese Songs* (1971) and David Blake's *The Bones of Chuang Tzu* (1972).¹⁴

Apart from its unifying subject matter, *Chuench'i* gains further coherence by thematic relationships between the songs and by the central role played by the piano part. As John McCabe observed, 'These are not songs with piano accompaniment but rather chamber music for voice and piano'.¹⁵ Such is the concentration of the material in

¹¹ Recorded on TOCC 0336.

¹² Pronounced 'Chew-en-chee'.

¹³ Gerard Victory, 'Chuench'i: An Analysis of Gerard Schurmann's Song Cycle', *The Music Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (August 1972), p. 204.

¹⁴ Sadly, Dr Waley never heard *Chuench'i*, as he died the day before the first performance of the work.

¹⁵ Sleeve notes to the Nonesuch LP (H71209).

these settings that McCabe has suggested that the cycle ‘might be seen as a set of very free variations.’¹⁶

Greeting the arrival of spring, the opening song, ‘New Corn’ [1], is permeated by faded memories of past happiness evoked by a misty morning. The piano accompaniment suggests the swishing of a hand-held fan. In ‘Plucking the Rushes’ [2], a boy and a girl drift idly in a boat, daydreaming. Marked *Presto con petulanza*, ‘Shang Ya!’ [3] acts as a kind of scherzo in which vows of friendship and fidelity are fiercely affirmed. The centrepiece of the cycle, ‘Flowers and Moonlight’ [4], brings calm and tranquillity in an idyllic description of a languorous spring evening during which a wave frightens the birds away. By contrast, the toccata-like ‘Look at that Little Bay of the Ch’i’ [5] is breathlessly vigorous as the singer admires a lover with eager excitement. In the melancholic ‘Self-Abandonment’ [6], an awakening from a drunken sleep brings the mournful discovery that spring has gone. In the final song, ‘At the End of Spring’ [7], the piano accompaniment again evokes the hand-held fan and returns to the material of the opening song, ushering in a stoical acceptance of the passing of time and youth, though not without a parting expression of sorrowful longing. The final cluster of piano notes is descriptive of a Chinese chandelier tinkling in a soft breeze.

Schurmann’s imaginative use of harmony is entirely at the service of the text in these graceful and intricately wrought settings. His use of the ambivalent tritone as the main interval complements the equivocal nature of the poems. In addition, serial techniques are deployed in such a way as to indicate tonal roots, however fleeting. The main material of the cycle is a ten-note scale presented by the voice in the opening bar of the first song. Unfolding in an inexorable arch-like structure, songs I and VII are linked thematically, whereas II and VI share a hypnotic calm and the A–E flat tritone. III and V are more recognisably tonal and articulate a similar fervour and devotion; the central song, IV, is the allusive and evocative heart of the work. In the moving outer settings, the mesmeric, repeated quintuplet figures underline the exquisitely ephemeral nature of all things as captured in the poetry.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Chuenchi was premiered by the dedicatee, soprano Marni Nixon, with the pianist Wilfrid Parry on 28 June 1966 at the Wigmore Hall, London. It was recorded by Nixon with John McCabe (piano) on Pye GSGC 14105 and Nonesuch H71209. In 1967 Schurmann wrote an orchestral version which received its first performance on 10 March 1968, with the Dutch soprano Ank Reinders with the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. The UK premiere took place at the Harrogate Festival on 10 August 1969, given by Hazel Holt and the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Erich Schmid, and the first US performance was given on 9 November 1972 by Marni Nixon with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, New York, under Frederick Prausnitz. This is the first recording of the work with tenor voice.

The Sonatina for Flute and Piano (1968) [13] was written for the Italian flautist Severino Gazzelloni and first performed by Patricia Dunkerly (flute) and John McCabe (piano) at the Dublin International Festival of Contemporary Music in 1969. It was subsequently programmed frequently by James Galway and many other flautists, such as Samantha Chang, Susan Milan, Patricia Nagle and John Solum.

There are five sections, played without a break. An evocative slow introduction, marked *Sostenuto*, provides the germinal ideas for the whole piece. It is followed by an exciting *Allegro vivace* of considerable contrapuntal virtuosity in which a long passage for unaccompanied flute requires a firm command of dynamics. In the central and most substantial section, the flute alone gives out a slow, brooding theme followed by five contrasting variations. In the first, a series of keyboard trills sustains tension. The trills pass to the flute at the start of the second variation and an intense dialogue between the two instruments ensues. A fleet-footed, dance-like *Allegro* variation builds to a climax. In its aftermath comes the virtuosic fourth variation, featuring the piano in high register and microtonal pitch bends in the flute. Sustained and introspective, the fifth and final variation is sombre and heartfelt. The fourth section is a shortened version of the *Allegro vivace* and the work closes with a return, also in abbreviated form, of the opening *Sostenuto*.

A powerful sense of unity is achieved in this score, not only because its five segments are continuous but also on account of the thematic cross-references between them. The writing for flute is idiomatic and adventurous, utilising the full compass of the instrument and exploiting fully its dynamic and technical possibilities.

The *Two Ballades* for piano were written in London and Los Angeles between 1981 and 1983 in homage to Leoš Janáček. When visiting Czechoslovakia on a concert tour in 1978–79, it became clear to Schurmann that the music legacy of Janáček had eclipsed in popularity even that of Dvořák and Smetana. One day he was taken to see the village of Hukvaldy, where Janáček was born and to which he returned constantly throughout his life. In Schurmann's words,

I clearly remember the pastoral scene, like a romantic fairy tale – the ruins of a Gothic castle, the little church with its pointed spire, the rolling wooded mountains of Beskydy, slightly veiled in the thinly trailing winter mist. The day's journey from there to Brno, where Janáček lived and worked for most of his life, took me along that same road that he used regularly. It was a Sunday, causing the cold wintry landscapes to be totally deserted, empty, and still, except for the occasional sound of distant church bells.¹⁷

The first *Ballade*, 'Hukvaldy' [14], consists of a slow opening *Sostenuto*, which provides most of the material, and the ensuing main *Allegro non troppo* section. Near the end, there is a brief, ghost-like quotation from part of the theme from the first movement ('Presentiment') of Janáček's piano sonata *I.X.1905*.

The second *Ballade*, 'Brno' [15], the longer of the two, opens very quietly with a depiction of a lonely, wintry scene, as described by Schurmann above. A bustling *Allegro vivace* bursts in with some force and is followed by a poignant episode marked *Lento*. This halting, sighing passage evokes the touching story of Janáček listening anxiously to the breathing of his dying daughter. After a climax, the music leads back to a reworked form of the *Allegro*. The main material is reflected upon in a short-lived return to the slower tempo, before a final *Presto* brings the piece to a stirring conclusion.

¹⁷ Composer's note, prefacing the 1984 Novello score.

A warm tribute from one directly communicative composer to another, the *Two Ballades* call upon pianistic technique of the highest calibre, but always engage the listener. They were premiered on 19 September 1983 by Jeffrey Kahane at the County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, and Christopher Green-Armytage gave the *Ballades* their first UK performance at the Purcell Room, London, on 25 May 1985.

Moonbird, for solo flute or recorder (1998) [8], was written for the recorder player John Turner. It was first performed by the dedicatee at a recital of songs and chamber music by Schurmann and Alan Rawsthorne in the University of Manchester Department of Music on 25 September 1999. *Moonbird* shares its title with the slow second movement of Schurmann's Concerto for Orchestra, written two years earlier. Whereas the creature of the night depicted in the orchestral movement was grand and lugubrious, in this delightful solo-instrumental character study the nocturnal bird is distinctly agile and lively in character, darting and swooping at various points in the score and always moving with grace and elegance. Writing for a single line has the effect of liberating Schurmann's imagination, and *Moonbird* is notable for its expressive range and narrative sweep. Although the music sounds spontaneous, the score unfolds with a strong dramatic coherence on account of Schurmann's poetic use of a judicious selection of recurring motifs and gestures.

The *Four Pastoral Preludes*, for piano solo (2012), were first performed by Mikhail Korzhev at the Beverley Hills Festival, California, on 7 August 2013. They were written after a visit by the composer to Bellac in France and dedicated to John Poole, former Director of the BBC Singers, and his wife Laura, who live there. The house is built precipitously against a rocky cliff in a picturesque setting with small streams and a lake.

In 'Bellac' [9] the first eight bars introduce the principal ideas developed throughout the rest of the piece. A secondary theme, tranquil and lyrical, appears at midpoint and is recalled at the end. In the second piece, 'Grotto' [10], the occasional crash suggests intermittent rockfalls. The generally moderate pace is punctuated by a couple of furtive, scurrying passages. 'Rivulets' [11] effectively juxtaposes smooth, flowing semiquaver passages with occasional moments of stillness. The final 'Solitude' [12] is an eloquent and

measured piece that begins in rich chordal progressions but is subsequently pared down to single lines in a deeply felt discourse between the hands before the final chord.

Schurmann's *Six Songs of William Blake*, for voice and piano, rework some of his earlier *Nine Blake Songs*, written for Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears in 1956. In these settings the poems are unified by a common theme marking the passage of time. A new version was commissioned by the Rawsthorne Trust in memory of the soprano Tracey Chadwell, and first performed on 4 July 1997 by the soprano Alison Wells and pianist Keith Swallow as part of the Lichfield International Arts Festival. Schurmann revised the score further in May 2018 for the present recording.

Such is its homogeneity and overarching integrity that the listener would be hard pressed to deduce that this cycle had been composed over such a long period of time. Schurmann adopts a direct and simple approach, always at the service of the text. Restraint is the keynote of these settings, as is perfectly illustrated at the start of the opening 'Augury' [16] as the piano begins with the same single (E flat) note with which the voice enters. As the piano texture fills out and the vocal line is embellished with melismata, Schurmann laces both the vocal and piano parts with triplet figures which form such a recurring feature throughout his entire *œuvre* that they must be counted a natural part of his creative personality. Following almost without a break, 'Ah! Sunflower' [17] is quiet, relaxed and flowing, the voice floating over the gently reassuring continuous semiquaver figuration in the piano. At the centre of the cycle is a slow but dynamically and harmonically far-ranging setting of 'I Laid Me Down Upon a Bank' [18], which has the stamp of a mini-scena, with its dramatic vocal lines and tiny piano introduction and coda. 'Eternity' [19] is driven by an emphatic piano ostinato and uplifted by the high tessitura of the vocal writing. In contrast, 'The Sick Rose' [20] creeps earthily, its dark-hued chromaticism suggesting 'the invisible worm that flies in the night'. Schurmann says¹⁸ that this particular song is modelled on Benjamin Britten's own setting of the poem and that of all the songs in this cycle it is the closest to his original conception of it for Britten and Pears. The set concludes with a coolly elegant setting

¹⁸ E-mail, 4 March 2019.

of Blake's poem 'To the Evening Star' [21], where the steady chordal accompaniment is poised and offers firm support to the more flexible, roving vocal line.

Schurmann's most recent revisions to the score are, for the most part, concerned with clarifying notation and textures. Compared to the first revision, his feeling for the speed of some of the songs has changed, so that the metronome markings of the first, fourth and sixth are slower, whereas the second is faster (there is no change in pulse in the third and fifth). Perhaps the most substantial reconsideration applies to the fourth song, 'Eternity'. As well as carrying a significantly reduced metronome marking, it now bears the simple indication, *Allegretto*, in contrast to its former heading of *Allegro ed agitato*, which suggests a revised approach to the basic character of this setting as well as to its tempo.

Though not as extrovert as *Chuenchi*, the Blake songs are no less successful than Schurmann's earlier cycle in capturing the essence of the text without distracting from it. As vital a facet of Schurmann's art as his large-scale statements, they impart his love of Blake as authentically as his 1968 orchestral studies reveal his passion for Francis Bacon's paintings.

Paul Conway is a freelance writer specialising in twentieth-century and contemporary British music. He has reviewed regularly for The Independent, Tempo and Musical Opinion, provided programme notes for The Proms and the Edinburgh, Spitalfields and Three Choirs Festivals and contributed chapters to books on John McCabe and Robert Simpson.

Hailed by *Das Opernglas* as a ‘vocally powerful, technically impressive, dominant heroic tenor’ and by *Opera News* for ‘his consummate mastery of Rossini’s style, range and vocal bravura’, the American tenor **Randall Bills** has earned praise from audiences and critics for performances in opera and concert throughout the world. He has earned particular acclaim in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* as Tamino (Theatre Dortmund, Nationaltheater Mannheim, New Zealand Opera, Seattle Opera), in *Don Giovanni* as Ottavio (Theater Osnabrück, Seattle Opera) and in *Così fan tutte* as Ferrando (English National Opera, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari), and Rossini’s *Armida* as Geoffredo and Ubaldo (Rossini Opera Festival), *Mosè in Egitto* as Osiride (New York City Opera), *Il barbiere di Siviglia* as Almaviva (Oper Leipzig, Theater Wielki Poznań), *La cenerentola* as Ramiro (Opernhaus Chemnitz,



Boston Youth Symphony, El Paso Opera), and *Ricciardo e Zoraide* as Agorante (Rossini in Wildbad Festival). Other notable operas and roles he has performed include Bellini’s *La sonnambula* as Elvino (Staatstheater Darmstadt), Donizetti’s *La favorite* as Fernand (Washington Concert Opera), *Don Pasquale* as Ernesto (Staatstheater Darmstadt), Verdi’s *La traviata* as Alfredo (Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar), Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress* as Tom Rakewell (Staatstheater Braunschweig and the Oldenburgisches Staatstheater), Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* as Prologue/Peter Quint (Teatro Comunale di Bologna) and Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier* as the Italian Singer (Theater Bremen, Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar).

Most recently, he debuted at the International Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe as Jupiter in *Semele*, conducted by Christopher Moulds in a production from Floris Visser, as well as at Gothenburg Opera as Almaviva in Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* conducted by Henrik Schaefer in a production from David Radok, returned to the Rossini in Wildbad Festival as Aménophis in a new production of *Moïse et Pharaon* conducted by Fabrizio Maria Carminati, directed by Jochen Schönleber, and to the Theater Wielki Poznań, again as Almaviva, conducted by Massimiliano Caldi in a production by Marek Weiss-Grzesiński, where he also made his role debut as Nemorino in *L’elisir d’amore*, conducted by Katarzyna Tomala in a new production from Andriy Zholdak. He has appeared as a guest of a number of orchestras, including the

Houston Symphony (Orff's *Carmina Burana*), Louisville Symphony (Berlioz's *Romeo et Juliette*), Fresno Philharmonic (Beethoven's Symphony No. 9), Naples Philharmonic (Britten's *Serenade* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony), and Pasadena Symphony (Mozart's Mass in C minor and Beethoven's Ninth), Los Angeles Master Chorale (Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Mozart's *Litaniae de venerabili*) and the Long Beach Mozart Festival Orchestra (Mozart's *Requiem*). European orchestras with whom he has appeared include the Hamburg Symphony Festival Orchestra, Bochum Symphony (Mozart Mass in C minor), Verona Teatro Filarmonico (Mendelssohn *Elijah*), Vahrer Kantorei (Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*), Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal (Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* and Weber's *Freischütz-Messe*), L'Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi (Bach's *St John Passion*), American University of Beirut Choir and Choral Society (Bach's *Magnificat* and Handel's *Utrecht Jubilate*). He has also appeared in Mexico with the Philharmonic Boca del Río (Beethoven's Symphony No. 9). Notable conductors with whom he has sung include Grant Gershon, Michael Guettler, Julia Jones, Jorge Mester, Jayce Ogren, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Carl St Clair and Ralf Weikert.
www.randallbills.com ~ @randallbills on Twitter and Instagram

The flautist **Maxim Rubtsov** is one of Russia's best musical ambassadors. Appointed Principal Flute of the Russian National Orchestra in 2003, Rubtsov was given unprecedented solo opportunities with the RNO by its founding conductor Mikhail Pletnev. They have included the Russian premiere of John Corigliano's *Pied Piper Fantasy* in 2004 under the baton of Alexander Vedernikov. Of the performance the composer said: 'Maxim Rubtsov is the perfect Pied Piper. He has both the charm and excitement that a great performer must have. With his movie star looks and charisma, and his magnificent playing and acting of the part, the legendary piper becomes alive for all to see'. In 2014 Rubtsov re-staged the *Pied Piper Fantasy* with the Omsk Symphony Orchestra, putting 40 children on stage and earning critical acclaim as soloist and production designer.

Maxim Rubtsov's US recital debut came in December 2007, with the pianist Valentina Lisitsa, presented by Friends of Chamber Music of Miami. *The Miami Herald* called his playing 'virtually flawless' and stated that 'he possesses a stellar technique'.



In addition to his solo work, Maxim Rubtsov has performed hundreds of surpassingly beautiful solo passages in symphonic music preserved in RNO recordings on the PentaTone Classics label. His solo album, *Russian Romance*, was re-released in 2013. A project of Blue Griffin Recording, it was engineered by Sergei Kvitko, who also accompanies Rubtsov on the piano. Rubtsov and Kvitko were featured in concert at the National Flute Association 2011 annual convention in the United States and have appeared in concert together from Connecticut to California.

Born in 1977 in Bryansk, Russia, Maxim Rubtsov began to study piano at age five. At age seven he danced with the famous Moiseyev Dance Company and only later did he begin flute lessons. At thirteen he transferred to the Gnesin Academy of Music in Moscow and subsequently graduated with an advanced degree in music from the Moscow State Conservatoire. He joined the flute section of the RNO in 1999 and was appointed Associate Principal the following year, at the time the youngest ever to hold this position in the history of the orchestra. Rubtsov has also performed as a flautist-dancer at the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre with Germaul Barnes and with the Denis Boroditsky Dance Company.

His 2015 teaching residency with New World Symphony in Miami, a collaboration with Michael Tilson Thomas, featured an online master-class linking participants from the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Previously he had been flautist-in-residence with Tilson Thomas' San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. His teaching residencies have included conservatoires, universities and music schools in Brazil, Dubai, Russia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States. He also performs in chamber ensembles and is a founding member of the Russian National Orchestra Wind Quintet, which took top honours in the Fifth Annual Osaka International Chamber Music Contest. Together with the RNOWQ he has explored jazz and other genre-bending compositions, including the works of Chris Brubeck for wind quintet and jazz quartet, as well as adaptations of *Peter and the Wolf* and *Wolf Tracks* for children.

He has shared the stages of Europe in chamber performances with the pianists Mikhail Pletnev and Francesco Schlimé. In 2012 he performed with American soprano Lisa Delan at the Napa Valley Festival del Sole, and they recorded together at Skywalker Studios in California. In 2013 he was featured flautist along with Diane Boyd Schultz (piccolo) in Chris Brubeck's musical for children entitled *Hermitage Cats Save the Day*, which was premiered in the United States and Russia. In 2012 he toured Russia with the Brubeck Brothers Quartet, playing jazz and classical compositions in tribute to the legendary Dave Brubeck.

Mark Robson has been hailed by *The Los Angeles Times* as a performer with a ‘monster technique’ and ‘an inquiring mind’; he continues to gather praise with his multi-faceted career as a soloist, chamber musician and teacher. He is equally comfortable in styles ranging from early music, which he performs on the harpsichord and organ, via the great Romantic repertoire and beyond, to contemporary piano works demanding theatrical participation from the performer. He is also a highly respected collaborative artist with singers and instrumentalists. As a founding member of the Los Angeles-based series ‘Piano Spheres’, he presents recitals devoted to new and rarely played music and has frequently performed on the ‘Jacaranda’ series in Santa Monica, CA. As an organist he has played at Disney Hall on the ‘Green Umbrella’ series and in the ‘Minimalist Jukebox’, as well as assuming the organ part for Mahler’s Eighth Symphony at the Hollywood Bowl.



After completing his conservatoire and university training, Mark Robson expanded his musical studies by studying in Paris, where he was a pupil of Yvonne Loriod and subsequently Alain Motard. While in France he also studied the ondes Martenot with Jeanne Loriod and attended courses at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and the Centre Acanthes of Aix-en Provence. Additional musical evolution came through his work on the music staff of the Los Angeles Opera for fourteen years, as an assistant conductor and assistant chorus master. During this time he collaborated with renowned international singers and conductors, gaining further insight into the lyric art. In addition to preparing singers in rehearsal for opera performance, he conducted backstage bandas and choruses, played harpsichord in the pit for Baroque and Classical operas and even performed in the role of pianist Boleslao Lazinski in Giordano’s *Fedora*. He has also been a musical assistant at the Salzburg and Spoleto (Italy) festivals.

As a composer, Mark Robson has been programmed in concerts in Barcelona, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Paris. Two of his orchestral works – *Apollo Rising* and *Christmas Suite* – were premiered by the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony. The soprano Patricia Prunty has recorded his song-cycle *A Child of Air*, and the same piece was presented by Sari Gruber at the winter Ravinia Festival. Other compositions include a trio *Dances and Dirges* for piano,

clarinet and cello, *Södergran-Dagbok* for baritone and piano, numerous songs, *Trio Botanica* for three bassoons, *Ribono shel olam* for tenor, cello and organ, and a set of 24 left-hand preludes for the piano.

The recipient of several scholarships and awards (including the Certificate of Excellence from the Corvina Cultural Circle for artistic contributions to Hungary), Mark Robson has received degrees from the University of Southern California and Oberlin College; his teachers included James Bonn, Lydia Frumkin, Alain Motard and John Perry. He has worked as a vocal coach on the faculties of University of Southern California, California State University, Fullerton, Chapman University and the California Institute of the Arts. Two of his large-scale music projects have been the performance of the complete Beethoven sonatas and multiple performances of Messiaen's piano cycle *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. He is also a proud 2012 graduate of the comedy improv programme at Bang Studio in Los Angeles.

Mikhail Korzhev, a pianist who 'projects strength, atmosphere and the ability to untangle even the knottiest passages' (*International Record Review*), is equally active as a solo recitalist, a performer with various chamber groups, a soloist with orchestras and a recording artist. His latest recordings, the two volumes of the complete piano concertos by Ernst Krenek in collaboration with the English Symphony Orchestra and Kenneth Woods, were released by Toccata Classics in 2016 and 2017 to enthusiastic reviews in *Gramophone*, *Diapason* and other publications, made it to the 'Want List' of *Fanfare* magazine, became one of '10 Best Contemporary Records of the Year' for *The Times*, and in December 2017 were cited in the list of 'Top 10 Best Classical Records of the Year' in *Forbes* magazine. His discography also includes three earlier recordings of solo-piano and chamber works by Gerard Schurmann (in collaboration with Alyssa Park and the Lyriss String Quartet), all on Toccata Classics, and a compilation of 40 classical standards for the online music library Megatrax.com.



He has collaborated with several distinguished conductors, Sergiu Comissiona and Carlo Ponti Jr among them. His chamber-music partners include soloists of the Russian National

Orchestra, the Lyris String Quartet and members of the St Petersburg and Tokyo String Quartets, as well as Oleh Krysa, Richard Stolzman, Eugenia Zukerman and other noted musicians.

In September 2017 Mikhail Korzhev received a prestigious Anassilaos Prize, the annual award for the achievements in Arts and Sciences given by the local government of the province of Calabria in Italy.

He combines his performing career with teaching. Having taught at the University of Southern California, he is currently is on the faculty of California State University at Fullerton and Chapman University. He is a faculty member at Beverly Hills International Music Festival and Festival Napa Valley. He has also taught a summer course at the Bosendorfer Piano Academy in Vienna.

Texts

Chuenchi: Song-Cycle from the Chinese

Translations by Arthur Waley

1 I New Corn

Tao Ch'ien

Swiftly the years, beyond recall.
Solemn the stillness of this fair morning.
I will clothe myself in spring clothing
And visit the slopes of the Eastern Hill.
By the mountain stream a mist hovers,
Hovers a moment, then scatters.
There comes a wind blowing from the south
That brushes the fields of new corn.

2 II Plucking the Rushes

Anon.

Green rushes with red shoots,
Long leaves bending to the wind –
You and I in the same boat.
Plucking rushes at the Five Lakes.

We started at dawn from the orchid island.
We rested under the elms till noon.
You and I plucking rushes
Had not plucked a handful when night came!

3 III Shang Ya!

from 'Oaths of Friendship'

Shang Ya!

I want to be your friend
For ever and ever without break or decay.
When the hills are all flat,
And the rivers are all dry,
When it lightens and thunders in winter,
When it rains and snows in summer,
When Heaven and Earth mingle -
Not till then will I part from you.

4 IV Flowers and Moonlight on the Spring
River

Emperor Yang-Ti

The evening river is level and motionless
The spring colours just open to their full.
Suddenly a wave carries the moon away
And the tidal water comes with its freight of
stars.

5 V Look at that Little Bay of the Ch'i
from 'The Book of Songs'

Look at that little bay of the Ch'i,
Its kites-foot so delicately waving.
Delicately fashioned is my lord.
As thing cut, as thing filed,
As thing chiselled, as thing polished.
Oh, the grace, the elegance!
Oh, the lustre, oh, the light!
Delicately fashioned is my lord;
Never for a moment can I forget him.
Look at that little bay of the Ch'i,
Its kites-foot in their crowds.
Delicately fashioned is my lord,
As a thing of bronze,
A thing of white metal,
As a sceptre of jade, a disc of jade.
How free, how easy
He leant over his chariot-rail!
How cleverly he chaffed and joked,
And yet was never rude!

6 VI Self-Abandonment
Li Po

I sat drinking and did not notice the dusk,
Till falling petals filled the folds of my dress.
Drunken I rose and walked to the moonlit
stream;
The birds were gone, and men also few.

7 VII At the End of Spring
Po Chü-i

The flower of the pear-tree gathers and turns
to fruit;
Swallows eggs have hatched into young birds.
When the Seasons' changes thus confront the
mind
What comfort can the Doctrine of Tao give?
It will teach me to watch the days and months
fly
Without grieving that Youth slips away;
If the fleeting world is but a long dream,
It does not matter whether one is young or old.
But ever since the day that my friend left my
side
And has lived an exile in the City of Chiang-
ling,
There is one wish I cannot quite destroy:
That from time to time we may chance to meet
again

Six Songs of William Blake

16 No. 1 Augury

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower.
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

17 No. 2 Ah! Sun-flower

Ah! Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done:

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

18 No. 3 I Laid Me Down Upon a Bank

I laid me down upon a bank
Where love lay sleeping.
I heard among the rushes dank
Weeping, Weeping.

Then I went to the heath and the wild
To the nettles and thorns of the waste
And they told me how they were beguiled
Driven out, and compelled to be chaste.

19 No. 4 Eternity

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies

Lives in eternity's sunrise.

The sword sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field:
The sword he sung a song of death,
But could not make the sickle yield.

O Lapwing, thou fliest around the heath
Nor seest the net that is spread beneath.
Why dost thou not fly among the corn fields?
They cannot spread nets where a harvest
yields.

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

20 No. 5 The Sick Rose

O Rose thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

21 No. 6 To the Evening Star

Thou fair-haired angel of the evening,
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains,
light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown

Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves, and whilst thou drawest
the Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver
dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on

The lake: speak silence with thy glimmering
eyes,
And wash the dusk to silver.
The fleeces of our flocks are covered with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine
influence!



Recorded on 10 July 2018 (*Moonbird*, Flute Sonata), 24 September 2018 (*Chuench'i*,
Six Songs of William Blake) and 25 September 2018 (*Four Pastoral Preludes*, *Two Ballades*)
at Allegro Recordings, Burbank, California
Producer-engineer: Matthew Snyder
Mastering: Matthew Snyder and Adaq Khan

The texts of the Arthur Waley translations set in *Chuench'i* are © The Arthur Waley Estate.

Booklet essay: Paul Conway
Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and lay-out: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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