

NAXOS

**COPLAND
BERNSTEIN
DANKWORTH**

**Music
for
Clarinet and Piano**

**Emma Johnson,
Clarinet**

**John Lenehan,
Piano**



Aaron Copland (1900–1990) • Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)
Sir John Dankworth (b.1927)
Music for Clarinet and Piano

Sir John DANKWORTH (b. 1927): Suite for Emma	18:30
❶ I. Valse	4:04
❷ II. Pavane	3:38
❸ III. Scherzo	2:41
❹ IV. Ballade	4:29
❺ V. Clarentella	3:38
Leonard BERNSTEIN (1918–1990): Clarinet Sonata	11:18
❻ I. Grazioso	4:05
❼ II. Andantino – Vivace e leggiero	7:13
Aaron COPLAND (1900–1990): Sonata for Clarinet and Piano	21:07
❽ I. Andante semplice – Allegro	7:50
❾ II. Lento	6:12
❿ III. Allegretto giusto	7:05
⓫ COPLAND: Nocturne (Clarinet and Piano version)	5:18
⓬ DANKWORTH: Picture of Jeannie	4:57

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Aaron Copland (1900–1990) • Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

Sir John Dankworth (b.1927)

Music for Clarinet and Piano

It has been on my wish list for a while to record the pieces John Dankworth wrote for me in the 1980s and 1990s, so I am glad to have the opportunity to set them down on this disc alongside classics by Bernstein and Copland, both of whom were also composers who could blur the boundaries between classical and jazz.

A leading figure in the jazz world for fifty years, Sir John Dankworth was born in 1927 and studied at the Royal Academy of Music where he was the first pupil to study both the saxophone and the clarinet. This habit of breaking the mould has shaped much of Dankworth's astonishingly varied career. Hit jazz singles in the 1950s, and successful television and film composing credits have not precluded conducting leading classical symphony orchestras and writing music for the Royal Shakespeare Company. The theatre in Wavendon he set up with his wife, the singer Dame Cleo Laine, is testament to Dankworth's strong belief in doing away with musical barriers and programming all types of music together.

Suite for Emma is a selection of classical song-like pieces with jazz inflexions glinting below the surface. John says of them "I didn't think of writing classical or jazz, just of the music I would like to hear Emma Johnson play". Each is a gem requiring great dexterity from the clarinetist but written by a composer who really knows how to show the instrument at its most velvety lyrical too. Most of the set was written in 1987 and given a première in Wavendon: *Valse* is a nostalgic waltz with a fiercely punchy middle section, *Pavane* a bitter-sweet melody with the regular tread of a medieval dance. *Scherzo* exploits jazzy rhythms to extremely witty effect, *Ballade* goes deepest of all the five, capturing the illusion of the clarinetist sharing his

thoughts as he improvises, and reflecting Dankworth's love affair with the musical interval of a fourth. *Clarentella* was added in 1993. It draws together motifs from earlier in the suite and provides a show stopping ending.

Similarly eclectic in outlook is the towering figure of Leonard Bernstein. His achievements in musical theatre with *West Side Story* and *On the Town* are second to none. Added to which he was one of the world's great classical composers and conductors, a fluent pianist and improviser, and an inspiring lecturer on music and aesthetics.

Bernstein's *Clarinet Sonata* (1942) dates from the very beginning of his career. Bernstein had graduated in conducting from the Curtis Institute after studying music theory at Harvard and was unsure which of his many talents would propel him into the world of professional music. The most important conductor of the era, Serge Koussevitzky, had just started his famous summer festival at Tanglewood and this turned out to be the most inspiring experience of Bernstein's musical education. His great friend and mentor Aaron Copland attended, as did other composers, including Hindemith. It was at Tanglewood that Bernstein met the work's dedicatee, the clarinetist David Oppenheim, and the two became close friends.

After the first performance of the Bernstein *Clarinet Sonata* in 1943, Copland, declared it "full of Hindemith" but the *Herald Tribune* review praised the music's "tender, sharp, singing quality" and called it "alive, tough, integrated". Certainly the German composer Hindemith is brought to mind by the fastidious neoclassicism of the first movement (*Grazioso*) in which sonata-form structure is superbly handled. However the

lean melodic lines and economic writing create a sense of lonely objectivity that is uniquely American and which can also be found in, for example, paintings by Edward Hopper or poetry by William Carlos Williams. Driving rhythms in the accompaniment also look forward to later American composers such as Glass, Reich and Adams. The second movement begins with slow, exposed music (*Andantino*) which is reintroduced and reworked in the middle of the subsequent fast section (*Vivace e leggiero*). Bernstein the lonely outsider and Bernstein the gregarious party-goer are skilfully integrated in this movement; the second slow section appears to melt into the final joyous drive home in which jazzy 5/8 rhythms yield to 6/8 and 7/8. *West Side Story* does not seem far off!

Aaron Copland acted as a father figure not only to Bernstein but to American music as a whole. His achievement was to forge an American voice amongst the hitherto mainly European voices of classical music. On a practical level he also helped set up a badly needed professional infrastructure of unions and laws to protect American musicians' rights and royalty entitlements. Like the other composers on this disc, Copland possessed the ability to draw upon the vernacular. He could take the sounds he heard around him, distil them, and raise them into high art.

Copland's *Clarinet Sonata* (1943) was a response to the death in combat of Lieutenant Harry H. Dunham, an admired friend who was shot down in the Pacific and whose loss was felt keenly by the arts community. The work's first incarnation was as the *Violin Sonata No. 1* but in the late 1970s Copland reworked it for clarinet and piano. This involved transposing the work down a third and making a few other minor changes. The reworking owes much of its success to the fact that the focussed tone of the clarinet tends to emphasize the sense of the "long line", of each idea moving coherently and ineluctably to the next, that is so crucial to

Copland's music. The clarinet sound also underlines the associations with other Copland works of the 1940s such as *Appalachian Spring* and the jazzy *Clarinet Concerto*. Despite the sonata's connections with war, the first movement (*Andante semplice*) is not overtly tragic but shows rather, as the commentator Howard Pollack puts it, "the values at stake: peace, civility and freedom". The singing simplicity of the opening could be the sun rising over the vast open spaces of America. The singing line works itself up into jagged, dancing, thrusting music of the type that might have inspired the choreographer Martha Graham with whom Copland collaborated on the ballet *Appalachian Spring*. At the heart of this movement a moment of reflection is provided by a hymn-like melody in Shaker style. The bare textures of the second movement (*Lento*) are bleak but also bring to mind the dignity of a war memorial or of a Remembrance Day parade. At one point the music rises to *forte* as the melodic lines develop into a three-part canon, and it as though the composer's personal grief suddenly comes into focus. Composure is quickly recovered and the music resumes its ceremonial tread which is all the more devastating for its understated simplicity.

High spirits return for the third movement (*Allegretto giusto*). The rhythmic poise of the opening has all the swagger of big-band jazz, but this is only one of a patchwork of elements, from the eloquently lyrical to the zany raucous, that are cleverly juxtaposed here. An earlier American composer, Charles Ives, seems at times to be looking over Copland's shoulder as several ideas play simultaneously and recreate the "can do" bustle of a big American city. Unfortunately eventually the party must end. Disjointed phrases from the first movement poignantly bring the movement to a close in uneasy tranquility disturbed only by odd memories of dancing rhythms in the bass of the piano.

Copland's *Nocturne* was written in 1926 as one of a pair of violin pieces (the other is an up-tempo number called *Ukulele Serenade*). Copland and the violinist Samuel Dushkin performed them in an all-American show-case concert in Paris where Copland had studied for three years with Nadia Boulanger. A line of music slowly unravels to conjure up the colours and smells of nightfall in a sleepy American town. This work was republished for clarinet in 1976.

Before Copland, Stephen Foster (1826-1864) was a kind of uncrowned "Father of American Music". Songs like *Beautiful Dreamer*, *Camptown Races* and *Oh! Susanna* were incredibly important to the American

settlers of the nineteenth century and still are popular today. Sadly Foster was before his time in trying to make a living as a songwriter in the New World and he died, sick and penniless, in his thirties. As yet there were no enforceable laws of copyright to ensure him an income from his popular hit songs. *Picture of Jeannie* is a skilful elaboration for clarinet of a Foster song that I have loved since childhood: *Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair*. John Dankworth wrote the arrangement for me to play in the London Symphony Orchestra's Summer Pops season of 1986.

Emma Johnson 2008

Emma Johnson



One of the few clarinetists to have established an international career as a soloist, Emma Johnson has performed throughout the world and is especially popular in Britain, where her concerts regularly sell out and her discs appear in the classical CD charts. Her musical career was launched when, at the age of seventeen, she won the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition and was a medal-winner in the Eurovision Young Musician televised throughout Europe. She was later to be a winner of the Young Concert Artist Auditions in New York. She plays over forty concertos, some of which were written especially for her, with the world's leading orchestras. She is also in demand as a recitalist and chamber musician. A frequent broadcaster on television and radio, she enjoys presenting programmes about music and has also published a number of books of arrangements and compositions for clarinet. She was recently the first woman to be made an honorary fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge University, and in 1996 was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to music.

John Lenehan



The pianist John Lenehan's performances and recordings have been acclaimed by critics and audiences throughout the world. He has regularly appeared with leading British Orchestras and his innovative recital programmes often include film projection and jazz repertoire. In a performing career spanning more than 25 years he has also collaborated with many of today's leading instrumentalists and is recognised as one of the foremost accompanists and chamber musicians of today. During the past few years he has appeared in major concert halls in London, Amsterdam, Vienna, Salzburg, New York, Washington, Toronto, Seoul and Tokyo. John Lenehan is also active as a composer and has written and arranged for Kennedy, Julian Lloyd Webber, Tasmin Little, Emma Johnson and Angelika Kirchschrager. Published works include *Keynotes*, four books of piano repertoire for Faber, each containing a new Lenehan work, and for Schotts a collection of original pieces for flute and piano called *Little Gems*.

Sir John Dankworth was inspired by Benny Goodman's playing to study clarinet at the Royal Academy: his delightful *Suite for Emma* was composed for Emma Johnson, former BBC Young Musician of the Year, who performs it on this disc. Jazz and popular music influences are to the fore in the young Leonard Bernstein's *Clarinet Sonata*, which foreshadows the music for his ever-popular *West Side Story*. Aaron Copland's arrangement for clarinet of his *Violin Sonata* is a major addition to the repertoire.

MUSIC FOR CLARINET AND PIANO

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|------|---|-------|
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Emma Johnson, Clarinet
John Lenehan, Piano



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