

Robin STEVENS

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

BASSOON CONCERTO
DISRUPTED CHORALE
DONA NOBIS PACEM
SUITE ÉCOSSAISE

Adam Mackenzie, bassoon
Christopher Gough and Martin Murphy, horns
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Paul Mann

FIRST RECORDINGS

A COMPOSING CAREER

by Robin Stevens

I was born in Wales in 1958, into an artistic family. My father, Desmond Stevens, was a devoted music-lover, and my mother was the pianist and lecturer Gillian Butterworth. I began playing the cello aged eight and the piano aged twelve. Throughout my teenage years I dabbled in composition of a highly derivative kind, a pattern I continued as an undergraduate, with the exercises in pastiche which, in the late 1970s, were still a central component of a university music degree. In retrospect, perhaps the most important snippet of wisdom anyone ever passed on to me as a composer came at the age of twenty, when the composer and lecturer Geoffrey Poole, realising my fledgling essays in creativity were rather four-square and predictable, introduced me to the fluidity of mediaeval plainsong: my love of rhythmically free, recitative-like instrumental solos has its source in that one precious piece of advice. I began to take composing more seriously during my two years studying for an MA at Birmingham University (1980–82), under the sensitive direction of John Joubert. My first major composition, a four-movement string quintet, was written at this time: it is a stylistic melange, aspects of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Walton, Bartók and Bloch coalescing, I dare to believe, into a surprisingly satisfying whole.

During the five years I spent at St Paul's Church, York (1982–87), I was mainly occupied with composing choral settings and congregational songs. Writing songs for a very middle-of-the-road congregation developed my lyrical gift and encouraged me to avoid over-complication in my classical compositions. Towards the end of this period I changed to working part-time in the church, allowing me the space to compose three substantial pieces: a *Fantasy Sonata* for violin and piano; a *Sonata Tempesta*, also for violin and piano; and a Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello. Of these pieces, the *Fantasy Sonata* is the seminal work: a single-movement composition sixteen minutes long, based entirely on an octatonic scale (B–C–D–E flat–F–

F sharp–G sharp–A–B), giving the piece a limited but highly distinctive harmonic palette. The *Fantasy Sonata* is in two halves, comprising a statement and a varied counter-statement, the second half of the piece telescoping development and recapitulation, a practice that would become one of my most characteristic stylistic fingerprints.

For the best part of the next two decades my creativity was severely hampered by the debilitating effects of post-viral fatigue. As a result, my next important work, the *Three Character Pieces* for cello and piano, did not emerge until 2004. In this highly charged composition, dissonance is employed in a visceral, Expressionist manner. Vestiges of lyricism remain, but harmonic invention is the propelling force behind the music. *Say Yes to Life* for violin and piano (2005) inhabits a similar expressive world, but with the melodic dimension rather more prominent.

Restored to full health in 2007, I embarked upon six years' part-time study for a Ph.D. in composition at Manchester University, and in that time wrote six major works. In the first of these, my String Quartet No. 1 (2008), counterpoint takes centre-stage, and polyrhythms (originating in my study of Elliot Carter's own String Quartet No. 1) make their first appearance in one of my large-scale compositions. This piece marks the apogee of my Modernist style: it is a tough, gnarly work, uncompromisingly forthright, and very demanding for performers and listeners alike. The *Fantasy Trio* for flute, guitar and cello (2009) is similarly dissonant but, inspired by the unusual ensemble – a highly effective instrumental combination which I heartily recommend to other composers – I laid more emphasis on unorthodox instrumental colours and textures. The exploration of texture and timbre continued in my *Romantic Fantasy* for flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet (2010), which employs the same, single-movement, statement-varied counter-statement structure of the *Fantasy Sonata* of 25 years previously, a structure I would use once more in my *Sonata Romantica* for cello and piano. In the *Romantic Fantasy* I also employ a personal adaptation of bitonality: rather than the music ever being in two distinct *keys* at once, certain passages in this work embody a duality in which dissonant, atonal accompanying chords undermine any sense of tonality implicit in the melodic line.

The principle of ‘continual variation’ is important in much of my music, and in my String Quartet No. 2, *Three Portraits* (2011), it took me in a fresh direction. The central slow movement of this quartet is a set of variations, and there are strong thematic connections between all three movements, which follow one another without a break. Reflecting the cyclic processes at work in this piece, each movement is a portrait of a different member of one imaginary family – a shared DNA, but a distinct individual personality depicted in each, hence the subtitle.

Mourning into Dancing, a tone-poem for symphony orchestra (2011), is, like the Second String Quartet, a continuous musical span divided into distinct sections, each with a definite tempo and character, but with thematic material in common. Continual variation is most prevalent in the Scherzo section, though the variation here consists entirely of changing instrumentation, the main Scherzo theme itself remaining immutable. Bitonal harmony, particularly the combination of minor triads a tritone apart (for example, B minor and F minor), is a central feature.

Brass Odyssey for brass band and eight percussionists (2012–13), the last of my Ph.D. compositions, is in two parts. Part I sees the principle of continual variation operating in a cumulative manner: the music is bound together by three appearances of a chorale and five appearances of a fanfare, both chorale and fanfare growing in intensity and complexity on each restatement. In Part II the pattern of accumulation is observed again in my treatment of the bold, two-phrase *ritornello* theme with which this second part opens: on its four subsequent reappearances the *ritornello* acts as a structural marker, separating the four dance-episodes of Part II from one another, and becoming louder and more majestic each time it is heard. In *Brass Odyssey* the polyrhythms of earlier works are replaced by eastern-European additive rhythms, with asymmetric bar-metres such as $\frac{5}{8}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ dominant in the faster passages: in the slower passages the rhythmic freedom of solo recitatives alternates with the solemn tread of a processional, recalling the first two sections of *Mourning into Dancing*.

After completing my Ph.D. in 2013, my fondness for pastiche, prevalent in my youth, resurfaced in two works. The *Te Deum* for choir and orchestra (2013) is an affectionate

tribute to the British choral tradition, doffing its cap in turn at Handel, Stanford, Holst and Walton, but also incorporating more personal passages of harmonic complexity to convey mystery and awe. The *Balmoral Suite* for recorder, harp and strings (2017) unashamedly mimics Scottish folk-music, throwing in the occasional Modernist twist in a manner recalling my *Suite Écossaise* (2005, orchestrated 2010).

In the period immediately following my Ph.D., as well as returning to pastiche, in the sharpest possible contrast, I also experimented with using microtones in an extensive series of miniatures for unaccompanied cello. These shorter pieces proved a testing ground for incorporating microtones into almost all my subsequent major works, beginning with the epic, single-movement *Sonata Romantica* for cello and piano (2019), and continuing with the four-movement Clarinet Quintet (2019–20) and the Cello Concerto and the Viola Concerto.

In recent years, therefore, as some new stylistic traits have appeared in my music, other old ones have come full circle. The slow movement of my Clarinet Quintet, for example, contains two *fugato* sections, strongly recalling the parallel movement of my earliest major work the String Quintet. The solo cadenzas and numerous solo passages in the *Sonata Romantica* recall, and indeed were consciously modelled on, the solo cadenzas for violin and for piano in the *Fantasy Sonata*, written 34 years previously. And the catchy rondo subject and the ‘Child’s’ Theme from the finale of my Bassoon Concerto (2014–16) hark back to the cheerful tunefulness of the main finale theme in my *Sonata Tempesta* (1986). The Bassoon Concerto also testifies to my continued love of instrumental recitative, whether accompanied (as, for example, at the start of the work) or unaccompanied, as in the many solo passages scattered throughout the piece.

Through the receipt of a generous family bequest in 2018, I have been able to record the larger part of my back catalogue (five albums on the Divine Art label, and three on Toccata Classics – this is the first of them), and it has been my immense privilege throughout the recording process to have worked with some of the best instrumentalists in the UK, not least the three stellar soloists in the concertos, whose performances were all I could have wished for. Paul Mann in particular deserves my gratitude: the textures

of my orchestral music can be complex, but in his hands it all sounded as natural as I hoped it would, and no composer can ask more than that.

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Dona Nobis Pacem, for two horns and orchestra [1], was written in 1994 and revised 30 years later. The title is taken from the concluding words of the Latin Mass ('Give us peace'), and the work represents a sincere request for inner tranquillity from a creative who finds peace of mind somewhat elusive. In this composition the orchestra frequently imitates church bells through accented wind and string chords which quickly decrease in volume, and through the presence of crotales, glockenspiel, tam-tam and tubular bells. The harmony, centring on dissonant combinations of perfect fourths and perfect fifths, creates a sense of music which is simultaneously very old and yet contemporary. In the outer sections of the piece the solo horns suggest plainsong in their simple, unadorned melodic lines, but in the animated central section they cast off restraint in soaring ascending lines full of passion and urgency.

Disrupted Chorale, for wind decet (pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns), from 2021 [2], is a miniature quite unlike anything else in my musical output. Essentially an exploration of colour, texture and overlapping wind sonorities, it consists of four chorale sections, separated – or disrupted – by three very brief two-part inventions. The chorale sections eschew thematic development or even repetition in favour of a spontaneous unfolding of dissonant harmony, where the guiding concept is a four-note chord in which one interval is discordantly 'enveloped' (an octave higher, or lower) by a slightly wider interval – for example, a minor third (A–C) enveloped, an octave higher, by a perfect fourth (G sharp–C sharp). As one might expect, the textures in the two-part invention sections are sparer, and the articulation more *staccato*, but the sound-world remains relentlessly abrasive.

My romance with the bassoon began in 2014 when I heard the excellent Amici Bassoon Trio in concert at the Royal Northern College of Music. Inspired by their playing, and by the exciting possibilities of that unusual instrumental combination, I quickly wrote three pieces for them: *Five Portraits*, *Cinematic Fantasy* and a

three-movement Sonata. From there it was a natural step, over the following eighteen months, to complete a fully fledged Bassoon Concerto.

This piece is 40 minutes long, each of its three movements being of approximately the same duration, with the central slow movement leading straight into the finale. The orchestra for this colourful score is large: an extensive percussion section including marimba, xylophone and vibraphone; harp; pairs of trumpets and horns; a woodwind section augmented by two piccolos, alto flute, two cors anglais and a bass clarinet; and a full complement of strings.

Although the Concerto is extremely demanding for the bassoonist, it is no flashy showpiece but rather a serious work in which soloist and orchestra interact as equal partners. In the first movement, *Moderato con moto* [3], elements of sonata-form and free fantasy intermingle: at the outset dissonant orchestral chords punctuate aggressive solo recitatives, but soon more lyrical bassoon lines predominate, though the movement is not without further moments of high drama. The atmospheric slow movement, a Lament marked *Adagio non troppo* [4], initially recalls Bartók's 'night music' style. Then, over a bedrock of smooth clarinet harmony, the bassoon, followed by solo oboe and horn, plays angular, asymmetrical melodic lines which undermine the benign character of the clarinet accompaniment – disturbing music which starkly contrasts with the whole of the Concerto up to this point. Abruptly the passage ceases, and the remainder of the slow movement earnestly attempts, not entirely successfully, to regain a sense of inner equilibrium.

Introspection is cast aside with the onset of the *Allegro amicabile* Finale [5], in which the chirpy *staccato* articulation so characteristic of the bassoon at last comes to the fore. The amiable opening bassoon idea regularly reappears, in the manner of a typical rondo theme, alternating for the first half of the movement with lively dance episodes. In the middle of the movement, matters threaten to get rather more serious, and the music builds to a tremendous climax. However, once the dust settles, there is a big surprise: a completely new melody, of disarming childlike simplicity, introduced by the bassoon. Then, after a brief cadenza, a further unexpected twist: a substantial jazzy *Presto* which is a Modernist take on the twelve-bar blues. Stress and strain are finally cast off in an

insouciant coda, where the bassoon decides that dancing a tarantella might, after all, be the best way to resolve life's most intractable problems.

The genesis of *Suite Écossaise* is unusual. I originally wrote this three-movement composition to fulfil a commission from my dear friend Colette Wilmot (a Walloon) for a straightforward unaccompanied piece for her great-niece, a cellist, in celebration of that young lady's first holy communion. All three movements are pastiches of Scottish folk-music, a style that has always come very easily to me (though there is no Scots blood in me whatever!). The first movement [6] is considerably the longest. Its punning title – *À la Mode* is French for 'trendy' or 'fashionable' – alludes to the modal nature of the music, for in this movement I set myself the challenge of writing a medley of hummable tunes using, in no particular order, every one of the traditional church modes. An easy way of remembering the sequence of intervals in each mode (or scale) is to confine oneself to the white notes of the piano, and then, depending on which note the music is centred, the modes reveal themselves: thus white notes centred on C are the Ionian mode; on D, Dorian; on E, Phrygian; on F, Lydian; on G, Mixolydian; on A, Aeolian; and on B (very rare, but it does briefly appear in this movement), Locrian. The opening couplet of tunes provides a binding agent to this melodic hotchpotch, returning, in different orchestrations, in the middle of the movement, and again at the close.

The central Berceuse, or Lullaby [7], begins with a peaceful, unaffected melody for solo oboe. The orchestral texture becomes richer in the slightly more animated central section, but soon calm is restored and the opening melody returns, this time played by solo trumpet. The lively finale, a Gigue [8], is another medley replete with typical Scottish inflections, such as the frequent use of the Mixolydian mode (the major scale with a flattened seventh), bagpipe-like drones, and switches, back and forth, between $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{2}{2}$ time, in a manner beloved of Scottish accordion players. Near the finish the percussion section becomes more prominent, and flamboyant woodwind flourishes and whooping horns bring this warm-hearted celebration of the Auld Alliance between Scotland and the French-speaking nations to a sparkling conclusion.

Christopher Gough studied horn and composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow from 2010 to 2014 and after graduating quickly gained prominence on the Scottish freelance scene, frequently performing with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet. He was Principal Horn of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2016 to 2023, at which point he took the decision to work on a freelance basis, allowing more time for composition and arranging. For the past few years he has been guesting as Principal with many of the other leading UK orchestras, as well as abroad, in such places as the Republic of Ireland, Sweden and, most recently, New Zealand, with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He is now Principal Horn of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.



Martin Murphy, from North Lanarkshire, started to learn to play the horn at school when he was ten years old, performing on a borrowed instrument until 2007, when, aged seventeen, he won a Dewar Arts Award that enabled him to buy his own. Graduating from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2013, he initially freelanced with orchestras in Scotland, Newcastle, Manchester and Ireland until, in 2018, he joined the RSNO Horn Section as Assistant Principal. He is also an able pianist.



Katherine Bryan, flute, made her concerto debut at the age of fifteen, and has since performed as soloist with orchestras around the world. She had a stellar apprenticeship: she won a full scholarship to study flute at the Juilliard School, was a prize-winner at the Royal Overseas League Competition in London and the Young Concert Artists Competition in New York and was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year for three consecutive competitions. She was also awarded the Julius Isserlis Scholarship by the Royal Philharmonic Society.



She has been Principal Flute with the RSNO since she was 21, also playing as Guest Principal flute with orchestras throughout the UK and across the world. She is in much demand as a teacher and tutor (she has run her own flute course on the banks of Loch Lomond) and often performs live on radio and TV. In 2019, she was named by *BBC Music Magazine* as one of the top six international flute-players of all time.

The Australian flautist **Adam Richardson** is one of the most versatile freelance musicians in Scotland. He performs in a variety of roles with leading orchestras in Scotland, England and Ireland, including the RSNO, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Royal Northern Sinfonia. In the pit, he has worked with Scottish Opera, Irish National Opera and Scottish Ballet. He also appears with touring productions such as *Wicked*, *Mary Poppins*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *My Fair Lady*. Beyond the stage, he records extensively as a session musician, contributing to film, television and video-game soundtracks.



Peter Dykes, born in North Yorkshire, studied oboe under Stéphane Rancourt and Stephen West at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, graduating in 2000. During this time in Scotland, he made frequent guest appearances with the RSNO and the BBC Scottish SO. He was also a member of the Jeunesses Musicales World Orchestra, touring extensively in Europe and America. For three years he held the position of solo oboe in the Slovenia National Theatre Opera and Ballet Orchestra and also played with the Slovenia Radio Television Symphony Orchestra and Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2003, he was appointed to the position of Principal Oboe with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra in New Zealand, where he was also a professor of oboe at the University of Canterbury and the Pettman Junior Academy of Music. In 2010 he moved to Wellington to take up the position of Associate Principal Oboe with the New Zealand SO. He was also a member of the Wellington contemporary music group Stroma, and an Artist Teacher at the New Zealand School of Music. In July 2017 he was appointed Associate Principal Oboe with the RSNO, and so he and his wife, Jill, moved back to Glasgow. He is also an oboe



teacher at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and an Advisory Trustee for Vacation Chamber Orchestras, one of the foremost British orchestras for developing young musicians.

Stéphane Rancourt, oboe, was born in Quebec in 1967, where he studied with Jacques Simard, at the Conservatoire de Musique de Québec, and in Europe, with Thomas Indermuhle, at the Rotterdam Konservatorium and the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe. In Canada, he was the first oboist to win the Sylva Gelber Award, given by the Canada Council for the Arts, and was also the prize-winner of the 1991 Prix d'Europe. As an orchestra player and soloist, he has performed in most European countries as well as in South America, Russia, Canada, Japan and Australia. Before taking up his appointment as Principal Oboe with the Hallé Orchestra in 2003, he was for eight years Principal Oboe with the RSNO.

His discography includes Alan Rawsthorne's Oboe Concerto, nominated for a *Gramophone* Award, and Samuel Barber's *Canzonetta* for oboe and string orchestra and *Capricorn Concerto*, selected as a *Gramophone* 'Editor's Choice'. For the Hallé label, he recorded the Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto, and NMC recently released his live performance of John Casken's *Apollinaire's Bird*, which was written for him and commissioned by the Hallé.

He teaches oboe at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and is a visiting oboe tutor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

William Knight holds the position of Associate Principal Clarinet with the RSNO. For two years previously he was a member of the Welsh National Opera orchestra. Having graduated with First Class Honours from the Royal College of Music, where he won the RCM Clarinet Prize, he has gone on to perform as guest principal clarinet with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Hallé, Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and others. As a chamber musician, he has appeared with the Nash Ensemble, the Hebrides Ensemble and the Gaudier Ensemble.



Photograph: Neilson Reeves



A fifth-generation classical musician, **Duncan Swindells** studied clarinet at the Royal Academy of Music before pursuing a successful career freelancing in London. In 2002 he took up his current position as Principal Bass Clarinet with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Musicianship is not the only artistic activity to run in the family: his mother, Pat Swindell, is a writer ('Drusilla Carr' is one of several pseudonyms), and he himself is also an established novelist, with *Birth of a Spy*, his well-received debut novel (and the first of a trilogy of spy thrillers), self-published in 2009 through Amazon, which continues to be the platform for his books.



David Hubbard, bassoon, grew up in Wiltshire and went on to study music at the Royal College of Music, graduating in the summer of 1990. He then lived and worked in Spain for twelve years, with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Málaga and then the Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla. He took up the position of Principal Bassoon of the RSNO in July 2004. He has performed as a soloist with the RSNO on several occasions, playing the Mozart Bassoon Concerto, the Vivaldi E minor, and F minor concertos, Michael Daugherty's *Dead Elvis*, the Elgar *Romance* and the Weber *Andante and Hungarian Rondo*. In April 2011 he premiered *That Blessed Wood*, a concerto written for him by Rory Boyle and commissioned by Camerata Scotland. He has guested as principal bassoon with many of the British orchestras.



Born in Cuneo, in north-western Italy, in 1979, and graduating from the local conservatoire, **Paolo Dutto** continued his education at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole and as a member of the Orchestra Giovanile Italiana and achieved a Bachelor's degree at the Conservatorio in Turin. From 2005 to 2010 he was contrabassoon of the Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini, founded and directed by Riccardo Muti. He has also worked with such orchestras as the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai, the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and the Spira mirabilis Project. He has been Principal Contrabassoon with the RSNO since 2019.



The prize-winning horn-player **Benjamin Hartnell-Booth** studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He has performed as Guest Principal Horn with orchestras across Britain, including the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He is a committed chamber musician, too, and frequently plays as a member of the wind quintet Lumas Winds; he has performed at the Peasmarsh, Corbridge and Winchester Chamber Music Festivals.



Alison Murray studied music at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff and the National Centre for Orchestral Studies in London. She moved to Scotland in 1988 and had a varied freelance career playing with all of Scotland's orchestras. In 2004 she joined the RSNO as fifth horn, moving to Assistant Principal second horn a few years later. Throughout her career she has also enjoyed working in education, both in schools and coaching ensembles.



Adam Mackenzie is the Principal Bassoonist of Opera North in Leeds, a position he has held since December 2017. After leaving the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2004, he studied with Valentino Zucchiatti at the Accademia del Teatro alla Scala in Milan and with Dag Jensen in Hanover. While living in London, he worked with most of the UK symphony and chamber orchestras but had little to do with opera until his appointment to Opera North.



He is an active chamber musician. As a member of the New London Chamber Ensemble he has played at the Wigmore Hall with the pianist Angela Hewitt, performed Berio's *Opus Zoo* choreographed and from memory, and recorded works by Lennox Berkeley for Naxos. As a member of Chamber Domaine, he has performed Rossini's *Giovanna d'Arco* for an installation by Anish Kapoor, recorded Britten's *Sinfonietta* and Bridge's *There is a Willow Aslant a Brook* for Resonus Classics and given performances of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* to hundreds of children. He has also played this Faustian cabaret piece from memory while acting in a fully staged production at the Old Vic Theatre, London.

He is passionate about contemporary music and has a particular interest in the use of improvisation in composition. He was part of the team which created a modern perspective on

Purcell's *King Arthur* with Peter Wiegold and Club Inégales at Wilton's Music Hall in London and in 2014 he went on tour to India with the Britten Sinfonia and the leading sarod-player Amjad Ali Khan.

His interest in the freedom that improvisation brings has led him to take a serious involvement in music education. As Director of Education for English Sinfonia and the Brandenburg Sinfonia, he devised and delivered composition projects up and down the country with seasoned professionals and non-musicians alike, narrated *Peter and the Wolf* many times with groups such as the London Mozart Players, London Winds and Sinfonia ViVA (of which he was a member for some years) and brought together over 800 children for a massed concert in Fairfield Hall, Croydon. Until recently he was Head of Instrumental Learning for Opera North, where he oversaw the In Harmony project, the setting-up and development of the Young Musicians Studio and many other aspects of instrumental education at the company.

Most recently he performed the Rossini Bassoon Concerto in Hull, the Strauss *Duett-Concertino* with the Orchestra of Opera North at the Ryedale Festival and recorded the *Capriccio* for bassoon and strings by Brian Elias for Signum.

Paul Mann is a regular guest-conductor with many orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and the Far East. His work as chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark achieved considerable critical success, particularly in the symphonies of Beethoven, Elgar, Mahler, Schumann and Shostakovich; with it he made numerous recordings of a wide range of repertoire, for such labels as Bridge, DaCapo and EMI.

He first came to international attention as winner of the 1998 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, as a result of which he was also appointed assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He made his LSO debut shortly afterwards, and subsequently collaborated frequently with the Orchestra, in both the concert-hall and the recording studio. Special projects with the LSO included the Duke Ellington Centenary Concert at the Barbican Hall with Wynton Marsalis, and a famous collaboration with the legendary rock



group Deep Purple in two widely acclaimed performances of Jon Lord's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* at the Royal Albert Hall, the live DVD and CD of which remain international bestsellers. Among his best-known recordings is the first-ever studio account of Lord's *Concerto*, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with Jon Lord himself and a star-studded cast of soloists, and the live recording of *Celebrating Jon Lord*, a special concert which took place at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 with an all-star cast paying tribute to the late composer.

This is his 31st recording for Toccata Classics, furnishing a discography that spans a wide range of music, both new and forgotten. His first album for Toccata Classics was of orchestral works of Leif Solberg, closely followed by three-disc surveys of the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien and of the Victorian English composer Henry Cotter Nixon, both series including works in his own orchestrations and reconstructions. He has recently been closely associated with a revival of interest in the music of the Swiss composer Richard Flury, recording the complete cycle of symphonies and other orchestral works with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, together with three of the composer's four operas, and many other shorter symphonic pieces, also including rarities in his own orchestrations. As often with his recordings, they were almost all made from his own specially created editions.

He has also established himself as a champion of contemporary British symphonists, recording the Ninth (rocc 0393), Tenth and Thirteenth (rocc 0452) and Fifteenth (rocc 0456) Symphonies of David Hackbridge Johnson and the Third by Steve Elcock (rocc 0400), each accompanied by smaller works, as well as the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4 and tone-poem *Distant Nebulae* by Rodney Newton (rocc 0459), together with explorations of other living British composers, including Rob Keeley and Arnold Griller and four volumes of music by Derek B. Scott. Latterly, an album (rocc 0450) of Robin Holloway's orchestrations – of the Brahms Piano Quintet, Op. 34, as a Symphony in F minor, the Op. 23 *Variations on a Theme of Schumann* and Schumann's *Canonical Studies*, Op. 56 – has been particularly well received.

Paul Mann is curating, as well as conducting, a series of new works for string orchestra, *Music for My Love*, all written in memory of Yodit Tekle, the partner of Martin Anderson, founder of Toccata Classics. The first volume (rocc 0333) featured music by Brahms (arranged by Ragnar Söderlind), Maddalena Casulana (arr. Colin Matthews), Brett Dean, Steve Elcock, Andrew Ford, Robin Holloway, Mihkel Kerem, Jon Lord (arr. Paul Mann), John Pickard, Poul Ruders and Ragnar Söderlind himself. The second volume presented music by Nicolas Bacri, Ronald Corp, Wim Hautekiet, Sean Hickey, John Kinsella, David Matthews, Phillip Ramey, Gregory

Rose, Gerard Schurmann, José Serebrier, Robin Walker and Richard Whilds (TOCC 0370), and the third volume (TOCC 0504) brought music by Michael Csányi-Wills, David Braid, Martin Georgiev, Adam Gorb, Raymond Head, Ian Hobson, David Hackbridge Johnson, Robert Matthew-Walker, Lloyd Moore, Rodney Newton and Dana Paul Perna. Further volumes are in preparation.

Formed in 1891, the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** (RSNO) is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. Awarded royal patronage by Queen Elizabeth II in 1977, its special status in UK cultural life was cemented in 2007 when it was recognised as one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government.

Led by its Music Director, Thomas Søndergård, the Orchestra performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms. It also tours internationally, most recently visiting the USA, China and Europe.

The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving a 2020 *Gramophone* Classical Music Award for the Chopin Piano Concertos (soloist: Benjamin Grosvenor), conducted by Elim Chan, two Diapason d'Or awards (Denève/Roussel, 2007; Denève/Debussy, 2012) and eight Grammy Award nominations. In recent years, the RSNO has increasingly recorded soundtracks for film, television and video games, with notable titles including *Horizon: An American Saga* (Warner Bros.), *Life on Our Planet* (Netflix), *Star Wars Outlaws* (Ubisoft) and *The Woman King* (Sony Pictures). The Orchestra records at its in-house facility, Scotland's Studio, in Glasgow.

The RSNO believes that music can enrich lives and aims to inspire, educate and entertain people throughout Scotland and beyond with its performances, recordings and engagement programmes. Supporting schools, families, young professionals and wider communities, the RSNO delivers high-quality initiatives for all ages and abilities. Recent additions to RSNO engagement activities have included an expansion of its singing strand to encompass Chorus Academies in Dundee and Glasgow, a lunchtime Workplace Choir and a Buggy Choir, in addition to the established and highly respected RSNO Youth Chorus and RSNO Chorus. The community choruses are designed with the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing at their core and are open to all.

First Violins

Lena Zeliszewska, Associate Leader (Bassoon Concerto)

David Adams, Guest Leader (other works)

Tamás Fejes

Patrick Curlett

Eleanor Wilkinson

Susannah Lowdon

Alan Manson

Liam Lynch

Caroline Parry

Liu-Yi Retallick

Ursula Heidecker Allen

Lorna Rough

Elizabeth Bamping

Helena Rose

Sharon Haslam

Joe Hodson

Nia Bevan

Fiona Stephen

Veronica Marziano

Sian Holding

Second Violins

Marion Wilson, Associate Principal

Jacqueline Speirs

Colin McKee

Kirstin Drew

Robin Wilson

Nigel Mason

Sophie Lang

Harriet Hunter

Paul Medd

Tom Greed

Laura Embry

Seona Glen

Harry Kerr

John Robinson

Violas

Tom Dunn, Principal

Felix Tanner, Associate Principal

Asher Zaccardelli

Francesca Hunt

Claire Dunn

Nicola McWhirter

Maria Trittinger

Beth Woodford

Katherine Wren

Lisa Rourke

Elaine Koene

Cellos

Pei-Jee Ng, Principal

Betsy Taylor

Kennedy Leitch

Rachael Lee

Sarah Digger

Robert Anderson

Niamh Molloy

Gunda Baranauskaitė

Susan Dance

Double Basses

Nikita Naumov, Principal

Michael Rae

Moray Jones
Alexandre Cruz dos Santos
Yehor Podkolzin
Cole Morrison

Flutes

Katherine Bryan, Principal
Jack Welch, Guest Principal
Japheth Law Cheng
Frederico Paixão
Adam Richardson, piccolo

Oboes

Adrian Wilson, Principal
Stephane Rancourt, Guest Principal
Peter Dykes
Henry Clay, Principal Cor Anglais
Fraser Kelman, cor anglais

Clarinets

Timothy Orpen, Principal
William Knight
Duncan Swindells, Principal Bass Clarinet

Bassoons

David Hubbard, Principal
Grant McKay
Paolo Dutto, Principal Contrabassoon

Horns

Benji Hartnell-Booth, Principal
Amadea Dazeley-Gaist, Guest Principal
Alison Murray
Martin Murphy

Trumpets

Christopher Hart, Principal
Katie Smith

Trombones

Dávur Juul Magnussen, Principal
Joshua Parkhill
Alastair Sinclair, Principal Bass Trombone

Tuba

Andy Duncan, Guest Principal

Timpani

Paul Philbert, Principal
Robbie Bremner, Guest Principal

Percussion

Simon Lowdon, Principal
Alasdair Kelly
Tom Prichard, Drum Kit
Colin Hyson
David Kerr
Philip Hague
Peter Murch

Harp

Helen Thompson (Bassoon Concerto)
Pippa Tunnell (other works)

Piano

Lynda Cochrane



Recorded on 16–18 June (Bassoon Concerto) and 7 and 8 August 2025 (other works)
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Producer: Michael Ponder

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ROBIN STEVENS Orchestral Music, Volume One

1 *Dona Nobis Pacem: A Prayer for Peace for Two Horns and Small Orchestra* (1994, rev. 2024) **3:57**

2 *Disrupted Chorale for Wind Decet* (2021) **3:46**

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra (2014–16) **41:15**

3 I *Moderato con moto* 14:47

4 II *Lament: Adagio non troppo* – 14:17

5 III *Finale: Allegro amicabile* 12:11

Suite Écossaise (2010) **8:24**

6 I *Mouvement à la Mode: Moderato, ben marcato* 4:07

7 II *Berceuse: Adagio con moto* 2:24

8 III *Gigue: Allegro vivo, alla danza* 1:56

TT 57:27

Christopher Gough and Martin Murphy, horns 1

Katherine Bryan and Adam Richardson, flutes 2

Peter Dykes and Stéphane Rancourt, oboes 2

William Knight and Duncan Swindells, clarinets 2

David Hubbard and Paolo Dutto, bassoons 2

Benjamin Hartnell-Booth and Alison Murray, horns 2

Adam Mackenzie, bassoon 3–5

Royal Scottish National Orchestra 1 3–8

Paul Mann, conductor

FIRST RECORDINGS,
MADE IN THE PRESENCE
OF THE COMPOSER