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THREE BRITISH ACCORDION CONCERTOS

MUSIC BY
JONATHAN DOVE
GORDON JACOB
EDWARD MCGUIRE



BBC
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FIRST RECORDINGS

Owen Murray, accordion
BBC Concert Orchestra
Sir James MacMillan, conductor

THREE BRITISH ACCORDION CONCERTOS

Paul Conway

The emergence of an accordion with a free-bass keyboard in the early 1950s enabled the performer to play melodic passages over several octaves, giving composers the freedom to write for a fully polyphonic instrument with a pitch-range of several octaves in either hand. The Danish accordionist Mogens Ellegaard (1935–95) was a major advocate for the instrument and the premiere by Ellegaard in Copenhagen in 1958 of Ole Schmidt's *Symphonic Fantasy and Allegro* (1958), written for him, paved the way for *concertante* works by other Scandinavian composers, including Nils Viggo Bentzon's concerto (1963) and Per Nørgård's *Recall* (1968). The development of an original repertoire of quality for the instrument led the Danish Royal Academy of Music to open an accordion department in 1970 with Ellegaard as Head.¹ The repertoire of accordion concertos has been further enriched by composers across the globe, including the Czech Václav Trojan (*Fairy Tales*, 1959), French Jean Wiener (1962), Maltese Charles Camilleri (1968), Canadian R. Murray Schafer (1992), New Zealand-British Lyell Cresswell (*Dragspil*, 1994), Estonian Erkki-Sven Tüür (*Prophecy*, 2007), Polish Krzysztof Penderecki (2012), Australian Brett Dean (*The Players*, 2019) and Portuguese Luís Tinoco (2023).

British *concertante* pieces for the instrument include Howard Skempton's Concerto for oboe, accordion and strings (1997), Sally Beamish's *The Singing* (2011), Ben Lunn's *Mandala* (2012), Aileen Sweeney's *Winter* (2021), Jay Capperauld's *Galvanic Dances* (2025) and a concerto (2025) by the Bulgarian-British Dobrinka Tabakova. This release offers three further disparate and highly individual contributions to the medium from British composers. Two of the featured scores were written for Owen Murray, who has pioneered the classical accordion and done much to expand and

¹ Owen Murray, the soloist on this album, studied with Mogens Ellegaard at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen between 1974 and 1982.

diversify the repertoire of the instrument, not least by commissioning and premiering works by British composers, such as Ronald Stevenson's *The Harlot's House: Dance Poem after Oscar Wilde*, for free-bass accordion and percussion (1988),² premiered by Owen Murray and Evelyn Glennie at the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, on 30 August 1988 as part of that year's Edinburgh Festival, Kenneth Dempster's *Modern Athenians* (1990), John McLeod's *Passage of the Divine Bird* (1991) and *Incredible Vistas* (1993), likewise premiered at the Queen's Hall, on 25 January 1994 by Owen Murray and the Paragon Ensemble conducted by David Davies, David Doward's *Amazonian Moonflower* (1992) and Nigel Clarke's *On the Wings of the Wind* (1993). But Murray's first steps on the path to becoming a professional classical accordionist were met with outright condescension:

My commitment to establishing educational possibilities for the classical accordion began in 1973, when I enrolled in a music class led by Neil Butterworth, at the Edinburgh College of Commerce, now Napier University. I was told not to bring my accordion with me! One day the class had a visit from a man from the education authority. He spoke with each student individually until it was my turn. When I said 'I play the accordion, sir', he walked on without saying a word. I told Neil Butterworth that I would go abroad, get an education, then come back and make sure that no young accordionist would, in future, have to suffer such discrimination and humiliation again. I won!³

GORDON JACOB

1895–1984

Concerto for Chromatic Accordion, String Orchestra and Percussion (1972)

Gordon Jacob was born in Upper Norwood, south London, and educated at Dulwich College. After active army service in the First World War, he entered the Royal College of Music, studying conducting with Adrian Boult, piano with George Thalben-Ball and composition, principally with Charles Villiers Stanford but also with Herbert Howells and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Jacob taught at Birkbeck and Morley colleges before joining the staff at the RCM, where he taught composition and orchestration

² Recorded by Neil Sutcliffe, accordion, and Michael O'Rourke, percussion, on Toccata Classics TOCC 0658.

³ E-mail to Martin Anderson of Toccata Next, dated 30 December 2025.

from the mid-1920s until his retirement in 1966. Among his many pupils at the College were Malcolm Arnold, Philip Cannon, Ruth Gipps, Imogen Holst, Joseph Horovitz and Elizabeth Maconchy. His books on music include *Orchestral Technique*, *How to Read a Score* and *The Composer and his Art*⁴ and he also contributed to several reference works and textbooks. He was awarded the CBE in 1968.

Active as a creative artist for nearly three-quarters of a century, he wrote around four hundred works, including two symphonies (1929, 1943) and many concertos, several of which feature a string-orchestral accompaniment, including the first for piano (1927) the first for oboe (1933), those for bassoon (1947), horn (1951), violin (1953), cello (1955) and both for flute (1951, 1981). Other notable orchestral works include the *Variations on an Original Theme* (1936), three Sinfoniettas (1942, 1950 and 1954), *A Little Symphony* (1957) and the comedy overture *The Barber of Seville Goes to the Devil* (1960). There are also orchestral arrangements in his catalogue of, among many other pieces, Vaughan Williams' *English Folk Song Suite* (1924), Holst's *Moorside Suite* (1941) and Elgar's Organ Sonata, which was first performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sir Adrian Boult in 1947. Among his chamber and instrumental works are two string quartets (1928, 1930), an oboe quartet (1938), a clarinet quintet (1940), a piano trio (1956), a piano quartet (1969) and sonatas for piano (1956), cello (1957), oboe (1966) and viola (1978). His vocal output ranges from settings of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* for soprano and piano or string trio (1921) to Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, for chorus and orchestra (1954). He also wrote band pieces, such as *An Original Suite* for military or symphonic wind band (1928), *Music for a Festival* for symphonic wind band (1950) and the *York Symphony* for brass band (1970), as well as incidental music for the stage, television and radio, including the 1940s BBC comedy series *ITMA* (*It's That Man Again*). His film scores encompass the Ealing production *For Those in Peril* (1943) and *Esther Waters* (1948). He



⁴ Respectively Oxford University Press, London, 1982, Boosey & Hawkes, London, 1944, and Oxford University Press, London, 1955.

provided music for the opening of the 1951 Festival of Britain⁵ and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.⁶

In a BBC television documentary, *Gordon Jacob*, directed by Ken Russell in 1959, the composer said: 'I personally feel that the day that melody is discarded, you may as well pack up music altogether',⁷ and his enduring belief in clarity and directness of expression ensured that his music remained popular among concertgoers. As one of his former pupils, Philip Cannon, put it during Jacob's 70th-birthday year, 'In an intellectually gimmick-ridden age such as ours, craftsmanship like Gordon's is not fashionable, but it arouses a heartening response in the public simply because it produces telling and effective music'.⁸

Jacob's Concerto for Chromatic Accordion, String Orchestra and Percussion was written in 1972 for the accordionist John Gould, who premiered the work with the St Paul's Orchestra, conducted by James Young in Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, on 4 May 1974.⁹ Published by Chappell & Co. the following year, the work received a broadcast performance by Mogens Ellegaard, with the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Maurice Handford, on 10 November 1976. The publisher, Warner Chappell, lost the score and parts of the concerto when moving office. Owen Murray discovered a copy of a manuscript score, informed the publisher, who was completely uninterested, and therefore had it typeset himself. The 're-premiere' took place in Peebles, Scotland, on 9 May 2014, with the Peebles Orchestra conducted by Robert Dick. Jacob's widow, Margaret Hyatt Jacob, was in the audience for the occasion.

The opening movement begins 1 with a solemn *Adagio* introduction for strings. Baleful, sighing phrases trace an outline of a theme. A brief, cadenza-like passage for accordion precedes the scherzo-like *Allegretto* main section, where the principal subject is a dancing, chromatic melody, derived from the opening phrases in the strings. Timpani

⁵ An orchestral arrangement of the hymn *All People That on Earth do Dwell (Old Hundredth)* (1951).

⁶ An arrangement of *God Save the Queen*, for mixed chorus and orchestra, with preceding trumpet fanfare (1953).

⁷ Quoted by Eric Wetherell in his entry on the composer in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd ed.), Oxford University Press, London, 2001, Vol. 13, p. 727.

⁸ Philip Cannon, 'Gordon Jacob: 70th Birthday Tribute', *Composer*, October 1965, No. 17, p. 32.

⁹ In 1975, Jacob arranged the work for organ, strings and percussion.

and strings accompany a second, more lyrically flowing theme featuring a chordal sequence on accordion. Softer and more introspective, a third main idea is lilting, lightly scored and graced by an ornamented solo-violin line. These three principal themes are heard again. Lit by glockenspiel, a bridging passage slows the tempo and leads to a brief cadenza. This solo episode gains momentum as it unfolds and is succeeded by a hearty coda, underlined by timpani in its closing stages.

Marked *Quasi Menuetto*, the central Intermezzo [2] maintains the dancing character of the first movement. There is a Neo-Classical elegance to this delightful interlude. Soloist and *pizzicato* strings introduce themselves separately before the two protagonists join together, with bowed strings echoed by glockenspiel adding to the fairy tale-like atmosphere. The tiny trio section is a fluent variant of the minuet, which is then repeated. There is no coda, which comes as no surprise, since concision and economy of means are major contributing factors to the charm of this movement.

At the start of the eloquent *Largo* third movement [3], the unaccompanied accordion soloist reflects on the material of the slow section for strings that opened the concerto. Eventually, strings enter, initiating a vigorous, richly scored variant of the main idea. As the texture thins, violins hint at a new theme. It is taken up immediately by the soloist, who gets the *Allegro Moderato* fourth movement [4] under way without a break. In contrast with the seriousness of the preceding *Largo*, this finale is full of the composer's characteristic wit and good humour. The main theme is playful, a quality accentuated by the deft use of xylophone to accompany the strings' counterstatement. Marked *scherzando*, a smoother, more free-flowing secondary idea deftly accommodates constant shifts in pulse. The central section focuses on the main idea and includes sequences featuring first xylophone and then tambourine. A recurring slow sequence containing descending accordion chords casts an occasional shadow over the score, but these episodes are short-lived and serve to point up the prevailing high spirits. After both themes have been recalled, virtuosic flourishes by the soloist and then by violins lead to an incisive closing *tutti*, reinforced by timpani strokes.

EDWARD MC GUIRE

b. 1948

Accordion Concerto (1999)

Edward (Eddie) McGuire was born in Possilpark, north-west Glasgow, in 1948. He began to learn the flute at the age of fourteen. From 1966 to 1970 he studied composition with James Iliff at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was awarded the Hecht Prize in 1968. Three years later, a British Council scholarship enabled him to study in Stockholm at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music with Ingvar Lidholm. An interest in Scottish folk-music has informed his writing since 1973, and he has toured internationally as flautist for the traditional Scottish folk-group The Whistlebinkies. He also writes for, and plays bamboo flute in, the Scotland-based Chinese-music group Harmony Ensemble.

His extensive catalogue features the three-act ballet *Peter Pan* (1988) and the operas *The Loving of Etain* (1990), composed for the year in which Glasgow was European City of Culture, *Cullercoats Tommy* (1993), *Cake-Talk* (1996) and *Helen of Braemore* (1997). Among his orchestral pieces are the overtures *Hall of Memories* (2006), written to mark the re-opening of the renovated Glasgow City Halls, *Clyde Built* (2008), for the Ulster Orchestra, and *Revival* (2023), which celebrates the return of live music-making after lockdowns. He has also written the symphonic poems *Calgacus* (1976), *Source* (1979) and *The Spirit of Wallace* (1997), *A Glasgow Symphony* (1990), composed for the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, the *Chinese Folksong Suite* for strings (2011), and concertos for guitar (1988), trombone (1991), double-bass (1994), viola (1998), violin (1999) and cello (2021). His instrumental output contains the *Twelve White-note Pieces* for piano (1971), *Dancing Memories* for solo flute (2001) and an ongoing sequence of preludes for solo instruments, which began in 1976 with a work for cellist James Cowan.¹⁰ His chamber works include a horn trio (1966), *Liberation*, for flute, clarinet, viola and



Photograph: Laura Durrant

¹⁰ Prelude 12, for solo accordion, has been recorded by Owen Murray on Meridian CDE 84366, *On the Wings of the Wind*.

harp (1975), *Euphoria*, for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion (1980), a wind octet (1980), a string quartet (1982), a string trio (1986), *Dark Cloud*, for eight guitars (1991), *Elegy* for piano trio (1992), a harp octet (1992), *Chinese Knotwork*, for four clarinets (2001), *Botanic Gardens* for four players at two pianos (2016), *Entangled Fortunes* (2002), for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, written to celebrate the awarding of a Nobel Prize to Sir James Mirrlees, and *String Trio II*, premiered in 2019. Vocal pieces range from *Pipes of Peace* (1986), a setting of the Psalms for chorus and bagpipes, for performances by the Royal National Scottish Orchestra Chorus in Israel and Palestine, to *Songs from the North* for soprano and brass quintet, which features his own texts and was written to mark the 65th birthday of the Scottish trumpeter John Wallace in 2014. He has also written a considerable amount of music for guitar and the symphonic poem for brass band *Earthrise* (2003) and provided music for *Nineveh on the Clyde*, a 1999 television documentary on the Scottish architect Alexander 'Greek' Thompson, screened by the BBC.

Eddie McGuire's Accordion Concerto was commissioned by Owen Murray, who premiered the piece with the Goldberg Ensemble conducted by Malcolm Layfield at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival on 24 November 1999. The composer created an instrumental version of the piece in 2017 for accordionist and composer Aileen Sweeney and pianist Nick Lauener, but it is the original version, with string orchestra, which is featured on this release.

The opening *Moderato marcato* [5] begins with heavy lower-string chords, above which the soloist introduces a halting, emphatic theme, the murmuring accompaniment to which is passed around the ensemble. An ardently expressive idea containing rising and falling phrases provides melodic and emotional contrast. Just as the music appears to be heading for a climactic finish, the rug is pulled out from under the listener. In an unresolved ending, the music fades to a close as the soloist gives out fragments of the thematic material above repeated patterns of string harmonics.

An air of wry nostalgia hangs over the waltz rhythms, elaborately decorated lines and crisply phrased accompaniment of the quirky *Andante cantabile* [6]. The use of Scotch-snap rhythms by the Glasgow-born composer gives the relaxed and whimsical

narrative a personal touch. At the core of the movement is an extended cadenza that explores the expressive range of the solo instrument. The hushed and spacious final bars take care to leave the musical argument open.

In the closing *Vivo con bravura* [7], dancing energy and exuberance prevail. In his prefatory note to the score dating from the time of composition, McGuire writes of the 'rhythms of an energetic Balkan variety perhaps serving as a tribute to the spirit of resistance and rebuilding that is now, thankfully, prominent in the area'. An extended section for strings precedes an accordion cadenza. Soloist and strings remind the listener of the main theme of the movement before drawing the movement, and the concerto, to a vigorous, unequivocal conclusion.

JONATHAN DOVE

b. 1959

***Northern Lights* (2019)**

Jonathan Dove was born in London in 1959 to parents who were both architects. His formative musical experiences included improvising at the piano, becoming acquainted with choral music through playing the organ at his local church, and getting to know orchestral repertoire as a violist in the London Schools Symphony Orchestra. After studying composition with Robin Holloway at the University of Cambridge in the late 1970s, he gained wide experience as a freelance accompanist, répétiteur, animateur and arranger. This inside knowledge of the potential of the operatic voice and the day-to-day running of an opera house had a profound effect upon his own creative instincts. 'I've come to think about my music as a means of telling stories, whether on stage or in song'¹¹ he confessed, and a strong narrative element runs through his output. Vocal pieces, especially operas, dominate his catalogue, and his concert works also possess a dramatic impulse.



Photograph: Marshall Light Studio

¹¹ Andrew Palmer, *Encounters with British Composers*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2015, p. 150.

In 1987 he joined the music-staff at Glyndebourne which, eleven years later, commissioned and premiered his first main-stage opera, *Flight*. More than twenty operas followed, including *Tobias and the Angel* (1999), *The Enchanted Pig* (2006), *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (2007), *Swanhunter* (2009), *Mansfield Park* (2011), *The Monster in the Maze* (2015), *Itch* (2023) and the community opera *Uprising* (2024). The oratorio *There Was A Child*, was premiered at the 2009 Norfolk and Norwich Festival, and *A Song of Joys*, for chorus and orchestra, opened the 2010 Last Night of the Proms. He has also written *Who Wrote the Book of Love*, for baritone and string quartet, *Hojoki - An Account of My Hut* (2006), a dramatic cantata for countertenor and orchestra, *In Exile* (2020), for baritone soloist, cello and orchestra, *Gaspard's Christmas*, for narrator, chorus and orchestra (2022) and *Odyssey* (2023), for soprano and tenor soloists, children's chorus, adult community chorus, mixed chorus and orchestra. There are *concertante* works for flute (*The Magic Flute Dances*, 1999) and trombone (*Stargazer*, 2001), and a double concerto for trumpet and alto saxophone (*Moonlight Revels*, 2002).

Northern Lights, Dove's concerto for accordion and chamber orchestra, was written in 2019 and premiered on 2 May of that year by Owen Murray and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Clemens Schult, in Queen's Hall, Edinburgh. Dove was pleased to be asked by Owen Murray to write the work, since he had already included the instrument in some of his previous operas, such as *Tobias and the Angel*, *The Enchanted Pig* and *Swanhunter*, even incorporating two accordions playing together in his opera *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, inspired by buskers he heard in Naples. Even so, the commission was tinged with sadness: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies had originally intended to write an accordion concerto for Owen Murray, a project which Max, as he was affectionately known, had taken on with much pleasure, declaring that 'to be able to collaborate with a musician of his [Owen's] distinction is an unmissable opportunity to create a landmark in the history of this instrument',¹² but he died before being able to complete the score. The Northern Lights can be seen from Max's Orkney home, and feelings of awe and excitement at witnessing this natural phenomenon are reflected in

¹² Quoted by Michael Pearce in his article 'An Accordion Tribute', *Classical Music*, May 2019, p. 20.

Dove's concerto, which is dedicated to Max's memory. The modest orchestral forces required consist of two flutes (second doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets (second doubling bass clarinet), two bassoons (second doubling contrabassoon), two horns, two trumpets, percussion (one player: timpani, vibraphone, glockenspiel, crotale, triangle) and strings.

Marked 'Very spacious', the first movement [8] begins broadly. After an arresting initial chord from the soloist dies away, soaring, ornamented accordion figurations vaulted over low, held string chords evoke a vast, lonely expanse. Presently, a tiny flourish from the soloist invites woodwind players to join in, rapidly followed by an upsurge of shining trumpets and glittering crotale. An unaccompanied accordion fanfare heralds the arrival of the exuberant main section, buoyed up by the rhythmic vitality of its sparky, repeated melodic patterns. By way of contrast, the soloist introduces a sustained, arch-shaped melody, marked 'singing', taken up by upper woodwind and violins. Insistent, syncopated accordion chords reinstate the jaunty main material. Clarinets and bassoons introduce a fanfare-like figure into the swirling textures, seized upon by whooping horns and braying trumpets. Flecked by glockenspiel and crowned by a bright trumpet line, the main ideas are recalled before the isolated vistas of the opening bars briefly re-emerge.

Without a break, the central movement [9], which, like its predecessor, is marked 'Very spacious', begins with an eloquent, questing theme for accordion over extended, upper-string chords. In time, the tempo relaxes, and the soloist's phrases become increasingly spontaneous, leading to a brief, cadenza-like solo passage. The faster central section begins lightly with capering interplay between accordion and woodwind. In due course the material becomes more energetic. A slackening in pace presages the return of the initial searching melody of the movement, now rendered on high, keening woodwind. In the expansive closing bars, the solo line offers a freely expressive flourish. Dove has offered an evocative description of this movement: 'a watcher scans the night sky, wondering – and is rewarded with a display of the Northern Lights'.¹³

¹³ Jonathan Dove, programme note for Wise Music (<https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/64937/Northern-Lights--Jonathan-Dove/>)

Marked ‘Musing’, the finale [10] begins directly with a gentle accordion chord built up of three notes ascending stepwise, which is then repeated an octave lower. This sequence is soon revealed to be the opening three notes of Maxwell Davies’ *Farewell to Stromness*, invoked by the soloist in wistful and relaxed mood over solo double-bass *pizzicati*. This bluesy introduction celebrating Max’s much-loved theme is succeeded promptly by the spirited main section of the movement, featuring sparkling glockenspiel and airy strings and marked ‘dancing’. Presently, punchy rhythms lead to a climax, followed by a bravura passage for the soloist. The orchestra then reinstates the lively, capering material from the main section. A series of expectant flourishes generates considerable anticipation before the majestic, trumpet-capped return of the theme from *Farewell to Stromness*, victorious, unbowed and, in Dove’s words, ‘carried on the night air’.¹⁴ A parting burst of skipping glockenspiel in the closing bars suggests, inspiritingly, that the dance goes on.

Paul Conway is a freelance writer specialising in twentieth-century and contemporary British music. He has reviewed for The Independent, Tempo and Musical Opinion and provided programme notes for The Proms and the Edinburgh, Spitalfields and Three Choirs festivals. His book Moorland Symphonies: An Introduction to the Music of Arthur Butterworth was published by Lyrrita in 2023.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Owen Murray studied with Mogens Ellegaard at the Royal Academy of Music in Copenhagen. On completing his education in 1982, he began campaigning to create educational possibilities for young accordionists in the UK and acceptance of the classical accordion on the concert platform. That led to his being appointed professor of accordion at the Royal Academy of Music in 1986 – the first appointment of its kind in the UK.

Owen Murray has become synonymous with the emergence of the classical accordion as a recognised and respected instrument on the UK concert platform. He has raised the status of the instrument by commissioning a considerable body of new works and inspiring a new generation of young performers that includes Ksenija Sidorova and Martynas Levickis.

He was awarded the coveted Hon. RAM (Honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Music) in 1993, thereby joining a distinguished list of musicians that includes Anne-Sophie Mutter, Plácido Domingo and Sir András Schiff. He was awarded a Silver Disc at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music in 2010.

He plays on a model 'Mythos' classical accordion, No. 27, made by Pigini in Castelfidardo, Italy; the tuning is by Viktor Melnyk.

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies – who was going to compose a concerto for Owen Murray but died before he could do so – said of him: 'Owen's life's work has been to establish an identity for the classical accordion. To be able to collaborate with a musician of his distinction is an unmissable opportunity to create a landmark in the history of this instrument.'



Photograph: Britten-Pears Foundation/Bridgeman Images

Sir James MacMillan is one of today's most successful composers and performs internationally as a conductor. His musical language is flooded with influences from his Scottish heritage, Catholic faith, social conscience and close connection with Celtic folk-music, and is distinctive for its rhythmic excitement and powerful emotional communication. He first became internationally recognised after the extraordinary success of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* at the BBC Proms in 1990. His prolific output has since been performed and broadcast around the world. His major works include the percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*, which has received close to 500 performances, a cello concerto for Mstislav Rostropovich and five symphonies. Recent major works include his Percussion Concerto No. 2 for Colin Currie, Violin Concerto No. 2 for Nicola Benedetti and his Symphony No. 5, written for The Sixteen, which was premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2019 as part of a major feature to celebrate his 60th birthday year. Several new works for chorus and orchestra have been premiered in recent seasons including his *Christmas Oratorio* premiered by the London Philharmonic in 2021 and *Timotheus, Bacchus and Cecilia*, a celebration of the power of music, premiered by the Cincinnati Symphony and the Hallé Orchestra in 2023–24. Most recently, a new Concerto for Orchestra was co-commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia and Singapore Symphony.



He enjoys a successful career as conductor of his own music alongside a range of contemporary and standard repertoire, and is praised for the composer's insight he brings to each score. He has conducted such orchestras as the Rotterdam Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Danish Radio Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Hungarian National Philharmonic, St Louis Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, BBC Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic until 2013 and Composer/Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic until 2009.

In October 2014 he founded the music festival The Cumnock Tryst, which takes place annually in his native Ayrshire. In 2024, to mark its tenth anniversary, the festival launched an

International Summer-School for Composers, directed by James MacMillan and open to young composers worldwide. The Cumnock Tryst won the Sky Arts Award for Classical Music in 2024, and the Series and Events Award at the 2025 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.

He has conducted many of his own works on disc for Chandos, BIS and BMG. A notable highlight is a series on Challenge Records, including his violin concerto *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness* and percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* with Colin Currie and the Netherlands Radio Kamer Filharmonie. A release on Harmonia Mundi, where he conducted the Britten Sinfonia in works including his Oboe Concerto, won the 2016 BBC Music Magazine Award. In 2017, The Sixteen's recording of MacMillan's *Stabat Mater* was nominated for a Gramophone Award and won the Diapason d'Or Choral Award.

He was awarded a CBE in 2004 and a knighthood in 2015. He was appointed a Fellow of the Ivors Academy in 2024.

The mission of the **BBC Concert Orchestra** is to bring inspiring musical experiences to everyone, everywhere, with the versatility of the ensemble as the key. The Orchestra explores a wide selection of classical and contemporary music and is broadcast weekly on *Friday Night Is Music Night* on BBC Radio 3. In London it appears regularly at the BBC Proms, at the Southbank Centre and in the Alexandra Palace Theatre, where it is Associate Orchestra. It has a partnership with the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and Nottingham Royal Concert Hall. The BBC CO has close relationships with its Chief Conductor Anna-Maria Helsing, Principal Guest Conductor and Curator Edwin Outwater, Associate Conductor Jérôme Kuhn and Conductor Laureate Barry Wordsworth.

Soundtrack recordings include *Blue Planet* and *Call the Midwife* for BBC One and Isobel Waller-Bridge's score for Charlie Mackesy's Oscar-winning film *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* as well as new music for BBC Sounds' *Music & Meditation* podcast.

Its performances for *Piano Room Month* on BBC Radio 2 have featured collaborations with pop artists, including Olivia Dean, Robbie Williams and Paul Weller.

The BBC CO education and community activities include a leading role in Create Yarmouth, a residency with Orchestras Live aiming to engage and inspire young people and adults in the Great Yarmouth area, and involvement in 'BBC Ten Pieces', the 'BBC Young Composer' competition, and the 'BBC Open Music' programme.



Recorded on 25–27 February 2024 in Studio 1, BBC Maida Vale, London W6

Engineer: Christopher Rouse

Producer: Neil Varley

In loving memory of Inger Murray (1944–2020)

Owen, Katja and Mike Murray

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THREE BRITISH ACCORDION CONCERTOS

GORDON JACOB

1895–1984

Concerto for Chromatic Accordion, String Orchestra and Percussion (1972)**14:42**

<input type="checkbox"/> I	<i>Adagio – Allegretto</i>	6:14
<input type="checkbox"/> II	<i>Intermezzo: Quasi Menuetto</i>	2:45
<input type="checkbox"/> III	<i>Largo –</i>	1:48
<input type="checkbox"/> IV	<i>Allegro Moderato</i>	3:55

EDWARD MC GUIRE

b. 1948

Accordion Concerto (1999)**19:18**

<input type="checkbox"/> I	<i>Moderato marcato</i>	8:37
<input type="checkbox"/> II	<i>Andante cantabile</i>	6:39
<input type="checkbox"/> III	<i>Vivo con bravura</i>	4:02

JONATHAN DOVE

b. 1959

Northern Lights* (2019)*22:53**

<input type="checkbox"/> I	<i>Very spacious –</i>	7:34
<input type="checkbox"/> II	<i>Very spacious</i>	7:30
<input type="checkbox"/> III	<i>Musing</i>	8:49

TT 57:55**Owen Murray, accordion**

FIRST RECORDINGS

BBC Concert Orchestra**Sir James MacMillan, conductor**