



Described by The Daily Telegraph as 'brimming with style and panache', over the past few years O Duo have made their BBC Proms debut, won a Special Commissioning Award from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and been appointed Artistic Directors of the Children's Classic Concerts series in Scotland.

In 2010 O Duo returned to the Proms to give the premiere of *Wilful Chants* by Stephen Montague with the BBC Symphony Chorus and gave recitals at Wigmore Hall, Cheltenham and City of London Festivals.

Engagements the following season include the world premiere of Stephen McNeff's *ConcertO-Duo* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican as part of their 80th-birthday celebrations. The Duo go on to give Hallowe'en Concerts and Christmas Concerts with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Orchestra of Scottish Opera at the Royal Concert Hall Glasgow and Queen's Hall Edinburgh.

Formed in 2000 at the Royal College of Music, O Duo released their first commercial CD on the Sony BMG label in 2007 to critical acclaim. They have given concerts as far afield as the Al Bustan, Harare and Mexico City Festivals and in Paris, Madrid, Lucerne, Zug, Germany and Bulgaria and performed concertos with the BBC Philharmonic, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras.

Outstanding communicators, O Duo have worked at Abbey Road and Sony studios on television and film scores, appeared at the Proms in the Park in Hyde Park, and broadcast on BBC Radio 2 and 3, Classic FM, Channel 4 and BBC Television. In 2003 and 2004 they won Best Music Act of the Fringe at the Edinburgh Festival.

'Phenomenal artistry...Brimming with style and panache.'
The Daily Telegraph

'Brilliant....one of the Fringe's small gems'
***** *The Herald*

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CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

O Duo

Owen Gunnell & Oliver Cox



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01	CHOPIN Fantasia-Improptu in C# minor	05:08
02	MCNEFF Baristas	06:13
03	J. S. BACH Partita No.1 - Praeludium	02:09
04	J. S. BACH Partita No.1 - Corrente	02:44
05	MIKI Marimba Spiritual	08:38
06	J. S. BACH Praeludium VI	01:36
07	VELDHUIS Goldrush	13:37
08	J. S. BACH Praeludium II	01:46
09	J. S. BACH Fuga II for three voices	01:56
10	JOLLIFFE Knock About	05:20
11	MENDELSSOHN Fugue No.4 in F minor	03:57
12	POULENC Sonata for Piano Duet - Prélude	02:15
13	POULENC Sonata for Piano Duet - Finale	02:03
14	J. S. BACH Praeludium in C# major	01:40
15	BARTÓK Suite for Piano - Allegro molto	02:15

FRYDERYK CHOPIN (*Zelazowa Wola, near Warsaw, 1810 – Paris, 1849*)

01 **Fantaisie-Improptu in C sharp minor, Op. 66**

Chopin wrote four pieces to which he gave the title *Improptu*: his Op. 29 in A flat major, Op. 36 in F sharp major, Op. 51 in G flat major and this Op. 66 in C sharp minor. But the opus numbers mislead: the ‘first’ three were composed after Op. 66, which dates from around 1834. Chopin never released the piece for publication; it was his friend Julian Fontana who brought it out, with Opp. 67–73, as *Œuvres Posthumes pour le piano de Fred. Chopin* in 1855; it may have been Fontana, too, who gave it the title *Fantaisie-Improptu*, since modern musicology has established that it did not originate with Chopin himself. The title, though, may have helped distinguished it from the other three *Improptus* – and its glorious central melody (in D flat major, which is the enharmonic equivalent of C sharp major, the parallel major, ensuring a sense of light) has guaranteed its place among the most popular of classical pieces.

STEPHEN MCNEFF (*b. Belfast, 1951*)

Fantaisie-Improptu

02 **Baristas**

Stephen McNeff was born in Ireland and grew up in Wales. He studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music; his post-graduate work was at the University of Exeter. His first successes were in music-theatre; more recently, his operas – *Clockwork* in 2004 and *Tarka the Otter* in 2007 – have been well received. He has also written extensively for brass, and his appointment, in 2005, as composer-in-residence with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra resulted in a number of orchestral scores: *Heiligenstadt*, *Secret Destinations* and a *Sinfonia. Of Baristas*, which dates from 2004, the composer writes:

“I wrote *Baristas* for Olly and Owen after they had played my opera *Clockwork* at the Royal Opera House Linbury Theatre and on tour. I was immensely impressed by their virtuosity, sense of fun and refusal to let any challenge defeat them. They needed a

new work for their Edinburgh Festival programme; ‘just before the interval’, they said. What could be more appropriate than two busy guys preparing for an interval rush just like their brothers in coffee, the professional baristas? You only have to see a crack team of coffee-makers to appreciate the comparison in speed, dexterity and – most importantly – sound. *Baristas* captures the rhythmic precision and accompanying cacophony of beans, steam and – what we all aim for – hitting the right place. A double espresso of an experience.”

J. S. BACH (*Eisenach, 1685 – Leipzig, 1750*)

03 **Partita No. 1, BWV825: Praeludium**

04 **Partita No. 1, BWV825: Corrente**

06 **The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I: Prelude No. 6, BWV851**

08 **The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I: Prelude No. 2 in C minor, BWV847**

09 **The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I: Fugue No. 2 in C minor, BWV847**

14 **The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I: Prelude No. 3 in C sharp major, BWV848**

Bach’s music has been arranged more often than that of any other composer, and for an astonishingly wide range of instruments, and its textural clarity means that it transcribes especially well for tuned percussion – steel bands play more Bach than any other classical composer. Tracks 03 and 04 offer the first and third movements from the first of the six Partitas that appeared in 1726 – Bach’s first publication, at the age of 41 (he published, advertised and distributed it himself). *The Well-Tempered Clavier* was published as two books of 24 préludes and fugues apiece, in each of the major and minor keys, the first composed in 1722 and intended, so the score states, ‘for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study’; the second volume followed in 1742. The selections here are all from Book 1: track 06 brings the sixth prelude, tracks 08 and 09 offer the second prelude-and-fugue pairing, in C minor; and track 14 is the C sharp major Prelude.

MINORU MIKI (*b. Tokushima, 1930*)

05 **Marimba Spiritual**

Minoru Miki is a hugely productive Japanese composer, with as many as nine full-length operas – inspired by Japanese history – to his credit. Many of the works in his enormous catalogue reveal his interest in traditional Japanese music. His *Marimba Spiritual* of 1983 was one such. It was commissioned by the Japanese marimba player Keiko Abe and initially written for three percussionists; it was premiered by Ms Abe and the Nieuwe Slagwek Groep Amsterdam. The composer writes:

“Marimba Spiritual is my third marimba work, following *Time for Marimba* and *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*. The piece was composed between 1983 and the beginning of 1984, and the composer had in mind the acute famine in Africa which was occurring at this time. The piece is composed in an organic fashion, with the first section of the piece as a static requiem and the second section a lively resurrection. The title is an expression of the total process.”

Its African inspiration notwithstanding, ‘The rhythmic patterns for the second part are taken from the festival drumming of the Chichibu area northwest of Tokyo’.

JACOB TER VELDHUIS (*b. Scheema, Groningen, 1951*)

07 **Goldrush**

Jacob ter Veldhuis is one of the most eclectic and successful of contemporary Dutch composers. He began his career as a rock musician before studying composition at the Groningen Conservatory, winning the Dutch Composition Prize there in 1980. He has written extensively for percussion, both in his orchestral pieces and in works for percussion ensemble, ascribing his interest in rhythm to his early experiences in rock culture. *Goldrush* was written in 1995 for the Danish percussionists Morten Friis and Uffe Savery, who formed the Safri Duo. The composer writes that:

“it involves the whole family of percussion instruments. Although music is an abstract art form it can tell stories too. *Goldrush* is an adventure; while listening to it you can imagine people exploring new land in search of gold, which led to so many catastrophes in the the history of man. At the end of the piece, and when you are least expecting it and after a lot of struggling, they find pure, shining gold, represented by instruments such as crotales, chimes and the glockenspiel.”

EDMUND JOLLIFFE (*b. London, 1976*)

10 **Knock About**

Edmund Jolliffe studied music at Oxford University and went on to complete a masters in film composition at the Royal College of Music under Joseph Horowitz; he is now much sought-after as a composer for television. He also teaches at Westminster Under School (where he is assistant director of music) and is a composition tutor at Trinity College of Music. Of *Knock About*, written in 2004, the composer writes:

“When I first met *O Duo*, what struck me most about them was their amazing ability to be completely relaxed and laid back, but then suddenly launch into difficult pieces of music with incredible virtuosity. It made me think of people who casually kick a ball around together and reveal fantastic football skills. This gave me the idea of incorporating a ‘football rhythm’ into the piece and suggested the title *Knock About*. At its centre is one simple rhythm, but this is hidden by really fast music, which *O Duo* manage to pull off with their usual flair.”

Felix Mendelssohn (*Hamburg, 1809 – Leipzig, 1847*)

11 **Six Preludes and Fugues, Op. 35: Fugue No. 4 in F minor**

Bach is such a staple of musical life nowadays that it is difficult to imagine it without him. But it was Felix Mendelssohn who put Bach back on the map: his performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in Leipzig in 1829 was the first to have been given since Bach’s own lifetime. Bach was to prove a strong influence on

Mendelssohn’s own compositions, too, right from the start, in the organ works he wrote in his early teens and then on through the rest of Mendelssohn’s short life. In 1837 a set of six Preludes and Fugues for piano was published as his Op. 35, although they had been written over a number of years. This F minor Fugue, marked *Allegro con fuoco*, bears the date 3 December 1834.

FRANCIS POULENC (*Paris, 1899 – Paris, 1963*)

12 **Sonate à 4 mains: Prélude**

13 **Sonate à 4 mains: Final**

Poulenc was one of the first composers whose music deliberately expressed a sense of fun. But it didn’t stop at the notes themselves. Mozart wrote a sonata for two pianos to avoid having to sit next to a young lady student who fancied him rather more than he did her. Poulenc took that idea in the opposite direction: in the first movement of this, the first of his two sonatas for piano duet (composed in 1918 and revised in 1939), he wrote one of the parts to be played at the extremes of the keyboard, with the other player occupying the centre ground. By playing the music on marimbas *O Duo* avoid any unprofessional intimacy.

BÉLA BARTÓK (*Nagyszentmiklós, 1881 – New York, 1945*)

15 **Suite for Piano, Op. 14: III. Allegro molto**

The flavour of Hungarian folk-music can be tasted in almost everything Bartók wrote, and around the time of the composition of the *Suite*, Op. 14, in 1916 he composed a number of pieces based directly on Hungarian folksong, of which he was an ardent, and scientific, collector. But the *Suite*, exceptionally, doesn’t draw on that potent source. Before 1913 almost all of Bartók’s activity as a folksong collector had been within Hungary; in June of that year – in the interests of widening his experience of folk-music – he had travelled to North Africa, where the whirling dances and driving drumming of the Berbers of Biskra (now in Algeria) left their direct mark in the third movement of the *Suite*.