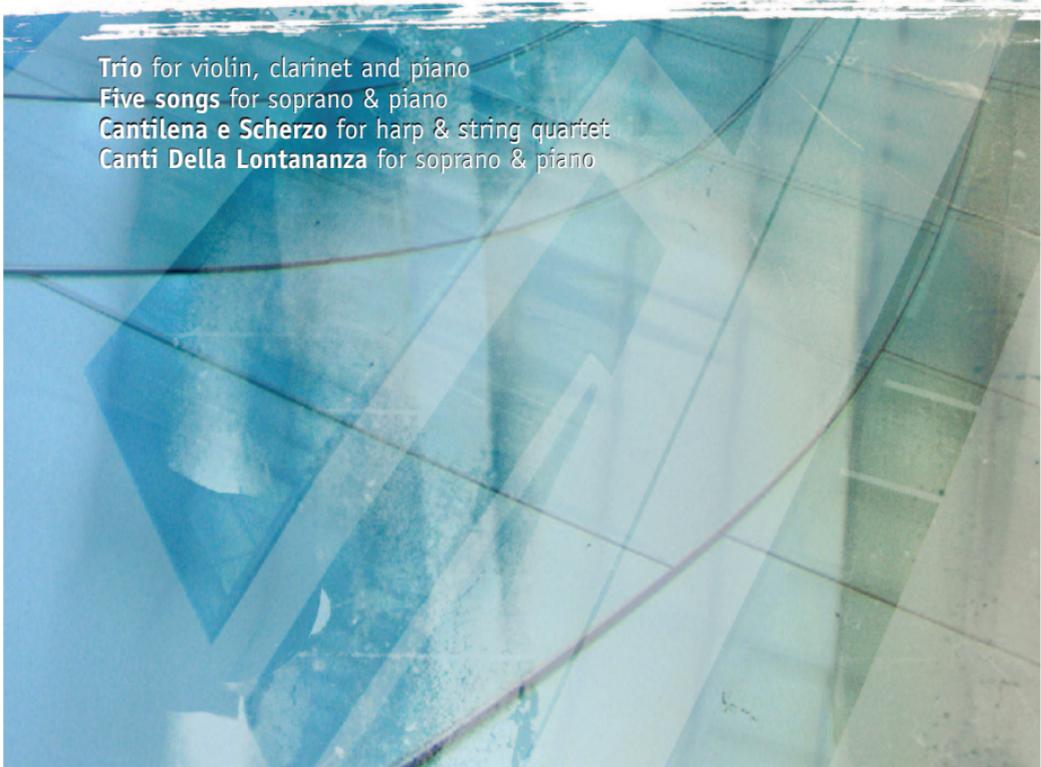


## Gian Carlo Menotti



Trio for violin, clarinet and piano  
Five songs for soprano & piano  
Cantilena e Scherzo for harp & string quartet  
Canti Della Lontananza for soprano & piano

# Gian Carlo Menotti

	<b>Trio for Violin, Clarinet &amp; Piano</b>	
01	Capriccio	5'09
02	Romanza	5'59
03	Envoi	2'33
	<b>Five Songs</b>	
04	<i>i</i> The Eternal Prisoner	2'05
05	<i>ii</i> The Idle Gift	1'41
06	<i>iii</i> The Longest Wait	3'54
07	<i>iv</i> My Ghost	3'47
08	<i>v</i> The Swing	3'41
09	<b>Cantilena e Scherzo</b> for harp and string quartet	10'25
	<b>Canti Della Lontananza</b>	
10	<i>i</i> Gli Amanti Impossibili	1'51
11	<i>ii</i> Mattinata di Neve	2'42
12	<i>iii</i> Il Settimo Bicchieri di Vino	0'54
13	<i>iv</i> Lo Spettro	2'14
14	<i>v</i> Dorme Pegaso	1'35
15	<i>vi</i> La Lettera	2'57
16	<i>vii</i> Rassengnazione	3'17

**Gian Carlo Menotti** was born in Italy in 1911, but moved to America in 1928 to study at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he met his long-term partner, fellow-composer Samuel Barber. Throughout his life, Menotti felt a kinship with both his Italian heritage and the immediacy of American life. His musical style was direct and emotional, drawing upon the influences of Puccini and Mussorgsky especially, but encompassing a whole range of stylistic traits. Above all, Menotti was acutely conscious of reaching out to his audience. A prolific writer of stage works, his 1951 television opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* brought opera to a new, wider public, and as co-founder of the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto in Italy, as well as its sister Spoleto Festival in South Carolina, Menotti lived out his belief that music is a gift to be celebrated and shared by all.

Menotti's *Trio* was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio, though it took more than one request to motivate Menotti to write the work. Indeed, the Trio's very existence is a testament to the value of perseverance. Violinist Walter Verdehr first wrote to Menotti in 1987, asking him to write a work for his chamber ensemble comprising violin, clarinet and piano. After several more letters, Menotti eventually accepted in 1989, but instructed Verdehr ("in the kindest way") to call him regularly in order to ensure the work progressed. Verdehr duly took to calling Menotti, whose adopted son Francis and daughter-in-law Malinda became friends with the persistent violinist, helping him to nudge the composer into action.

In May 1995, Verdehr and his wife, the Trio's clarinetist Elsa Ludwig-Verdehr, visited Rome, where they met Menotti and his son. Menotti was there as director of Spoleto's Festival of the Two Worlds, and promised to finish the piece in time for the Trio's concert for the 50th Anniversary of the UN. In the end, only the slow movement materialised, and was duly performed. Menotti promised the rest by Christmas, but suffered a serious fall. As he recovered, he set to work again; the first movement was ready in time for a Spoleto Festival concert on 7 July 1996, and the whole piece was ready just in time for his 85th birthday concert in September – the last notes were written just before the performance.

The *Capriccio* begins with lively exchanges between clarinet and violin, creating a vivid sense of witty, at times even sardonic, conversation. The piano takes a more supportive but essential role, anchoring the entire work, which has stylistic traits in common with Prokofiev especially. Menotti once claimed:

*“The Italians are very unmusical. If I go to a Protestant church in London or Amsterdam or listen to a black choir, I hear four-part harmony. Italians could never do that. In Italy we all have to sing the melody because we cannot harmonise.”*

Though exaggerated for comic effect, Menotti’s words do offer an insight into the Trio’s reliance on melodic exchanges between the violin and clarinet and the piano’s less soloistic, more supportive material; it is as though Menotti was more comfortable writing single, melodic lines. Throughout the movement there is a recognisable sense of tonality, initially heard as gestures rather than clear melodies, until a lyrical tune unfolds on the violin, ushering in a new, softer, quality to the music. This is in turn answered by the clarinet, before both the opening edgier dialogue and the lyrical material are developed, at times overlapping, at times juxtaposed. A final statement in octaves from all three musicians drives the movement to its close.

In contrast, the slow movement is pervaded with a nostalgic quality, with moments of introspection elaborated through recitative-like soliloquies. The finale opens with vigorous fugal writing, which then ebbs and flows between quicksilver, virtuosic exchanges and softer interjections. The clarinet introduces a more clearly melodic idea, but the music swiftly runs away with itself, creating a stream-of-consciousness effect. The piano is used more prominently than in opening movement, and there is a similar quality of spiky humour, a charming tussle between affectionate mutual regard and irascible competition.

When Menotti came to the Institute of United States Studies at London University in 1998 to hear the British premiere of the Trio, he said: “Unlike Victorian children, old composers should be heard and not seen,” adding that he knew he wasn’t Bach but felt he wasn’t Offenbach either.

Despite the quality of his instrumental output, Menotti’s great love musically was undoubtedly the human voice. Opera and vocal works dominate his output, and even the instrumental works have a human, often conversational quality, the Trio being a fine example. In 1964 Menotti wrote:

*“There is a certain indolence towards the use of the voice today, a tendency to treat the voice instrumentally, as if composers feared that its texture is too expressive, too human”.*

Menotti’s own writing for voice resolutely avoids this angular ‘instrumental’ quality, retaining a strong sense of melodic shape and emotional expression. His Five Songs were originally a set of four, written in 1981, with a fifth added in 1983; the composer wrote the English texts himself. Interestingly, the English language has a bearing on the music’s style; *The Eternal Prisoner* has a similar rugged, restless quality to composers of English pastoral songs such as Quilter.

*The Idle Gift* is initially more playful than *The Eternal Prisoner*, with a strong sense of melody and florid piano writing, but there is a sinister undercurrent – the song deals with avenging a wayward lover, and its flighty character is grounded by the sombre final chords.

In *The Longest Wait* the voice declares: “It is not love that I desire” but “the kiss of peace”. This is a searching, poignant song with a Schubertian sense of melodic shape, balanced by an illustrative piano accompaniment full of rhetorical gestures, such as the dramatic pause after “silenced”.

*My Ghost* boasts witty, almost Noel Cowardesque words, their intimate, story-telling character a perfect vehicle for flamboyant performance. In a moment of pathos, the ghost admits: “Earth bores me but heaven frightens me”. But humour prevails; one of Menotti’s great strengths was comedy and, as the Trio also demonstrates, he was a master of the amusing, throwaway ending.

*The Swing* returns us to more contemplative territory; the swing itself is used to represent life and its decay. The illustrative piano part shifts from undulating pleasure to chilling melancholy, with funereal piano chords recalling Chopin's funeral march. Yet there is resolution at last, with the song's final bars reaching a state of peaceful resignation.

Written in 1977, the *Cantilena and Scherzo* is another instance of Menotti's use of singing lines in an instrumental context. Perhaps inevitably, the work has its roots in Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* and Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane*, but instead of separating the two movements, Menotti frames the *Scherzo* with the *Cantilena's* lyrical material, creating a ternary structure. The very choice of the word 'Cantilena' betrays Menotti's preoccupation with vocal writing, and the result is suitably song-like, full of melodic richness, sustained string writing, and a resonating harp part. A passionate climax leads into the mercurial triple-rhythm *Scherzo*, before the *Cantilena's* joyous return.

*The Canti di Lontananza* ('Songs of Distance') were composed in 1967 for the great soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who commissioned the cycle and who premiered it at Hunter College, New York with Martin Isepp at the piano. Menotti wrote both the text – in Italian – and music for these seven songs, all of which deal with aspects of loss and separation. Menotti's relationship with Barber was suffering by this time; having written libretti for Barber's operas *Vanessa* (1957) and *A Hand of Bridge* (1959), Menotti felt snubbed when Barber turned to Franco Zeffirelli for the libretto to *Antony and Cleopatra*. The opera was written for the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House in 1966, but proved unsuccessful. Not long afterwards, Barber left the States for a period of solitude. Menotti later recalled:

"The only moment of bitterness that ever existed between Sam and me was because of *Antony and Cleopatra*... I was very hurt, because I was dying to write another libretto for him."

There was a happier side to this time, however; Igor Stravinsky specifically requested that Menotti direct *The Rake's Progress* at the Hamburg Opera in 1967. Furthermore, Menotti overcame his unhappiness over *Antony and Cleopatra* so that, despite the end of their partnership, he still felt able to help Barber revise the libretto in 1975.

A further insight into Menotti's state of mind as he wrote the *Songs of Distance* comes from his faith: "... I've always suffered guilt from being a Catholic; when I was in my fifties I felt a need of being needed." This desire for acceptance coupled with Barber's snub fed into the emotional language of the *Songs of Distance*; the result is some of Menotti's most immediate and heart-felt music.

The cycle opens with *Gli amanti impossibili* ('Impossible lovers'), an intensely dramatic song, full of raw emotion that remains unresolved at the song's end. *Mattinata di neve* ('Snowy morning') bears the influence of Duparc; the shifting tonality between major and minor modes and the use of chromaticism create a sense of shifting emotion, wavering between exquisite recollection and poignant loss. There follows a moment of respite with the more light-hearted *Il settimo bicchiere di vino* ('The seventh glass of wine'), which has the quality of an operatic patter-song, ending with a witty piano flourish.

In contrast, *Lo spettro* ('The spectre') plunges us into a suitably haunting, dark-hued sound-world that bears an affinity with the songs of Berg and Schoenberg. *Dorme Pegaso* is concise and enigmatic, its moments of almost whispering quiet lending it a child-like quality, while *La lettera* ('The letter') is full of operatic rhetoric and mysterious, searching lines. The cycle ends with *Rassegnazione* ('Resignation'), a wistful song with rich melodic shaping. The relatively simple harmony is redolent of Fauré, but the opulent, Romantic gestures suggest the influence of Wolf's songs. In places, the piano part has an almost Schubertian simplicity, but soon brims over with late-Romantic passion.

### **Marianne Thorsen** *violin*

Winner of many international competitions, including most notably the 2003 Sion International Competition, Marianne Thorsen has established herself as one of Norway's leading violinists. She has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the major orchestras in Scandinavia, among many others. She enjoys a regular collaboration with the Trondheim Soloists with whom she recently toured and recorded Mozart's Violin Concertos Nos 3, 4 and 5 to great critical acclaim. Her latest recording, of Ståle Kleiberg's Violin Concerto with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra, has received a 2010 Grammy nomination. In 2004 she gave the world première with the same orchestra of a violin concerto dedicated to her by the Norwegian composer Ketil Hvoslef; a subsequent performance of the work with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra was broadcast on national Norwegian television. A keen chamber musician, Marianne Thorsen is a founder member of the Leopold String Trio with whom she has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, New York, the Musikverein in Vienna and Wigmore Hall, London. In 2000 she was appointed Leader of the internationally renowned Nash Ensemble of London. She is the Director of the festival Vinterfestspill i Bergstaden in Røros, Norway and plays the 'Emiliani' Stradivarius violin by arrangement with the Leif Hoegh Foundation.

### **Maximiliano Martín** *clarinet*

Born in Tenerife, Martín studied in Barcelona and at the RCM in London. His teachers include Richard Hosford and Joan Enric Lluna. Principal Clarinet of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and winner of the Young Artists Plattform in 2002, Martín has since made debuts at the Wigmore Hall London, Queens Hall Edinburgh, Palau de la Musica Barcelona and Teatro Monumental in Madrid. As a soloist Martín has performed with

orchestras such as SCO, EUCO, OST under the baton of Bruggen, Manze and Swensen. Chamber music collaborations include groups such as London Winds, Doric String Quartet and other artists such as Kuusisto, Bourgue and Zacharias. Regular guest principal with orchestras such as the LSO, COE and Orquesta de Cadaques, and has worked with conductors like Abbado, Haitink and Mackerras.

Martín has recorded for Linn Records his debut album "Fantasía", the Mozart Clarinet Concerto and Messiaen *Quartet for the end of times*. His new album "Vibraciones del Alma" has been released this year. He teaches at the RSAMD and is one of the Artistic Directors of the Festival de Camara Villa de La Orotava held every year in his home town.

### **Julian Milford** *piano*

An English graduate of Oxford University, Julian Milford subsequently studied piano and piano accompaniment at the Curtis Institute and the Guildhall. He works as an accompanist and chamber musician with some of Britain's finest instrumentalists and singers, performing at major chamber music venues across Britain and Europe. Julian is the pianist and a founder member of the London Conchord Ensemble, a mixed chamber music ensemble founded in 2002 that has a busy performing schedule, this season visiting halls including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, and the Wigmore Hall. Julian's concerts as accompanist or duo partner have included recitals with baritones Sir Thomas Allen and Christopher Maltman, mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly, and cellist Han-Na Chang in venues including the Frick Collection in New York, the Philharmonie in Cologne and the Herkulessaal in Munich, as well as the City of London and Cheltenham festivals.

Julian has also recorded extensively for major independent recording labels including Chandos, Hyperion, ASV and Black Box. He has made a number of recordings with the

distinguished violinist Lydia Mordkovitch for Carlton Classics and Chandos. His debut solo recording comprising works by William Alwyn (Chandos) was described as "impeccably stylish" by *BBC Music Magazine*.

### **The RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet**

Winner of the 1988 London International String Quartet Competition and now in its twenty-third concert season, the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet is one of Europe's most successful quartets, internationally-recognised for its beauty of sound, clarity of texture and integrity of interpretation within an unusually wide and varied range of repertoire. Appointed Resident Quartet to RTÉ in 1986 and with almost 700 performances in Ireland to date, the group has dedicated itself to bringing the wonders of the string-quartet repertoire to audiences throughout the country. At the same time they have built a thriving international career, with regular tours taking them throughout Europe and the USA. The quartet members are also Artists in Residence at University Concert Cork and founders of the internationally acclaimed West Cork Chamber Music Festival. In 1994 the Quartet launched the Vanbrugh Scholarship Fund, a charitable fund dedicated to encouraging the art of chamber music among Ireland's talented young musicians.

In January 2009, the members of the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet were appointed lecturers in chamber music at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama.

As well as presenting the core string-quartet repertoire, the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet has consistently championed the work of Irish composers in concerts and broadcasts in Ireland and abroad. It has premièred new works by Gerald Barry, Raymond Deane, Donnacha Dennehy, Deirdre Gribbin, John Kinsella, Philip Martin, Jane O'Leary, Eric Sweeney, Kevin Volans, Kevin O'Connell, Rachel Holstead and Ian Wilson. As part of the

RTÉ Heaney At 70 celebrations, RTÉ Performing Groups commissioned the latter three composers to write short pieces for the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet in response to Seamus Heaney's work. The pieces were premièred on Easter Monday with Seamus Heaney introducing each piece by reading the poem that inspired it.

The RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet has an extensive and critically-acclaimed discography which includes the complete Beethoven quartets. Recent awards include Gramophone Critics' Choice 2003 for Boccherini's cello quintets and *Gramophone* Editor's Choice (February 2006) for Charles Stanford's viola and piano quintets, a CD released by Hyperion in cooperation with RTÉ. In April 2006 RTÉ lyric fm released *Quartet Classics*, a compilation CD of some of the most popular works in the repertoire.

### **Gillian Tingay harp**

Gillian Tingay was awarded a scholarship to study with Marisa Robles at the Royal College of Music when she was 15. She now gives solo, duo and chamber recitals and has a varied concerto schedule of classical and modern works. Her engagements have included concertos with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Orchestra of St. John's Smith Square, the Northern Sinfonia, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the Budapest String Orchestra, and the RPO as well as double concertos with Marisa Robles and James Galway. She performed at the first arts festival held in Beirut for twenty years, after the civil war. Gillian is a member of the highly-acclaimed chamber ensemble The Fibonacci Sequence and broadcasts regularly on Radio 3, Classic FM and on television. Gillian's numerous CD recordings include: the flute and harp works of JM Damase, 'Fantasie', 'Beyond the Dark', and 'Harp' with the Fibonacci Sequence. Gillian has been the harpist for many TV series and films, including *Band of Brothers*, *Lewis*, *The Laws of Attraction*, *Stardust*, *Young Victoria* and *Clash of the Titans*.

## **Christine Brewer**

Grammy™ Award winning American soprano Christine Brewer's appearances in opera, concert and recital are marked with her own unique timbre, at once warm and brilliant, combined with a vibrant personality and emotional honesty reminiscent of the great sopranos of the past. Her range, golden tone, boundless power, and control make her a favorite of the stage as well as a sought-after recording artist.

On the opera stage, Ms. Brewer is highly regarded for her striking portrayal of the title role in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, which she has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra de Lyon, Théâtre du Châtelet, the Santa Fe Opera, the English National Opera, and the Opera Theater of St. Louis. Earning critical acclaim with each role, she has performed Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the San Francisco Opera, Gluck's *Alceste* with the Santa Fe Opera, the Dyer's Wife in Strauss's *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Paris Opera. Ms. Brewer has frequently collaborated with many of the greatest conductors of the day including Pierre Boulez, James Conlon, Sir Colin Davis, Christoph von Dohnányi, Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Sir Charles Mackerras, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Antonio Pappano, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Donald Runnicles, Robert Shaw, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas.

Frequently sought after to sing the great symphonic works of Mozart, Brahms, Verdi, Mahler, Beethoven, Strauss, Wagner, Janáček, and Britten, Ms. Brewer has sung with the philharmonics of New York and Los Angeles, and the orchestras of Cleveland, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., St. Louis, San Francisco, Boston, and Dallas. In Europe, she counts the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Staatskapelle Berlin, as regular partners.

Ms. Brewer can be heard on the labels Hyperion, Naxos, Chandos, Telarc in repertoire ranging from Mozart, Schubert and Strauss to Barber, Britten and Wagner with the finest orchestras and notable conductors. Many have been nominated and won prestigious awards, as well as garnered great critical acclaim.

## **Roger Vignoles** *piano accompanist*

Roger Vignoles is internationally recognised as one of the world's most distinguished piano accompanists and musicians of today. He regularly partners the finest singers in major venues around the world and is regarded as a leading authority on the song repertoire. The most recent partnerships include Thomas Allen, Christine Brewer, Susan Graham, Angelika Kirchschrager, Bernarda Fink, Kate Royal, Anne Schwanewilms, Joan Rodgers, Mark Padmore, John Mark Ainsley, Christopher Maltman, Robert Holl, Florian Boesch, Jonathan Lemalu, Measha Brueggergosman, Miah Persson, Werner Güra, Katarina Karnéus, Elizabeth Watts, Andrew Kennedy, Ailish Tynan and Renata Pokupić.

He is also an outstanding teacher, and has given masterclasses in Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Stockholm, New York, Boston, Baltimore, Montreal and Toronto. He is currently the director of Sommer Lied Weinberg in Upper Austria, the annual Ciclo de Lied Galega at Santiago de Compostela in Spain and the Tetbury Festival. His extensive discography includes many highly-acclaimed recordings, from German Lieder and French Melodies to Spanish Canciones and Cabaret Songs.

Apart from his regular appearances throughout Europe and US, Roger will present Strauss Song Series this season at the Wigmore Hall with Angelika Kirchschrager, Christine Brewer, Marlis Petersen, Dorothea Röschmann, Anne Schwanewilms, Christopher Maltman and Andrew Kennedy, in conjunction with his Strauss Complete Songs recordings with Hyperion Records.



Marianne Thorsen



Gillian Tingay



Roger Vignoles: by Ben Ealovega



Julian Milford



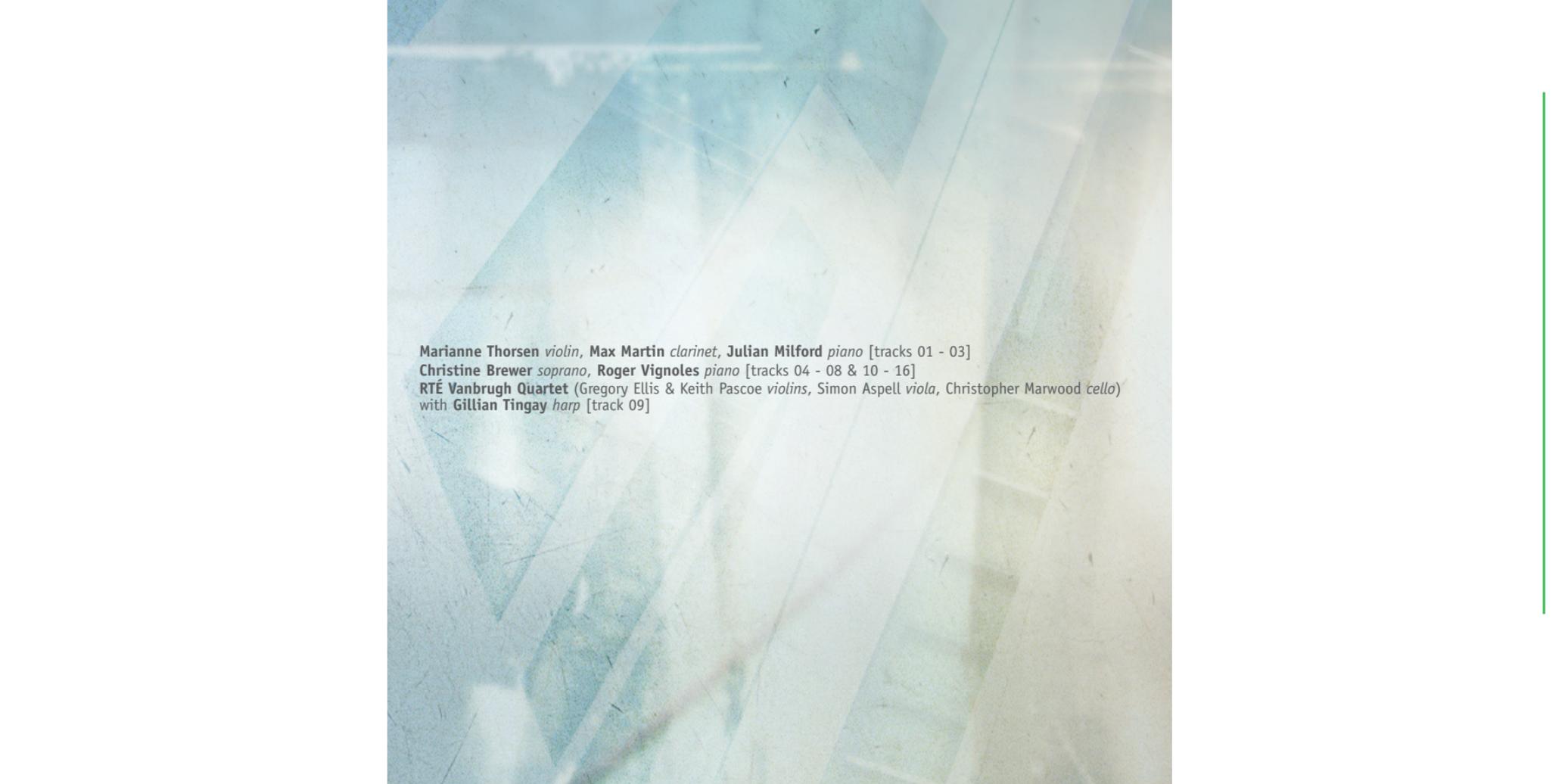
Christine Brewer: by Christian Steiner



The RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet © RTÉ



Maximiliano Martin



**Marianne Thorsen** *violin*, **Max Martin** *clarinet*, **Julian Milford** *piano* [tracks 01 - 03]

**Christine Brewer** *soprano*, **Roger Vignoles** *piano* [tracks 04 - 08 & 10 - 16]

**RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet** (Gregory Ellis & Keith Pascoe *violins*, Simon Aspell *viola*, Christopher Marwood *cello*)  
with **Gillian Tingay** *harp* [track 09]