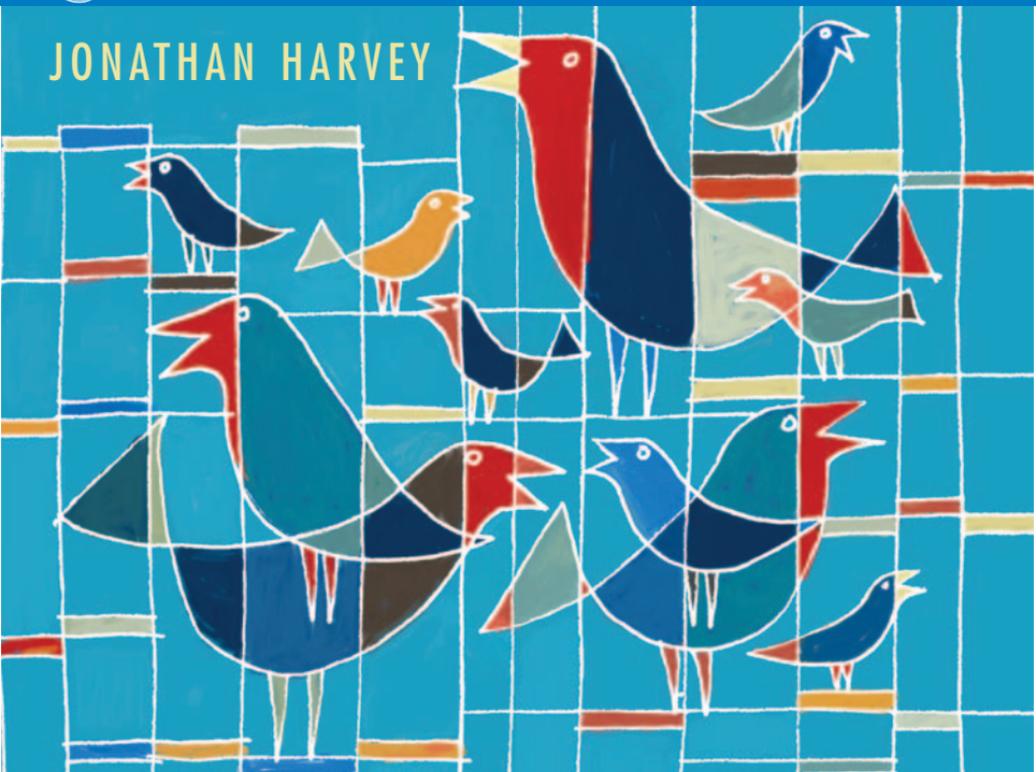


JONATHAN HARVEY



BIRD CONCERTO WITH PIANOSONG
RICERCARE UNA MELODIA • OTHER PRESENCES
HIDÉKI NAGANO *PIANO* • LONDON SINFONIETTA • DAVID AHERTON *CONDUCTOR*



Photo: Maurice Foxall

JONATHAN HARVEY

1 Bird Concerto with Pianosong 30'37

Hidéki Nagano *piano*
David Atherton *conductor*
London Sinfonietta
Recorded live at the Warsaw Autumn Festival 2009
by Polskie Radio

2 Ricercare una melodia 5'24

Gareth Hulse *oboe*
Sound Intermedia *live electronics*
Recorded live by BBC Radio 3

3 Other Presences 11'06

Paul Archibald *trumpet*
Sound Intermedia *live electronics*
Recorded live by BBC Radio 3

4 Ricercare una melodia 6'49

Tim Gill *cello*
Sound Intermedia *live electronics*
Recorded live by BBC Radio 3

Total timing 54'05

JONATHAN HARVEY: ECHOES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

by Arnold Whittall

Writing of his *Ashes Dance Back* (1997) for choir and electronics, Jonathan Harvey observes that in performance 'the hall was flooded with nature's power, as the choir dissolved and changed, humans audibly turning into the elements' – of wind, fire and water. Elsewhere Harvey has spoken of his affinity with French spectralism – found particularly in works by Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail – as promoting 'a great leap forward towards finding a new grammar based on nature'. *Bird Concerto with Pianosong*, composed in 2001 and revised two years later, was probably Harvey's most ambitious exercise in the exploration of that new grammar before *Speakings* (2007-8), his remarkably rich composition for large orchestra and electronics, which might be said to do for verbally-articulate humans what the concerto does for singing, wordless birds.

The 'new grammar based on nature' is also a celebration of nature's awesome transformative power: or, as Harvey expressed it in his own note on the piece, 'real' birdsong was to be stretched seamlessly all the way to human proportions – resulting in giant birds – so that a contact between worlds is made'. And even if all compositions involving birdsong are more-or-less explicit homages to music's most dedicated and resourceful ornithologist, Olivier

Messiaen, Harvey's concerto, written a decade after Messiaen's death, is a celebration of the kind of technical advances in electro-acoustics which the creator of *Oiseaux exotiques* and the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* was never able to explore.

The opening of *Bird Concerto with Pianosong* immediately establishes its post-Messiaen credentials. We hear real birds; Harvey explains that 'indigo bunting, orchard oriole, golden crowned sparrow ... are some of the forty colourful Californian birds whose songs and cries sparked the ignition of this work', as he began its composition in the 'brilliant light' of their native American state, and set about finding innovative ways of integrating and transforming those Californian songs and cries to create a mesmerically evocative dialogue between nature and art. Responding to a commission from pianist Joanna MacGregor, Harvey set his soloist the challenge of combining piano playing with the generation of birdsong recordings from a sampler/synthesizer, 'placed above the piano keyboard where the music stand normally is. The music stand can go on top of the synthesizer'. In addition, 'a sustain pedal for the synthesizer must be positioned and taped down to the left of the piano pedals, and the left foot will be almost constantly poised to use it.'

Harvey's extensive practical experience with the realisation of live electronics in real-time performance, often in conjunction with the technical specialists of Paris's IRCAM studios, is evident in such painstaking details from the score. But all trace of technical trial and error disappears in the interactive exuberance and eloquence of the musical result. With the aid of sound diffusionists at a mixing desk, the double-functioning soloist and supporting ensemble of 17 players (with accordion and metal percussion particularly prominent) embark on a half-hour 'flight' through musical space and time.

The concerto begins with processes of gradually intensifying energy, and moves by way of a more contemplative phase to renewed activity, reaching a cadenza and a climax, after which a magical winding-down suggests the world of nature finding degrees of repose which are all the more satisfying for having so little of traditional closural rhetoric about them. The overriding aesthetic quality of the piece throughout is that of 'playing with song': the basic contrast between organisms which sing and instruments which can (only) play fuels a transformational drama, and along the way Harvey touches in a multiplicity of allusions to archetypal musical genres which involve such highly diverse associations as folk-like melodic simplicity and darkly expressionistic harmonic density. As in many Harvey scores, even those without an overtly Buddhist theme, song-like lyricism is balanced against dance-like exuberance, and the large-scale form

includes enough explicit repetition and clarity of articulation to avoid 'information overload' and to enable even first-time listeners to stay on board.

Ricercare una melodia (1984) was one of Harvey's earliest explorations of the interactive potential of real-time performance with some kind of electronic equipment. Having worked since the mid-1970s with the combination of live instruments and pre-recorded tape, a phase culminating in *Bhakti* (1982, recorded on NMC D001), he had the opportunity to write a short piece for the trumpet player Jonathan Impett in which the live instrument could be heard in five-part counterpoint with its own recorded sounds by way of a quadraphonic tape-delay system, supervised by a sound-projectionist. As Harvey points out, while 'Ricerca' (as with Bach) denotes a fugue-like texture in relatively strict counterpoint, the word also means 'to search for', and his short piece charts the quest for a fully-formed melody, moving from rather improvisatory, fractured opening gestures to something more sustained and continuous.

From the beginning, however, the single line proliferates. What initially sounds like a canon at the unison for five trumpets (or oboes, or cellos, in the versions included on this disc), with each 'voice' entering at a distance of two and a half seconds, changes as the music evolves and the playback speed of the recorded echoes is reduced by half, leading to the aura of deep, slow-

moving pitches that hauntingly underpin the live soloist in the piece's final stages. The original technical set-up required the use of two tape recorders, and this technology was still envisaged when Harvey made a version of the piece for oboe in 1987, though its effects can now be simulated by more modern electronic processes. Another seventeen years further on, in 2004, Frances-Marie Uitti adapted the composition for cello and a CD projected by a MAC computer and four speakers. However, the basic material subjected to canonic treatment – eventually, as Harvey notes, 'by progressive augmentation and at the interval of the octave' – is the same in all versions: in addition, particular instrumental effects, like intensifying the amount of vibrato or eliminating it altogether, can apply to wind and stringed instruments alike. In *Ricercare una melodia* initial recitative-like phrases give way to rushing chromatic scales that (in alternation with a repeated-note figure) increasingly favour the spanning interval of the octave. More connected, more forceful melodic writing then moves the music into its decisive final phase, with rhetorical assertions, marked 'impetuous', enabling the live player to assert a considerable degree of pre-eminence over the other, recorded lines.

The intimate relation of the visible, active voice to the invisible, spatially-echoing recorded voices is no less fundamental to *Other Presences*, written for trumpeter Markus Stockhausen to perform at the Cheltenham Festival in 2006. This time, however, the polarity

between the instrumentalist on the platform and the sound-projectionist in the hall is abandoned: the solo player also operates the 'multi-track loop buffer system', including a harmoniser controlled from a keyboard, and sets in motion the playback process in which 26 separate extracts from the score, recorded in real time during the performance, are projected back in loops and superimposed in different groups channelled through four speakers. As with *Ricercare una melodia* the solo instrument's monodic utterance evolves slowly, with initially narrow intervallic spans and ornamental flourishes that can break out into more assertive gestures. The sound quality is varied by different articulations and use of mutes, and allows for a degree of improvisatory input from the live performer: as Harvey explains, this music tries out some of the 'wild sounds' from Tibetan purification rituals that feature in his orchestral composition *Body Mandala* (also 2006, recorded on NMC D141).

In the centre of the structure this assertiveness and agitation – with sweeping ascending glissandos – creates a climax of intense excitement. A quieter, more contemplative interlude follows, countered in turn by a dramatic change of mood with a short, boldly-shaped episode for piccolo trumpet. Then, with the return of the 'normal' trumpet, *Other Presences* enters its final phase. Forceful, repeated-note statements are set in the resonant aura established by the electronic harmoniser, but gradually give way to a song-like line associated with the piece's earlier melodic

material. This creates a sense of flexible symmetry, as well as reinforcing the special quality of music in which the very definite presence and personality of the live soloist on stage interacts with the much more mysterious aura of those alternative, electronic sonic presences which derive from the soloist's material yet at the same time seem strangely distinct from it.

Even though *Other Presences* does not use electronics to radically expand the pitch registers involved above or below the live instrument's natural range, as happens in *Ricerca una melodia*, the image of 'seamless stretching' evoked by Harvey for his treatment of birdsong in the Concerto can stand as a much more general, and highly productive, representation of the technical processes and aesthetic objectives that his recent compositions have explored with unfailing imagination and resourcefulness. Any suspicion that such technically intricate music must inevitably convey an essentially mechanical spirit is rapidly dispelled by the sheer spontaneity of the distinctive expressive world that Harvey creates.

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The composer would like to thank Juan Pampin and Sound Intermedia for help in aspects of the electronic programming, and Bill Schotstaedt for digitising the birdsong.

Jonathan Harvey

Born in Warwickshire in 1939, Jonathan Harvey was a chorister at St Michael's College, Tenbury and later a music scholar at St John's College, Cambridge. He gained doctorates from the Universities of Glasgow and Cambridge and, on the advice of Benjamin Britten, also studied privately with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller. He was a Harkness Fellow at Princeton in 1969–70.

An invitation from Boulez to work at IRCAM in the early 1980s resulted in eight realisations at the Institute, and two for the Ensemble Intercontemporain: these include the celebrated tape piece *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* (1980), *Bhakti* for ensemble and electronics (1982, issued on NMC's first release NMC D001), and String Quartet No.4, with live electronics. Harvey has composed in many other genres: orchestral works include *Tranquil Abiding* (1998), *White as Jasmine* (1999) and *Madonna of Winter and Spring* (1986), while his chamber compositions number four string quartets, *Soleil Noir/Chitra*, and *Death of Light, Light of Death*, as well as works for solo instruments. His church opera *Passion and Resurrection* (1981) was the subject of a BBC television film, while *Inquest of Love* (1993) was commissioned by ENO; his third opera, *Wagner Dream*, commissioned by Nederlandse Opera and realized at IRCAM, was premiered to great acclaim in

2007. Harvey's residency with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (2005-8) has produced a series of major orchestral works, including *Speakings*, *Body Mandala* and *...Towards a pure land* – the latter two featured on a *Gramophone* Award-winning NMC disc (NMC D141).

Harvey is in constant demand from a host of international organisations, and his music is extensively played and toured by major ensembles – London Sinfonietta, musikFabrik, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, ASKO, Nieuw Ensemble and Ictus, to name but a few. His standing in the international musical community was celebrated in 2009-10 with many dedicated concerts, new recordings, festival focuses and composer portraits. He has received several awards for his music, including the Prince Pierre of Monaco Prize in Musical Composition for *Speakings*; with the Charles Cros Grand Prix du Président for a lifetime's work, he became the first British composer to receive this honour since its inception in 1970.

Harvey was Professor of Music at Sussex University from 1977-93, and is now an Honorary Professor there. He was Professor of Music at Stanford University between 1995 and 2000, is an Honorary Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge and was a Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study in Berlin in 2009. He has been awarded honorary doctorates from the Universities

of Southampton, Sussex, Bristol, Birmingham and Huddersfield, is a Member of Academia Europaea, and in 1993 was awarded the prestigious Britten Award for composition. In 2007 he was awarded the Giga-Hertz Prize for a lifetime's work in electronic music. In 1999 he published two books, on inspiration and spirituality respectively.

London Sinfonietta

The London Sinfonietta is one of the world's leading contemporary music ensembles with a reputation built on the virtuosity of its performances and its ambitious programming. It is committed to placing new music at the heart of contemporary culture and continually pushing boundaries, regularly undertaking projects with choreographers, video artists, film-makers, electronica artists, jazz and folk musicians.

The ensemble is Resident Orchestra at Southbank Centre with its headquarters at Kings Place, and it continues to take the best contemporary music to venues and festivals throughout the UK and worldwide.

Famed for its commitment to the creation of new music, the London Sinfonietta has commissioned over 250 works since its foundation in 1968, and premiered many hundreds more. Its pioneering participation work includes the innovative Blue Touch Paper programme, which enables emerging composers and collaborators to

develop new work, and the newly launched Writing the Future scheme supports composers in the development of work on a one-to-one level with the London Sinfonietta players.

Extending its support of emerging talent, the London Sinfonietta launched the annual London Sinfonietta Academy in 2009, giving young instrumentalists from across UK the unparalleled opportunity to train and perform with some of the finest contemporary musicians in the world.

London Sinfonietta performs with the generous support of Arts Council England and the PRS for Music Foundation, and is grateful for the vision and investment of many other individuals, trusts and foundations, all of whom make their work possible.

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Hidéki Nagano *piano*

Hidéki Nagano studied at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and the Paris Conservatoire, where he was awarded the Premier Prix for piano and vocal accompaniment. He also won fifth prize in the Montreal International Competition as well as the Samson François Special Prize in the first International Competition for Twentieth Century Piano Music in Orléans. In 1995, he was chosen as the pianist for Pierre

Photo: J. Radel



Boulez's world renowned Ensemble Intercontemporain.

His solo recordings include a recital of twentieth-century French music on Fontec, George Antheil's piano works on Agon, and Prokofiev, Messiaen, Murail and Ravel for Denon. Nagano has performed virtuoso repertoire from classical to contemporary music, and has been awarded many prizes for his outstanding achievement. He currently resides in Paris.

David Atherton *conductor*

David Atherton studied music at Cambridge University where his operatic conducting aroused much interest. After becoming the youngest conductor ever to appear at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, he

spent twelve years there as Resident Conductor. He has also often appeared with the English National Opera, Glyndebourne and Canadian Opera, and has a particularly close relationship with the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

He co-founded the London Sinfonietta and gave the premieres of many important contemporary works. His recordings have gained an Edison Award, many Grammy Award nominations, the sought-after Grand Prix du Disque, the Serge Koussevitsky Critics' Award and the Prix Caecilia. His recording of Tippett's opera *King Priam* won the coveted International Record Critics' Award.

From 1980-87 he was Music Director of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra and he returns to California each summer to direct the Mainly Mozart Festival, which he founded in 1989. He has also held titled positions with the BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. In 2000, after eleven years as Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, he was awarded the OBE and made the orchestra's Conductor Laureate.

Paul Archibald *trumpet*

Paul's principal positions have included the London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of St John's, Britten Sinfonia, London Mozart

Players and Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. He now performs chamber music with Trio D'Art, Carnyx Brass, and Fibonacci Sequence, recitals with pianist Helen Reid, and with particular focus on his group, English Brass and its associated English Brass Academy. Paul maintains a great interest in folk music and is a member of Brass Monkey and the rock-folk band Home Service. He is a prize winner of the Toulon Prix de Concours.

He is Artistic Director of Brass Classics, his own recording label, and his discography includes *Joie de Vivre*, *Divertissement*, *Proclamation*, *Hodie Gloriosa*, Peter Maxwell Davies' Trumpet Sonata. His recording of the Shostakovich Concerto No 1 for Piano, Trumpet and Strings with Alain Lefèvre (piano) and the London Mozart Players was awarded Canada's prestigious JUNO award for best Classical Album in 2010. In 2003 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

Tim Gill *cello*

Tim Gill began to play the cello at the age of eight, subsequently studying with Dimitry Markevitch in Paris, Christopher Bunting at Cambridge and David Strang at the Royal Academy. In 1989-90 Tim was resident artist at the Banff Centre, Canada, where, as a result of winning the Banff concerto competition, he was invited to play Elgar's Cello Concerto with the Calgary Philharmonic.

His Purcell Room debut in 1990 resulted in an invitation from the Park Lane Group to give the Prialux Rainier recital the following year. Tim has since given recitals and played concertos throughout the UK, Europe and India, and is much in demand as a soloist and chamber musician. In 1996 he gave his Wigmore Hall debut and released two CDs on the Guild label with pianist Fali Pavri.

Tim is currently principal cellist with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta.

Gareth Hulse *oboe*

Gareth Hulse read music at Cambridge University, and continued his studies on the oboe with Janet Craxton and Heinz Holliger. He was subsequently appointed principal oboe with the Northern Sinfonia, a position he has since also held with English National Opera and the London Philharmonic.

Gareth now pursues his interest in contemporary music as principal oboe with the London Sinfonietta, and in chamber music with London Winds and the Nash Ensemble, with whom he has toured widely and recorded extensively for Sony, Decca and Hyperion. Gareth has given many concerto performances, in music ranging from Bach and Vivaldi to Berio and Lutoslawski, and is a frequent broadcaster on radio and television. He teaches at the Royal College of Music.

Bird Concerto with Pianosong was recorded at the Warsaw Autumn Festival on 19 September 2009, by Polskie Radio.

Sound Projection **EWA GUZIOLEK-TUBELEWICZ**
Editors **JONATHAN HARVEY**
IAN DEARDEN
for Sound Intermedia

Other Presences and *Ricercare una melodia* for oboe and for cello were recorded in Hall One, Kings Place on 3 October 2009, by BBC Radio 3.

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Cover image & graphic design **FRANCOIS HALL**

Jonathan Harvey's music is published by Faber Music.

NMC Recordings is a charitable company (reg. no. 328052) established for the recording of contemporary music by the Holst Foundation; it is grateful for funding from Arts Council England.

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Produced in association with BBC Radio 3

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Catalogue number: NMC D177

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