

EDMUND RUBBRA (1901-1986)

**SONATA IN C FOR OBOE AND PIANO, OP. 100**

- |   |          |      |
|---|----------|------|
| 1 | Con moto | 5'49 |
| 2 | Elegy    | 4'15 |
| 3 | Presto   | 3'30 |

EDWARD LONGSTAFF (1965- )

**AEGEUS (1996)**

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 4 |  | 8'21 |
|---|--|------|

THOMAS ATTWOOD WALMISLEY (1814-1856)

**SONATINA NO. 1**

- |   |                                  |      |
|---|----------------------------------|------|
| 5 | Andante mosso - Allegro moderato | 8'49 |
|---|----------------------------------|------|

JOHN CASKEN (1949- )

**AMETHYST DECEIVER FOR SOLO OBOE (2009)**

*(World premiere recording)*

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 6 |  | 7'16 |
|---|--|------|

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)

**TERZETTO FOR FLUTE, OBOE AND VIOLA**

- |   |                |      |
|---|----------------|------|
| 7 | Allegretto     | 6'59 |
| 8 | Un poco vivace | 4'36 |

MICHAEL BERKELEY (1948- )

**THREE MOODS FOR UNACCOMPANIED OBOE**

- |    |                      |      |
|----|----------------------|------|
| 9  | Very free. Moderato  | 5'24 |
| 10 | Fairly free. Andante | 2'33 |
| 11 | Giocoso              | 2'13 |

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

**SIX STUDIES IN ENGLISH FOLKSONG FOR COR ANGLAIS AND PIANO**

- |    |                    |      |
|----|--------------------|------|
| 12 | Adagio             | 1'37 |
| 13 | Andante sostenuto  | 1'28 |
| 14 | Larghetto          | 1'31 |
| 15 | Lento              | 1'36 |
| 16 | Andante tranquillo | 1'33 |
| 17 | Allegro vivace     | 0'54 |

**Total playing time: 68'34**

James Turnbull ~ oboe / cor anglais (all tracks) Libby Burgess ~ piano (tracks 1-5 and 12-17)

Matthew Featherstone ~ flute (tracks 7-8) Dan Shilladay ~ viola (tracks 7-8)



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## The English Oboe: Rediscovered

JAMES TURNBULL oboe



## FOREWORD

For a long time, I have been drawn towards English oboe music. It was therefore a straightforward decision to choose this repertoire to record. My aim was to introduce the most varied programme possible: as a result, this disc spans over a century. I did not want to create a chronologically ordered history of the repertoire: instead, I intended to open a door to the many different ways in which English composers have explored the oboe since the late nineteenth century.

One of the earliest decisions I made was to include Edmund Rubbra's Oboe Sonata in C. While studying at the Royal Academy of Music, I had the good fortune to meet Evelyn Rothwell for whom Rubbra had written this piece. When asked about her favourite repertoire, Rubbra's Sonata was quickly highlighted as something she believed to be particularly special and of the highest quality. I share this opinion with Evelyn as it has always been a work of great personal significance for me. Despite spending over a decade playing Rubbra's Sonata, I only encountered Walmisley's Sonatina No. 1 a year prior to the recording, when Christopher Hogwood showed me his new edition of the piece. Within a few minutes of first playing it, I felt very strongly that this was a piece I wanted to explore and perform as much as possible. Other compositions on this disc attracted me for different reasons. The incredible energy I found in the works by John Casken and Edward Longstaff was most compelling and almost hypnotic to me. What these two composers have achieved with *Amethyst Deceiver* and *Aegeus* is remarkable in terms of the extremes they have pushed the oboist to portray. The wonderful works by Michael Berkeley and Gustav Holst were included as I feel they both display what a great variety of character can be achieved in oboe repertoire and manage to balance vivid atmospheres with moments of real joy. To conclude the recording, I have included a work on an instrument of which I have always been very fond the cor anglais. Vaughan Williams' *Six Studies in English Folksong* were, in fact, originally for cello and piano but have always felt to me like they belong on the cor anglais and suit the instrument particularly well.



## PROGRAMME NOTES

Edmund Rubbra wrote much chamber music, including pieces for almost every instrument. He composed his Sonata for Oboe and Piano, op. 100, in 1958 for Evelyn Rothwell (Lady Barbirolli). Tonally this is a highly unified design in C minor that eventually concludes in a confident C major by way of an F minor opening to the *finale*. The gentle, elegiac first movement avoids sonata form as such, being rather a modified ternary form that rises to a brief climax and then subsides, while the slow second movement, entitled 'Elegy', encloses a short, dance-like episode. In both these movements the smoothly flowing, organic unfolding of the instrumental lines confirm Rubbra's quality as a master of counterpoint (on which he wrote a handy monograph) and demonstrate on a small scale essentially the same methods in the growth of ideas as he used in his symphonies. The *finale* is a pastoral *rondo*, serene in its evocation of rustic pipings but, like the other two movements, ends punctually without a wasted note.

The contemporary composer Edward Longstaff, born in 1965, studied at Royal Holloway College and Goldsmith's College. He joined the staff of the Purcell School for young musicians at Bushey in 1993, became Head of Academic Music in 1999 and was appointed Assistant Director of Music in 2002. Longstaff's music has been broadcast on BBC television and Radio 3 and recent commissions have included pieces for Chaconne Brass, Exaudi, the New London Chamber Ensemble, the Royal Northern College of Music Wind Band and a Clarinet Concerto for Sarah Williamson. *Aegeus*, his whimsical elegy for oboe and piano named for the father of the Greek hero Theseus, was composed in 1996. When Theseus sailed away to do battle with the Minotaur, King Aegeus asked Theseus to change the black sail of his ship to white if he was victorious. Every day he would watch on a cliff-top for his son's return. Theseus was successful, but forgot his promise to change the sail to white. Seeing the black sail, the despairing Aegeus threw himself from the cliff into the sea, which ever since has been known as the Aegean. Longstaff conceived his

piece, in which the oboe stands throughout for the King, as a meditation on Aegeus's vigil, his thoughts alternating between hope and fear. In the closing section of the work the oboe builds to a climax of elation and despair over a rhythmic ostinato in the piano; crashing piano chords and the cries of the oboe are portents of the King's eventual suicide, but as the work closes he is still waiting, alone, on the cliff-top.

Although Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814–1856) is generally remembered these days on the strength of just a single work, his church service in D minor, he was an important figure in early Victorian music, albeit one who did not fully realize his potential. Walmisley was a child prodigy who manifested considerable gifts at a very early age. He first studied composition with his godfather Thomas Attwood (1765–1838), the organist of St Paul's Cathedral, who had studied with Mozart in Vienna in the 1780s. Walmisley became a church organist in Croydon at 16, and three years later took over as organist of both Trinity College and St John's College, Cambridge. Astonishingly, so great was the appreciation of his gifts that he was appointed Professor of Music at Cambridge in 1836, when he was only 22 and still an undergraduate.

Walmisley proved an active reformer of church music and wrote a significant amount of choral and vocal music, but he also composed in other genres – his works include a symphony, two organ concertos, two overtures, chamber and instrumental pieces, including three string quartets and various piano and organ works – though very few of his compositions were published in his lifetime. An exception was the pair of Sonatinas for oboe and piano he composed in 1847, which appeared in print the following year. Works for oboe were rare at this time, and Walmisley also made versions of the sonatinas for flute and for clarinet, which appeared posthumously. Sonatina No. 1 in G minor consists of two movements played without a break, and its musical language – though

reminiscent of Mendelssohn – is firmly romantic. The first movement is an *Andante mosso* full of refined pathos in which the oboe is underpinned by emotional *tremolandi* and rippling *arpeggios* in the piano. The key shifts to the relative major (B flat) for the second movement, a flowing and highly melodic *Allegro moderato* into which Walmisley deftly works disguised reminiscences of the first movement's main theme.

John Casken's *Amethyst Deceiver* for solo oboe is inspired by the idea of a mysterious woodland locale in which strange things come to life. 'Amethyst deceivers' (Laccaria amethystine) are tiny purple mushrooms, rarely seen, but when picked and cooked have an intense flavour. They are, then, safely edible, but the name 'deceiver' probably comes from the fact that they closely resemble the poisonous Lilac Fibrecap. Capricious and voluble, playing hide and seek with mockingly inflected pitches, Casken's virtuoso work was composed for a student recital in 2007 and is directed to be played 'freely, and with an air of mischief', aspects which come out also in *lachrymose glissandi* and jazzy syncopations, although there is (though not for long) a more melancholic and thoughtful middle section. At the end the music seems to vanish into the woods.

Gustav Holst wrote very little mature chamber music, and the most important example is the *Terzetto* for flute, oboe and viola he composed in 1925. On 14 April that year he wrote to the critic Edwin Evans, 'I am working on something that will probably be either chamber music or waste paper'. In the end he decided it was the former, and the work was premiered the following year in London by Albert Fransella, Leon Goossens and Harry Bailey. From the mid-1920s Holst occasionally experimented with his own austere form of polytonality, and the *Terzetto* was in fact an experiment along those lines, being written in three keys simultaneously, one for each instrument (three sharps for the flute, four flats for the oboe, and neither sharps nor flats for the viola). There are only two

movements: the fragile, flowing first movement presents three diatonic tunes in the three different keys and develops them in exquisite counterpoint, like fine-drawn calligraphy. The second movement is a typically Holstian *scherzo* with a skipping motion and prominent melodic use of fourths. In the centre of the movement this becomes an ambling *meno mosso*, with touches of *fugato*; Holst later used a slowed-down version of this music in the slow movement of his Double Concerto for two Violins and Orchestra. The *scherzo* music returns and drives to a punctual close.

Michael Berkeley's *Three Moods* was written for Janet Craxton and first performed by her in 1978 in Knighton on the Welsh Borders. The first of these pieces starts in thoughtful, meditative style but builds to a fairly virtuosic mid-section built on rapid inflected scales. The short, lyrical second piece brings a hint of English folksong to its melodic writing. The third piece lives up to its *Giocoso* marking, being a capering, *scherzo*-like invention making plenty of use of lively rhythms and clutches of repeated notes, though there is a brief look back to the more soulful mood of the first piece before the teasing ending.

Ralph Vaughan Williams originally composed his *Six Studies in English Folksong* in 1926 for cello and piano, dedicating them to May Mukle, who gave the first performance. They were later arranged for a range of other instruments, including oboe – in Robert Stanton's version for cor anglais rather than the composer's original cello. The 'studies' are all short movements, the first five of them slowish, with an invigorating *finale* to finish off. They go considerably beyond mere harmonization of a folk original, however. The pieces are not exact transcriptions of identifiable English folksongs, but each presents a strophic melody with a likeness to a particular type of folksong. Nevertheless, the origins of each study have been traced to specific tunes, namely: (1) *Lovely on the Water (The Springtime of the Year)*; (2) *Spurn Point*; (3) *Van Diemen's Land*; (4) *She Borrowed*

*Some of her Mother's Gold*; (5) *The Lady and the Dragoon*; (6) *As I Walked Over London Bridge*. No great virtuosic demands are made on the soloist, who must nevertheless play with insight and a touch of self-effacement, allowing the poignant songs to reveal their own considerable beauties.

Malcolm MacDonald

Produced & Engineered by Richard Sutcliffe  
Edited by Richard Sutcliffe

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**James Turnbull** is an accomplished oboist highly sought after for solo and chamber music concerts. *Gramophone Magazine* described his first recital disc *Fierce Tears*, as “a notable debut” and *Classical Music Magazine* selected it as their Editor’s Choice Recording. As a featured artist of the Concert Promoters Network and the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, James has performed frequently throughout the UK and Europe. He has appeared as a soloist in live radio broadcasts and at festivals including the Oxford Chamber Music Festival, Swaledale, King’s Lynn and Cambridge Summer Music. In 2010, he performed his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall as a Maisie Lewis award winner from the Worshipful Company of Musicians.



James was seven when he began his oboe studies, learning with Irene Pragnell, Melanie Ragge, Celia Nicklin, Tess Miller and Chris Cowie. After gaining a First Class degree in music from Christ Church, Oxford University, James continued his oboe studies at the Royal Academy of Music and under Nicholas Daniel at Trossingen Musikhochschule in Germany, where he was awarded First Class for both his Artist and Soloist diplomas.

James is deeply committed to expanding the oboe repertoire. Composers including Patrick Hawes, Thomas Hewitt Jones and Norbert Froehlich have written for him. He has also worked closely with Michael Berkeley, John Casken, John Woolrich, Thea Musgrave and Tansy Davies on their compositions for oboe. James has a keen

interest in researching lost repertoire and bringing to new audiences works which have been rarely performed.

Aside from his performing interests, James is dedicated to broadening the appeal of the oboe and encouraging young people to learn the instrument. To this end, he has launched a project called ‘The Young Person’s Guide to the Oboe’ with an accompanying website [LearnToPlayTheOboe.com](http://LearnToPlayTheOboe.com). James is frequently invited to give masterclasses, workshops, and lectures about the oboe.

James plays a Lorée Royal Oboe and Cor Anglais. For more information about James and his playing, visit [www.james-turnbull.com](http://www.james-turnbull.com).

**Libby Burgess** is a pianist dedicated to the fields of song and chamber music, working with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation. She enjoys a diverse recital schedule, ranging from the Wigmore Hall and St John’s Smith Square to the Aldeburgh, Buxton and Oxford Lieder festivals; from music societies around the country to broadcasts on Radio 3. A committed chamber musician, Libby relishes partnerships with a range of string and woodwind players, collaborates regularly with the Berkeley Ensemble, and has performed in the Sacconi Quartet’s festival. She is artistic director of the Music at St Peter’s recital series in Sussex, has launched the ensemble ‘Constellation’, dedicated to the combined programming possibilities of song and chamber music, and is on the keyboard staff at Eton College.



Born in Sussex, Libby read music at Oxford, where she was the first female organ scholar at Christ Church Cathedral. She continued her studies with a

postgraduate scholarship in piano accompaniment at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded numerous accompanist prizes and graduated with the DipRAM for an outstandingly high final recital mark. She was part of the first-prize duo of the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition 2009, and is an alumnus of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme and of Graham Johnson's Young Songmakers' Almanac, as well as being a Samling Scholar.

**Matthew Featherstone's** early studies began in France, where he was taught by Arlette Biget, gaining his 'premier prix' for flute at the Conservatoire d'Orléans.



Returning to England, he pursued his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama on the undergraduate and postgraduate course with Philippa Davies, Sarah Newbold and Ian Clarke, where he was a fellow the following year. During his studies he was awarded a Worshipful Company of Musicians Busenhardt-Morgan-Evans award as well as awards from the MBF, the Countess of Munster Trust, and the Martin Musical Scholarship Fund.

Since being appointed Principal Flute of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Matthew has also appeared as guest principal flute with the Ulster Orchestra, and Britten Sinfonia.

As a solo recitalist who was awarded the Royal Overseas League Wind Prize, Matthew has enjoyed travelling round the UK to perform recitals with pianist Philip Shannon on the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, as well as performing at St John's Smith Square and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. He performed Fernyhough's *Cassandra's Dream Song* for solo flute at the Barbican as broadcasted on Radio 3.

Matthew is a keen chamber musician regularly performing with the Aelius flute and harp duo, and Trio Anima (flute, harp and viola), who were glad to receive the Elias Fawcett Award for Outstanding Chamber Ensemble in the 2012 Royal Overseas League Competition.

Matthew has also taken part in collaborations with dancers, actors, and artists, as an improviser, and enjoys working with up and coming composers on new works.

**Dan Shilladay** read music at the University of Birmingham before completing a masters degree in contemporary music studies at the University of York. Following a further year of study at the Royal College of Music with Susie Mészáros and Annette Isserlis, he is now a London-based freelance musician and works with, among others, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the English Chamber Orchestra and the English Baroque Soloists, with whom he has performed at the BBC Proms.

As a member of the 2008 Southbank Sinfonia, he participated in critically acclaimed productions of Tom Adès' *Powder Her Face* at the Royal Opera House and Tom Stoppard and André Previn's *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* at the National Theatre. Alongside period instrument performance, he is especially interested in contemporary music, and has played in the York and Cheltenham festivals.

A keen chamber musician, Dan is a founder member of the Berkeley Ensemble, a flexible group of winds and strings specialising in twentieth- and twenty-first-century British music. Formed in 2008, the ensemble now enjoys a busy concert schedule, performing in the UK and abroad.



Photo: Nigel Luckhurst