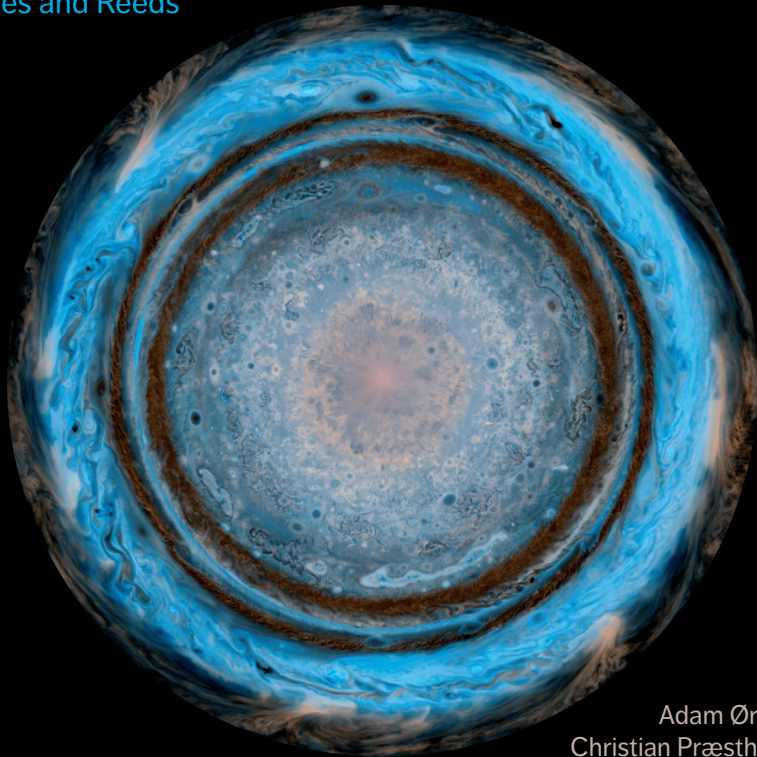


Mogens Christensen

Pipes and Reeds



Adam Ørvad
Christian Præstholt
Kiku Day

Mogens Christensen (b. 1955)

Pipes and Reeds

Adam Ørvad, accordion

Christian Præstholt, organ

Kiku Day, shakuhachi flute

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|---|---|-------|
| 1 | LOGITANION (2006) | 28:26 |
| | <i>for organ and electronics</i> | |
| 2 | COURONNE (2005) | 9:53 |
| | <i>for solo accordion</i> | |
| 3 | NIGHT FLYING WINTER CRANES (2009) | 20:09 |
| | <i>for shakuhachi flute and electronics</i> | |

Total: 58:28

MOGENS CHRISTENSEN (born 1955) has been a professional composer for more than thirty years. His already very voluminous opus list includes one opera, works for symphony orchestra, sinfonietta and chamber ensembles as well as songs, choral works and music for solo instruments, not forgetting the use of electronics, particularly in the past few years. He has served as composer in residence for the Copenhagen Philharmonic, 1998 – 2001 and Randers Chamber Orchestra (2006 – 2008). He is also the author of a handful of books in Danish on music theory and creativity.

In 2005 he was made Professor of musical communication. During his tenure as composer in residence for the Copenhagen Philharmonic Christensen led a highly innovative project involving hundreds of school children. By drawing inspiration from the symphonies of Carl Nielsen, the children created the components of a kind of “patch-work symphony”. Though it ultimately fell to Mogens Christensen to put the pieces together and to orchestrate the final result, the children were present and involved during each step of the process. The spectacular success of this project is, no doubt, the reason why, in later years, Mogens Christensen has been very much in demand as a leader of educational projects internationally.

As a composer, Christensen has always been, by temperament, a natural heir to the impressionistic line of musical thinking. Not overlooking his keen sense of melody and his occasional, wholehearted involvement with pulsating rhythm, Christensen has always been a sound alchemist, both master of and subject to tone colour. This obvious characteristic that runs through his output ties in well with the extra-musical sources of inspiration that have fascinated Christensen throughout his career: the world of dreams, fantastical literature, the visual arts, birds, the Zodiac, aphoristic poetry...

The present collection is evidence of a composer comfortable enough with his musical voice to both trust it and let go of it. True to form, Christensen has here composed three stunning works that, while not entirely eschewing physicality, find their point of balance somewhere in the land of the incorporeal.

In the piece for organ and electronics, *Logitanion* written in 2006, Mogens Christensen has drawn inspiration from the Thomas Gospel. The old manuscript was discovered in Egypt at the end of 1945 and consists of 114 aphorisms, independent of time or situation. These are words of wisdom allegedly spoken by Jesus in the presence of his disciple Thomas. Each of the aphorisms is referred to as a *logion*.

In *Logitanion* seven of the *logia* (18, 17, 67, 50, 112, 70 and 24 respectively) form the basis for the seven movements. These can be performed separately or as a whole, with or without electronics. On this recording we get the full version, electronics and all, and rightly so. This is a piece of music that may convincingly be described as “otherworldly”. Except for parts of the fourth and longest movement, this is predominantly quiet and slow music. The meditative atmosphere created by the organ is masterfully set off by the electronics. These include distant female heavenly choirs, sudden slabs of aggressive sound and readings of the *logia* in their original Coptic language (rendered by theology professor Søren Giversen). The combined result of all the elements is a music that seems to come from a place where Time has ceased to have, or perhaps never had a hold on the phenomenological world. The section of the 18th logion on which the first movement is based is, in itself, a phenomenological manifesto in miniature: “...for where the beginning is, the end will also be...” One may think, associationally, of the fourth of Italo Calvino’s “Cosmicomics”, titled “All at One Point” (*Tutto in un Punto*) – about a time so remote where all of Creation was concentrated in one point. In any case, the music of Christensen’s *Logitanion* manages, like no words ever could, to add a new mystical dimension to a continuing fascination for the figure of Jesus, leaving us with the joyful acceptance of the fact that we do not truly know anything.

The sound world of *Couronne*, written in 2005, (one year before *Logitanion*) takes us a few steps down the cosmic ladder. The music remains quiet and slow, but the electronics are gone and, in place of the mighty organ, we are now faced by that organ in miniature that is the accordion. “Faced” seems the apposite term. Whereas *Logitanion* came from an

unreachable sphere, from somewhere decidedly outside of human experience, *Couronne* appears to reach out a friendly hand. It still takes place outside the listener, but in a dimension that we are able to understand with our senses and our rational mind. The long harmonies, often unequivocally diatonic, cross each other forming layers of sound and have a cleansing effect on the receiver of the music.

“Couronne” is French for “crown”. The composer has attached to the work a short poem by Lene Henningsen called “Stenen” (The Stone) from her poetry book “Siden som stjerne”:

i et himmelstykke en sang
stenen med navn som en ild
et stjernes kud altid parat
til jordens inderste ønske

*in a piece of heaven a song
the stone with name as a fire
a shooting star always ready
for the deepest desire of the earth*

The piece was composed for the Copenhagen debut concert by the accordionist Adam Ørvad.

Night Flying Winter Cranes (for shakuhachi and electronics), written in 2009, brings us to an experiential Here and Now. Written in the tradition of the Japanese shakuhachi, an end-blown bamboo flute used for improvisation and meditation, this is music that, in contrast with *Logitanion* or *Couronne*, springs from inside a human being. The player's breath and the noises that come together with the sound produced through the instrument are an intrinsic part of the music, a form for physicality that was not present in the two previous works on this CD.

The score is laid out as a succession of independent concentric staves. This centering round a visual axis is appropriate to the meditative character of the music. The electron-

ics seem here, in contraposition to *Logitanion*, a natural extension of the music coaxed out of the shakuhachi by the player. Only twice do the electronics threaten to throw the player off balance. The second of these intrusions, near the end of the piece, takes the form of a slow sonic build-up, lasting nearly two minutes before it suddenly disappears. It is as if the noise of what some have referred to as “monkey mind” is intent on extricating the player from the centre of his meditation.

Night Flying Winter Cranes makes use of traditional shakuhachi techniques such as *komibuki* (a pulsating variety of vibrato coming from the diaphragm) a diversity of glissandi and a repeated instruction to play with a glass-like sound. It also makes references to existing shakuhachi pieces based on two different texts. In their English translation they run something like this:

Real life begins with cranes dancing
Two lives meet, nest, and lay eggs
Two lives become many lives
Towards the end of the year
The young fly away from the old cranes forever.
The young towards life
The parents towards winter

Everyone leaves, enriched.

and the second one:

A female shakuhachi player comes to the village.
She freely plays all the notes she has with her.
The residents of the village feel purified by the playing and ask for more notes.
When she later leaves the place the villagers give her a bowl
Within which all her notes have been neatly placed.

Both parties leave, enriched.

Letting go of meaningful experiences as a prerequisite for enrichment seems to be the leitmotif of these poems.

And so we have travelled from the esoteric in *Logitanion*, through the exoteric of *Couronne* and down to direct personal experience in *Night Flying Winter Cranes*. Three levels of consciousness, as it were. Then again, as Mr. Mike Heron famously wrote in 1968, “the opposite is also true”. This writer would never presume his interpretations of this music to be definitive. All the same, take your time with these works. They will require repeated, attentive listening. The reward will be a listening experience like no other.

Ricardo Odriozola is Associate Professor at The Grieg Academy in Bergen, Norway, where he teaches violin, chamber and contemporary music. He is also active as a composer.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ADAM ØRVAD (accordion) trained at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen with James Crabb and Geir Draugsvoll, and made his debut from the soloist class there in 2005. He is an active soloist and chamber musician, appears internationally in many contexts and is associated with many different Danish and international ensembles such as Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt and MusikFabrik in Cologne. Adam Ørvad is particularly committed to the development of new repertoire for the accordion and has been a catalyst for the creation of many new accordion works. This is reflected on his latest critically acclaimed CD, *WING SPAN* (Danacord), with first recordings of six Danish accordion works.

CHRISTIAN PRÆSTHOLM (organ) trained at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus with parallel studies with among others Professor Susan Landale at the Conservatoire National de Région de Rueil-Malmaison in Paris, where he achieved the highest distinction, the *Prix de Virtuosité à l'Unanimité du Jury*. Christian Præstholt has a particular interest in contemporary music, which he demonstrated in his debut concert in 1999 by exclusively playing works composed within the last 50 years. This has later given rise to close collaborations with and first performances of many different Danish and foreign composers. Christian Præstholt has recorded a number of CDs and has given many concerts in Denmark and the rest of Europe as a soloist, chamber musician and organ improviser. He has been an organist at the Danish churches in Paris and London and since 2007 is the organist at the Sct. Mortens church in Randers.

KIKU DAY is one of the relatively few women in the world who plays the distinctive Japanese bamboo flute, the *shakuhachi*. On this instrument she was accepted in 1989 as a pupil of the master Okuda Atsuya in Tokyo, where she spent most of the next ten years learning the traditional Japanese repertoire, *honkyoku* – a centuries-old repertoire created and played by itinerant monks from the Zen Buddhist Fuke sect. Since then Kiku Day has taken a PhD in ethnomusicology and performance, investigating the possibilities of playing contemporary music on the *jinashi shakuhachi* and has thus built up a

repertoire of new music for shakuhachi, which she now presents all over the world. Kiku Day has played shakuhachi concerts in Europe, the USA, Japan and Oceania – in solo concerts, as a soloist with among others the Odense Symphony Orchestra, and as an ensemble musician.

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Sound engineers: Knud Erik Esmarch (*Logitanion*), Finn Kaufmanas (*Couronne*) and Viggo Mangor (*Couronne*, *Night Flying*)

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