

1 **FANTASY ON A FUGUE OF ELGAR** 6'59

*London Serenata, conducted by Krzysztof Chorzelski, Laura Samuel ~ violin
Emily Pailthorpe ~ oboe Anna Stokes ~ flute*

FIVE SHAKESPEARE SONGS

Anna Leese ~ soprano Stephen De Pledge ~ piano

2 I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows 2'11

3 The quality of mercy 2'14

4 Sweet are the uses of adversity 3'01

5 How poor are they that have not patience! 2'17

6 O sleep, O gentle sleep 2'42

7 **STRING QUARTET ON A PRELUDE, CHORALE AND
FUGUE OF CÉSAR FRANCK** 8'59

*Bronte Quartet: Sarah Trickey & Katharine Gorsuch ~ violins Jon Thorne ~ viola
Daisy Gathorne-Hardy ~ cello*

8 **CARNE BEACH** 5'36

Stephen De Pledge ~ piano

FIVE SHAKESPEARE SONNETS

Anna Leese ~ soprano Stephen De Pledge ~ piano

9 When most I wink (Sonnet 43) 2'33

10 Weary with toil (Sonnet 27) 3'52

11 The marriage of true minds (Sonnet 116) 2'57

12 Poor soul (Sonnet 146) 4'00

13 Shall I compare thee (Sonnet 18) 2'59

GERONTIUS REVISITED

*Sacconi Quartet: Ben Hancox & Hannah Dawson ~ violins Robin Ashwell ~ viola
Cara Berridge ~ cello*

14 "Pray for me..." 7'09

15 "I went to sleep..." 4'09

16 "Praise to the holiest... Alleluia ..."

17 **FANTASY ON A MASTERSONG** 5'09

Gould Piano Trio: Lucy Gould ~ violin Alice Neary ~ cello Benjamin Frith ~ piano

Total playing time: 72'19



Whereon the Wild Thyme Blows

Fantasies by David W. Bowerman

London Serenata
Bronte Quartet
Sacconi Quartet
Anna Leese
Stephen De Pledge
Gould Piano Trio

PROGRAMME NOTES

Music about music: nothing could be more fashionably Postmodern. But there is no knowing irony here, no historical relativism; not even the Brahmsian melancholy of the latecomer initiated into the arts of greater predecessors. There is only pleasure in the material, and a desire to give thanks (and pleasure to others) through modest imitation. Unashamed to be the kind of composer he is, David Bowerman says that these compositions are more reflective than futuristic: 'I unashamedly draw on music that has meant much to me; a love of the music of Elgar and the organ works of César Franck.'

The 20th century made a fetish of originality, or at least up-to-dateness, in the arts. But a very wise (and profoundly original) composer once commented to me that creativity was never about making something out of nothing: creativity above all is a matter of appetite. The composer, for example, comes to know himself through the music with which he identifies most strongly – that he loves the most – and for him the primal urge is to make more of it. It is through his personal selection of the aspects of this music which he seeks to multiply in the world that his individuality emerges. After all, was it not Schoenberg who said: 'In the arts, there is only one real teacher: inclination. And he only has one useful assistant: imitation'?

David Bowerman's *Fantasies* – he is fond of that title, which suggests both the viol fantasies of 17th-century English music and the 19th-century 'fantasy' on favourite themes, from opera or elsewhere – are partly transcription of, partly musings upon, the themes of the composers whose works he loves. Transcription and re-arrangement used to invite critical dismissal, but not so much in these more enlightened times. It was the master-transcriber Busoni who pointed out that a composer's very first concrete realization of a theme or a work, into notation and chosen instrument, was already a transcription of his original idea: just one realization among an infinite multitude of compositional possibilities. The idea of

infinite, as yet unrealized possibilities is a Leitmotif in the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges. In his story 'The Garden of Forking Paths', for instance, a supposedly chaotic and unfinished Chinese novel of that title in fact teaches that a story can have an illimitable number of resolutions in innumerable possible futures. In a sense David Bowerman's *Fantasies* show this principle in action: they actualize one possible future in which the materials of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* become a string quartet; those of *Die Meistersinger*, a piano trio.

All of which may seem a roundabout, esoteric way of approaching music that does not pretend to be anything more than a way to share well-loved ideas with friends. As I wrote in the notes for Bowerman's *Favoured Fantasies* (CHRC015), 'this a friendly, social music. The works are written, often, as a tribute or present for their performers (very distinguished performers, in some cases), both for them to enjoy and as a vehicle for them to show off their paces. ... The original pieces ... act as a springboard for Bowerman's imagination, but he wishes to evoke them, not outsoar them.'

The degrees of transcription, and its admixture of 'fantasy', vary from work to work in the current programme. The serene string quartet after César Franck's 1884 *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* is transcription pure and simple, done with reverence but also considerable artistry. It should be noted that Bowerman thinks of the original as an organ piece, commenting that 'Its somewhat haunting nature could almost at times be described as monotonous when played on the organ' – but Franck's much-circulated organ version is already a transcription: the work was originally composed for piano. Certainly the four strings reveal new and delightful possibilities of tone-colour here.

The other string quartet, *Gerontius Revisited*, is much more of an original composition using Elgar's themes throughout: its three movements are almost a compressed synopsis of the great oratorio, but their artful re-ordering and

combination create a drama in a 'pure music' context. Bowerman freely admits that 'To emulate, in any way, this amazing experience is impossible, but this quartet is designed to remind the listener who is unable to get to a live performance, of some of the "heart-subduing melodies" it holds'. The piano trio *Fantasy on a Mastersong* is similar in intention and execution, though its origin was slightly different: 'Listening to a CD of *Meistersinger* on a distant beach, I felt inclined to jot down these extracts ... little reminders of a great opera'.

The Shakespeare settings are transcription of a different kind. Great song-writers have often preferred to set second-rate verse (Schubert, Brahms!) because such poems are not strong enough to be self-sufficient: they leave something for the music to do, the music completes them and then makes them something greater than they were. Great verse is often hugely difficult to set, not least because the poet has already composed into it a self-sufficient word-music: music can seldom do much here, and if too fussy and self-important can actually detract from the effect of the poem.

Shakespeare is the supreme word-musician of the English language; yet paradoxically he wrote many texts for music in his plays, and many great songs have been written to them, from Thomas Campion's day to our own. The sonnets are more challenging, as are passages of blank verse from the dramas. Clearly Bowerman is aware of these pitfalls. His settings on this CD do not draw undue attention to themselves or establish too distinct a melodic profile. Instead, using a harmonic profile redolent of the great early-20th-century age of English songwriting (Butterworth, Gurney, Ireland, Finzi), he provides a discreet 'setting' in the jeweller's sense, a surrounding aura to show off the jewel. And the jewel itself – Shakespeare's verse – is scanned with a minutely accurate ear for its prosody and the innate music of the words themselves.

The piano piece *Carne Beach*, named after 'one of those delightful little bays that adorn the Cornish coastline' in a sense transcribes a natural phenomenon: with its touches of phosphorescent whole-tone impressionism backed by a Brahmsian undertow, it records the experience of a 'retreat to a hotel in February (where it rained every day) overlooked the perpetual but gentle rolling of the waves up the sandy shore, occasionally disturbed when the wind rose, but subsided again to its monotonous yet peaceful rhythm'. The effect is eventually rather hypnotic.

The jewel of this collection, however, must surely be the *Fantasy on a Fugue of Elgar* for flute, oboe, violin and strings. The core of this beautiful piece is provided by an Elgar manuscript that Bowerman bought at auction: a very early two-part fugue written for Elgar's brother and a German friend. As is well known, the young Elgar taught himself composition, learning his craft through imitation of the classics – Bach, Handel, Mozart and so on (this is an example of Schoenberg's 'useful assistant' in operation). The manuscript was 'by any standards scruffy, and required some delicate interpretation', but the piece which emerged is a sprightly little thing, like a Bachian two-part invention with a Handelian twist. In itself it was so slight it hardly merited performance, but Bowerman had the happy idea to embed it 'into a string orchestral fantasy of Elgarian themes ... it is probably the only way this little gem will ever be heard!' Hints of the *Serenade for Strings*, 'Nimrod' and other Elgar echoes are in fact never obtrusive in this delightful meditation that travels between the late 19th century and the Baroque using Elgar's fugue as its time-machine.

Malcolm MacDonald

I BIOGRAPHIES

London Serenata

The London Serenata orchestra was formed in 2010 with some of London's finest young professionals. Conducted here by Belcea Quartet violist Krzysztof Chorzelski, the London Serenata is an energetic and enthusiastic ensemble, and orchestra in residence for the annual London Conducting Workshops. They are joined on this recording by soloists Laura Samuel (violin), Emily Pailthorpe (oboe) and Anna Stokes (flute).



Krzysztof Chorzelski



Laura Samuel



Emily Pailthorpe



Anna Stokes

Anna Leese - soprano

Soprano Anna Leese graduated from the Royal College of Music Benjamin Britten Opera course in London, winning the coveted Queen Elizabeth Rose Bowl. In 2004 she was the winner of the Royal Overseas League Vocal competition.

Numerous operatic roles include Ilia in Mozart's *Idomeneo* with the Auckland Opera Studio, Juliette in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with the British Youth Opera, and

Tamiri in Mozart's *Il Re Pastore* at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House (where she made her debut aged 24).

In 2006 Anna performed in her first Prom concert with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Norrington, and with the Royal Opera House, understudied Arminda



in *La Finta Giardiniera*, Musetta in *La Bohème* and in January 2007 sang Michaela in Bizet's *Carmen*. Since then, at the Royal Opera House, she has performed Musetta in *La Bohème*, Erste Dame in *Die Zauberflöte* and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. She has also

appeared in principal roles with Oper Köln, Canadian Opera, Opera New Zealand, Vlaamse Opera in Belgium and Opera Holland Park.

On the concert stage Anna has sung with several of the world's most-loved singers: Andrea Bocelli in Auckland and José Carreras in Newcastle, Seoul and Taipei. Another highlight for this avid All Blacks fan was performing with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa in Twickenham Stadium, 2005, for Jonah Lomu's return to rugby sevens.

Stephen De Pledge - *piano*

New Zealand pianist Stephen De Pledge is one of the most versatile musicians of his generation. He studied at the University of Auckland, and then with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. His career was launched after winning the Gold Medal from the Guildhall, and the NFMS Young Concert Artists' Award, and he has since maintained a diverse and wide-ranging performing schedule as soloist, chamber musician and song accompanist.

Stephen's solo performances have taken him throughout the UK, including five solo recitals in the Wigmore Hall in London, where he made an acclaimed debut in 1999. Concerto appearances include the Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras, and he has recorded solo works of Bliss, Arvo Pärt, and Gorecki.

As a chamber musician, Stephen has collaborated with groups such as Chamber Domaine, the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, the English Chamber Orchestra Ensemble and the Scottish Ensemble. Alongside his performing commitments, Stephen holds the position of Senior Lecturer in piano at the University of Auckland.



Bronte Quartet

The Bronte String Quartet formed in September 2001, and performed at such venues as the Wigmore Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Purcell Room, St David's



Hall and Snape Maltings Concert Hall. Winners of the second prize in the Eighth International String Quartet Competition in Cremona, they also won the 2003 Royal Overseas League Ensemble Prize and Miller Trophy. They were Lord and Lady Lurgan Junior Fellows at the Royal College of Music from 2002–4, and held the Bulldog Scholarship at Trinity College of Music from 2004–5. They have

also been Resident String Quartet at Aldeburgh as part of the Britten-Pears Young Artists Programme.

The Bronte Quartet disbanded in 2006, and its members continue to pursue active careers in performance.

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. The Sacconi is Quartet in Association at the Royal College of Music and Quartet in Residence at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre.

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. Now an established event in the cultural calendar it is expanding year on year with challenging programming and exciting collaborations. To date the



Quartet has given fifteen world premières and three British premières, including quartets by György Kurtág, Robin Holloway, Paul Patterson, John McCabe, Timothy Salter, John Metcalf and Alun Hoddinot, and recently performed as the solo string quartet on Paul McCartney's new song 'Come Home'. The Sacconi Quartet has been mentored by eminent musicians, including Gábor Takács-Nagy, Christopher Rowland and Levon

Chilingirian, and has been joined on stage by Ian Brown, Raphael Wallfisch, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Martin Roscoe, David Campbell, Lawrence Power, Robert Cohen, Guy Johnston, Alasdair Beatson, Tom Poster, Matthew Rose and actor Timothy West.

Gould Piano Trio

In over twenty years together, the Gould Trio has firmly established an enviable reputation for musical integrity and imagination, which has continued to evolve since their early success in winning the Charles Hennen (Holland), Vittorio Gui (Italy) and Melbourne international chamber music competitions.

A constantly developing career reflects their musical energy, with regular tours to the US and Europe; recent appearances including the Bath Mozart Fest, Hay-on-Wye (BBC Radio 3), and the RNCM and Lofoten (Norway) International Chamber Music Festivals. They enjoy planning and sharing their own chamber music festival in Corbridge, Northumberland (with clarinettist Robert Plane), their interaction between invited artists and a very loyal audience being a recipe for renewal and inspiration.

'The Goulds' are the first ensemble to record the complete cycle of Brahms' piano trios, including his two surviving early essays in the genre and the famous clarinet and horn trios (Robert Plane and David Pyatt respectively). An endeavour close to their hearts in recent years has been to reinstate the late British Romantics in the catalogue, recording works by Stanford, Bax, Ireland and Cyril Scott.

As well as the trio's performances, they feel passionate about passing on their craft to younger aspiring musicians, working closely with students at both the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, and at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.



SONG AND SONNET TEXTS

SHAKESPEARE SONGS

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows

Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

Oberon – A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 2, Scene 1

The quality of mercy is not strain'd

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:

Portia - Merchant of Venice, Act 4, Scene 1

Sweet are the uses of adversity

Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running
brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

Duke Senior – As You Like It, Act 2, Scene 1

How poor are they that have not patience!

What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
Thou know'st we work by wit, and not by
witchcraft;
And wit depends on dilatory time.

Iago – Othello, Act 2, Scene 3

O sleep, O gentle sleep

Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee
And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lull'd with sound of sweetest melody?

King Henry – Henry IV, Act 3, Scene 1

SHAKESPEARE SONNETS

Sonnet 43

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected;
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make
bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!

All days are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright days when dreams do show
thee me.

Sonnet 27

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts--from far where I abide--
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,

And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beautiful, and her old face new.

Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height
he taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Sonnet 146

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
These rebel powers that thee array;
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:

So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds
on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more
dying then.

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

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| Track 1 | Produced & engineered by Michael Ponder
Edited by Jennifer Howells
Recorded on 27th October 2011 |
| Tracks 2-6, 8-13 | Produced by Matthew Bennett
Engineered by Alexander Van Ingen
Edited by Matthew Bennett
Recorded on 28th June 2011 |
| Track 7 | Produced & engineered by Alexander Van Ingen
Edited by Dave Rowell
Recorded on 16th and 17th May 2006 |
| Track 14-16 | Produced & engineered by Alexander Van Ingen
Edited by Matthew Bennett
Recorded on 21st January 2011 |
| Track 17 | Produced & engineered by Michael Ponder
Edited by Jennifer Howells
Recorded on 16th December 2011 |

All tracks recorded at the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, except
Fantasy on a Fugue of Elgar, recorded at the Chapel of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea,
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