



KSENIJA SIDOROVA classical accordion

Nordheim Bach Berio Scarlatti
Mozart Schnittke Takahashi Piazzolla



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01	Arne Nordheim FLASHING	07'21
02	J. S. Bach OVERTURE IN THE FRENCH STYLE, BWV.831 <i>Adagio maestoso - Allegro - Adagio</i>	07'04
03	Luciano Berio SEQUENZA XIII "CHANSON"	09'15
04	Domenico Scarlatti SONATA IN D MINOR, K.77 <i>Moderato e cantabile - Minuetto</i>	05'09
05	Domenico Scarlatti SONATA IN D MAJOR, K.33 <i>Allegro</i>	03'12
06	W. A. Mozart 12 VARIATIONS "AH, VOUS DIRAIS-JE, MAMAN", K.265/300e	08'45
	Alfred Schnittke REVIS FAIRY TALE	
07	<i>i Chichikov's Childhood</i>	02'09
08	<i>ii Officials</i>	02'22
09	<i>iii Waltz</i>	03'15
10	<i>iv Polka</i>	02'33
	Yuji Takahashi LIKE A WATER BUFFALO	
11	<i>i Like a Water Buffalo (poem: Wendy Pousard)</i>	01'02
12	<i>ii Like a Water Buffalo</i>	09'30
	Bonus track	
13	Astor Piazzolla FIVE TANGO SENSATIONS - 1, <i>Asleep</i> Ksenija Sidorova with the Sacconi Quartet	06'51
		68'30

Ksenija Sidorova - accordion

Sacconi Quartet: Ben Hancox, Hannah Dawson - violins

Robin Ashwell - viola Cara Berridge - cello

Recorded in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, 13th–15th April 2010 [01–10, 12],
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Produced and engineered by Alexander Van Ingen

Edited by Dave Rowell Mixed & mastered by Alexander Van Ingen

all for Six Music Productions (www.sixmp.net)

FOREWORD

Music has been my passion since early childhood, and thanks to my grandmother I learnt the accordion. Classical accordion is still a young instrument, and unfortunately the image of its folk roots still remains. It will probably be a while before the phrase "I play the classical accordion" doesn't sound unusual or funny! The classical accordion is a wonderfully expressive instrument and the repertoire on this CD ranges from Baroque music to Contemporary, including works which have quickly become core repertoire pieces (Berio's *Sequenza*, Nordheim's *Flashing*) balanced along transcriptions of solo and orchestral music. In the past six years of my studies in London I was fortunate to meet many wonderful people, and to perform and record with fantastic musicians.

This CD recording would not have been possible without David and Mary Bowerman, recording producer Alexander Van Ingen, Professor Owen Murray and the support of my family. It is an exciting time to be a musician these days, and I am proud to say "I play the classical accordion!"



SELECTED WORKS FOR CLASSICAL ACCORDION

The accordion is an underexploited resource in western classical music. Like a number of 'marginal' instruments it needed a champion before composers began to take it seriously – Andrés Segovia and the guitar is an obvious parallel. Although the concertina, first patented in 1829, could call on a repertoire of classical compositions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, thanks chiefly to the efforts of Giulio Regondi (1822–72), it was not until the early twentieth century and the invention of the free-bass accordion – which much expanded the tonal and harmonic resources of the instrument – that the stimulus for a modern concert repertoire was perceived. The musician who picked up that challenge was the Dane Mogens Ellegaard (1935–95), who began to play the accordion when he was eight. In an interview in 1990 he looked back on the conditions with which he initially had to contend:

When I started, there was absolutely no accordion culture. Unless you define accordion culture as 'oom-pah-pah', or the Cuckoo Waltz – that sort of thing. The free-bass accordion didn't exist – it was entirely unknown when I was a child. At that time the accordion world was living in splendid isolation. No contact at all with the outside musical world. Concerts for us consisted of Frosini, Deiro¹ repertoire or folkloristic music. The possibilities of getting a formal, quality education [on accordion] were nil. The accordion was not accepted at any of the higher music institutions.... The possibilities for a soloist, for the best players, would be variety 'night club' work, Saturday night shows.... This is what I was doing when I was very young.

In 1953, while still a student, Ellegaard acquired one of the first free-bass accordions in Denmark and within four years the light-music composer Vilfred Kjær had written a concerto for him –

a work of light character, but anyway a beginning. At that concert, also by coincidence, Ole Schmidt [1928–2010] was sitting in the audience. He didn't like Kjær's composition, but liked the instrument, and told me this bluntly

afterwards. So I challenged him to write something better. In 1958 he wrote Symphonic Fantasy and Allegro, Op. 20, for accordion and orchestra, which was the first really serious work for accordion written by a good composer.

The search for a modern repertoire for the accordion was now underway, and over the next four decades Ellegaard's commissions built it up from scratch, with his students in turn commissioning further works. Of course, accordionists have also worked backwards, transcribing earlier keyboard works for their instrument – which gives Baroque music in particular a new lease of life. This CD mines both the old and new veins in the modern accordion repertoire.

One of the most important of those Ellegaard students is the Scots-born Owen Murray, who graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Music in 1982 and returned to Britain to raise his lance for his instrument. His appointment as professor at the Royal Academy of Music in 1986 (the first time an accordionist had been accorded such a senior position in any major British educational establishment) provided the platform from which several generations of students have in turn launched their own careers – and that of Ksenija Sidorova is already off to a glittering start.

Arne Nordheim: Flashing

The late Arne Nordheim (1931–2010) was not only the most prominent composer in his native Norway, where he enjoyed national standing (from 1982 he lived in 'Grotten', the official residence of the country's best-respected artist); he was also a figure of world standing in post-War modernism. Nordheim was one of the few modernist composers who managed to turn his back on traditional tonality without also sacrificing a sense of weight and impetus; as a result his music can have a real sense of physicality, of movement and change on a large scale. In 1975 he composed *Spur*, a concerto for accordion and orchestra, his third work to use the instrument. *Flashing* (1985) [1], is based on the cadenza from *Spur* and incorporates material from elsewhere in the work; Nordheim composed new music to top and tail

¹ Pietro Frosini (1885–1951) and Guido Deiro (1886–1950), though both Italians, were important accordionists on the vaudeville circuit in the United States.

it. He worked with electronics regularly, a passion which has left its mark on *Flashing*, with its use of crescendo and diminuendo on sustained notes. Like so much else in the modern accordion literature, *Flashing* is dedicated to Mogens Ellegaard; it has become a classic of the repertoire.

J. S. Bach: Overture in the French Style, BWV.831 – first movement

No composer has been transcribed more often than Bach: the formal clarity and graceful logic of his music ensure that it can be transcribed for some pretty bizarre combinations and still emerge with its meaning and dignity intact. But the accordion brings an advantage that few other instruments can offer: its notes do not begin to die away as soon as they are sounded which, coupled with its extended range of timbres, allows the player all kinds of colouristic possibilities denied to other musicians. It thus permits each line in Bach's contrapuntal argument to maintain its identity, bringing a degree of clarity to the music that is rarely heard elsewhere. The 'Overture in the French Style', BWV.831 (Bach's *Ouvertüren* are suites of dances), written for a two-manual harpsichord and published in 1731, opens with an expansive Overture [2] which illustrates just how strikingly the accordion can enhance the music it adopts. In it a proud *Adagio maestoso* leads to a brisk *Allegro* before returning to the initial tempo to close.

Luciano Berio: Sequenza XIII

Strung through the work of Luciano Berio (1925–2003), another master of modernism, is a series of fourteen *Sequenze*, each for a different instrument and designed to stretch its technique to the limit; they begin with *Sequenza I* for flute in 1958 and end with *Sequenza XIV* for cello in 2002. *Sequenza XIII* for accordion (1995) [3] – inspired by and dedicated to another champion of the contemporary accordion, Teodoro Anzellotti – bears the subtitle *Chanson*: Berio was thinking 'of the accompanied melodies of trips to the country and the songs of the working class, of night clubs, of Argentinean tangos and of jazz', elements which he felt have 'contributed, more than any other experience, to a redefinition of the instrument in

the last decades'. But, he confessed, 'I did not pose myself the problem of paying a unified homage to all those precedents'; instead, he said, *Sequenza XIII* was 'an improvisation, a rondo'. It opens with a compressed melody which is gradually developed, amid splashes of complex harmony and virtuoso filigree, before the return of the opening melody in slightly altered form.

Domenico Scarlatti: Sonatas in D minor, K.77, and D major, K.33

As with Bach's music, Domenico Scarlatti's 555 keyboard sonatas have been much transcribed, their evocation of sounds of the guitar endearing him to players of that instrument in particular. Most of the later sonatas fall into pairs, an arrangement foreshadowed in the binary form of the D minor Sonata, K.77, where a languid, Bachian accompanied melody, marked *Moderato e cantabile* [4], leads to a graceful minuet. The D major Sonata, K.33 [5], an *Allegro*, is more typically Scarlattian, both in its binary form and its dancing, outgoing buoyancy, Spanish flavour and recollections of guitar technique. Scarlatti published 30 of them as *Essercizi per Gravicembalo* in 1738; the American Scarlatti authority Ralph Kirkpatrick included these two sonatas on 'a partly conjectural list' of about forty which he thinks might have predated those published as *Essercizi*.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Twelve Variations on 'Ah, vous dirais-je, Maman', K.265/300e

The tune known to English-speakers (or -singers) as 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' or 'Baa baa, black sheep' seems to have made its first appearance in France in 1761, as 'Ah, vous dirais-je, Maman' (it is better known these days as 'Quand trois poules vont aux champs [6]'). So when in 1781 or 1782 (the date is uncertain) Mozart composed a set of twelve variations on the melody, it was roughly the equivalent of a composer today working with material from Abba. Mozart's choice of such a simple tune was not accidental, of course: it left him free to explore a startlingly wide range of moods. The set begins with a series of figurative variations, where the treble and bass imitate each other from variation to variation. Another variation breaks the theme down into

statement and echo; two more set the treble whirling above chordal support in the bass; a minor-key variation has, to modern ears, Slavonic, perhaps even Jewish colours. The penultimate variation, by far the longest, is an *Adagio* which sounds almost like a scene from a Mozart opera. It and the final variation, a minute marked *Alllegro*, are the only two to which Mozart gave tempo indications.

Alfred Schnittke: Revis Fairy Tale

The substantial output of Alfred Schnittke (1934–98) contains three ballets: the first, *Labyrinths*, in five episodes, was written in 1971, and the third, the full-scale *Peer Gynt*, dates from 1986. Between them, the one-act *Sketches* has a rather eventful history: it began life in 1978 as incidental music for *The Inspector's Tale*, an adaptation of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, but the production was banned by the Soviet authorities. Gennady Rozhdestvensky then assembled a suite from the music, which in 1985 was choreographed by Andrey Petrov – with additional numbers from Schnittke – as *Esquisses*, which now called on a range of characters from Gogol: not just Pavel Chichikov from *Dead Souls* but also, for example, Major Kovalyov and his peripatetic nose, better known from Shostakovich's opera, and Ferdinand VIII from *Tales of a Madman*. Three accordionists – Yuri Shishkin, Friedrich Lips and Ksenija Sidorova – have fashioned a suite for accordion, *Revis Fairy Tale*, from four of the numbers. The first, 'Chichikov's Childhood' [7], shows off Schnittke's 'polystylism', quoting from Beethoven, Haydn, Tchaikovsky and other composers; and 'Officials' [8] knocks Tchaikovsky sideways. The sardonic *Waltz* [9] illustrates a scene in *Dead Souls*; and the *Polka* [10] a character from Gogol's short story *The Overcoat*: Arkady Bashmachkin finally manages to scrimp together enough money to replace his threadbare overcoat with a new one, only to have it stolen by a couple of ruffians; after the general to whom he turns for help reprimands him for not following protocol, Bashmachkin contracts a fever and dies, his ghost then startling the general and removing his overcoat.

Yuji Takahashi: Like a Water Buffalo

The influential pianist, composer and writer Yuji Takahashi (born in 1938) studied first in his native Japan and then in Europe with Iannis Xenakis. His best-known composition, *Like a Water Buffalo* [12], was written in 1985 for the Japanese accordionist Mie Miki. The composer provides the following commentary on its origin:

We took the name from the band [Suigyū Band, or 'Water Buffalo Band'] we formed to introduce Thai protest songs in the 1970s against military dictatorship. The Australian poet and activist Wendy Poussard visited our home one day and wrote the poem ['Like a Water Buffalo'] for the band, to which I then composed a melody. This melody, and the accompaniment inspired by the sound of the wooden cowbells that water buffalos have hanging from their necks, are turned into a solo piece for accordion, for which Mie Miki asked me to write music from my heart for her instrument. That was in 1985 and I asked her to give the music to anyone who wanted to see the score. As a song reaches the ears behind the prison walls, and is handed down from musician to musician, we hope this music will strongly transmit the sound of freedom.

Takahashi's request that the music be passed 'from musician to musician' rather than published has been updated to meet the modern world: it can now be downloaded free from www.suigyū.com.

Astor Piazzolla: Five Tango Sensations – 'Asleep'

The bonus track on this CD, 'Asleep' [13], is the first of the *Five Tango Sensations* composed in 1989 by the world's most famous bandoneón player, the Argentinean Astor Piazzolla (1921–92), for himself to play with the San Francisco-based Kronos Quartet. In November 1989 Piazzolla, already gravely ill, flew to New York to premiere and then record *Five Tango Sensations* with the Quartet; it was to be his last studio recording.

KSENIJA SIDOROVA

“an amazingly accomplished artist” *Classical Source*

Born in Latvia in 1988 Ksenija Sidorova was encouraged to take up the accordion by her grandmother, who has roots in the folk tradition of accordion playing. Ksenija started to play the instrument aged eight in her home town of Riga, under the guidance of Marija Gasele. Wanting more exposure to both classical and contemporary repertoire and also more concert opportunities, her studies took her to London where she was a prize-winning undergraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, and studied with Professor Owen Murray from 2005. Outside the RAM her awards included a Philharmonia Orchestra Martin Musical Scholarship Fund Award and Philharmonia Orchestra Friends Award.

In February 2009 Ksenija was a joint winner of Friends of the Royal Academy of Music Wigmore Award, which led to her Wigmore Hall debut on May 18, 2009. The same year she was also made a Recommended Artist under Making Music's Philip & Dorothy Green Award scheme, and was selected to appear in Park Lane Group Young Artists New Year Series, 2009, being described by *The Times* as “one of the real finds of the series”. She is also a recipient of the Worshipful Company of Musicians Silver Medal, Maisie Lewis Award, and was the first accordionist to win the prestigious Worshipful Company of Musicians Prince's Prize.

Ksenija is also a winner of numerous competitions, both national and international, including a national talent competition in Latvia, the International Accordion Competition in Novosibirsk (Russia), and competitions in St. Petersburg (Russia), Città di Montese (Italy) and Siauliai (Lithuania). She has also worked with a variety of composers, including Stefano Gervasoni, Nirmali Fenn, Samantha Fernando, Carlos Duque, Elspeth Brooke and Patrick Nunn.

Ksenija has collaborated with the Brooks String Quartet, reaching the final of the 2008 Royal Academy of Music Club Prize and the Royal Over-Seas League in March 2009, where they were awarded the Elias Fawcett Award for outstanding ensemble.

Engagements have included performances with the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, a recital in Colston Hall (Bristol), performances at the Spitalfields Festival and DMCE symposium (Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe, Paris) and performances of Prokofiev's *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* Op.74 with the Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre and CBSO under Valery Gergiev. In June 2009 Ksenija was invited by Dame Felicity Lott to appear in her programme “Un Mardi Idéal” on Radio France Musique.

More highlights include a collaboration with the Belcea Quartet, recording with the Sacconi Quartet, a tour of Switzerland with Milos Karadaglic (guitar), solo recitals at the Purcell Room and the Lucerne Festival, and concerts in the UK at the North Norfolk Festival and the Two Moors Festival.

Ksenija is supported by Mr and Mrs David Bowerman and the Musicians Benevolent Fund.

SACCONI QUARTET

Since its formation at the Royal College of Music in 2001, the Sacconi Quartet has established a secure and substantial reputation. The Quartet is recognised for its unanimous and compelling ensemble, performing with style and commitment and consistently communicating with a fresh and imaginative approach. Its four founder members demonstrate a shared passion for string quartet repertoire, infectiousy reaching out to audiences with their energy and enthusiasm. Over the past decade they have enjoyed a highly successful international career, performing regularly throughout Europe, at London's major venues, in recordings and radio broadcasts. The Sacconi Quartet is renowned for its vigorous and individual approach to music-making. In 2008, the Quartet held the inaugural Sacconi Chamber Music Festival in Folkestone, Kent. The festival is now an established event in the cultural calendar and is expanding year on year with challenging programming and exciting collaborations. The Sacconi is 'Quartet in Association' at the Royal College of Music and 'Quartet in Residence' at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre.