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ECHOES OF ARCADIA
Music for solo recorder

James Risdon - *Recorders*

ECHOES OF ARCADIA

1 Jacob Van Eyck (ca. 1590 - 1657)

Fantasia and Echo 2:24
(Amadeus-Verlag)

2-3 Georg Philipp Telemann (1681 - 1767)

Fantasia No. 7 in D Major 5:42
(Barenreiter-Verlag)
I. Largo – Allegro 4:55
II. Presto 0:47

4-7 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Partita for solo flute BWV1013 18:04
(Barenreiter-Verlag)
I. Allemande 6:10
II. Corrente 4:04
III. Sarabande 4:54
IV. Bouree Anglaise 2:56

8 Cyril Scott (1879 - 1970)

The Extatic Shepherd (1921) 6:22
(Southern Music Company)

9 Hans-Martin Linde (b. 1929)

Music for a Bird (1968) 4:14
(Schott)

10-13 Pete Rose (b. 1945)

Medieval Nights (1998) 6:34
(Carus-Verlag)
1. Rough Session at the Round Table 1:41
2. Meditation 0:52
3. Dozing Off While Reading a Book 2:20
4. Wild Party 1:41

14 James Risdon (b. 1978)

Lullay and Lament (2013) 7:53
(www.jamesrisdon.co.uk)

15-17 Markus Zahnhausen (b. 1965)

Musica Inquieta (1990) 13:44
(Doblinger)
1. Sonata 5:45
2. Aria Interotta 5:29
3. Rondo 2:30

18 Annette Ziegenmeyer (b. 1976)

Na Zdrowie (2004) 2:34
(Moeck-Verlag)

19 Louis Andriessen (b. 1939)

Ende (1981) 1:52
(Ascolta Music Publishing)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 69:23

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Foreword

The sound of the lone recorder is, in my opinion, one of the most hauntingly beautiful and evocative in music, ranging from the tender and fragile to the brash and bravura. Its simplicity, far from representing musical limitations, affords technical and sonic possibilities, unparalleled on other wind instruments.

That the recorder has a thriving contemporary body of repertoire which is attracting ever more new players and composers to the instrument is a fact that would have been unimaginable a century ago. Apart from small pockets of activity, the recorder had lain largely dormant since the mid 18th century. Its renaissance during the 20th century has been in great part due to the enthusiasm of music historians and pioneers such as Arnold Dolmetsch, who were eager to recreate not only the music, but also the instruments on which it might have been played.

A burgeoning group of professional recorder players soon took playing standards to new and greater heights. Composers were in turn inspired to explore and exploit the recorder's musical potential. This they did in music of often thrilling virtuosity, occasionally captivating theatre and, even if more rarely, great expressivity.

My intention from the outset of this recording project was to plot an uninterrupted pathway through the recorder's unique musical history, seeking thematic and musical connections between contemporary works and their antecedents. The journey leads from the pleasure garden to the mountain valley, the salon to the concert hall, from the hot and humid jungle to ice-cold minimalism, ethereal to electronica. The result is a portrait in sound of this most simple yet versatile of instruments, heard through some of the most enduring repertoire it has inspired.

In studying the works with renewed focus, I have experienced a blurring of the boundaries between what is "historic" and what is "contemporary" and all that this implies. Our vantage point over musical history does not

always allow us to hear music of the 16th or 17th centuries (or even earlier) as new, innovative and daring. I have picked three pieces from the Baroque period which I believe are all of these.

Of the remaining works from the 20th and 21st centuries, some draw on traditional musical forms (the solo sonata) or even specific pieces (an Italian Estampi and the Coventry Carol), while others recall the recorder's pastoral associations (shepherds and birdsong). Echoes, both acoustic and electronic, frame the programme.

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London, September 2014

Notes

Jacob Van Eyck was a renowned carillonneur and bell maker in Utrecht. He was also employed to entertain visitors at the Janskerk by playing on his little flute. He would play popular folksongs and psalms of the day from all over Europe and embellish them with his own divisions and variations. As he was blind from birth, these were notated by a scribe and were eventually published in 1649 as “Der Fluyten Lusthoff” or “The Flutes Pleasure Garden”. This remarkable collection contains nearly 150 such sets of variations which serve both as testament to Van Eyck’s technical facility on the recorder and his invention as an improviser. It remains the largest collection of music ever written for a solo wind instrument. The Fantasia and Echo is particularly interesting as the only piece in the collection to make explicit use of “Forte” and “Piano” markings to create an echo effect. Perhaps this was inspired by the particular acoustic conditions of the Utrecht Cathedral courtyard.

The echo is given a more literal expression at the conclusion of this programme by Annette Ziegenmeyer. Her collection of pieces entitled “The Delay Flute” explore the use of electronically-produced delays with some striking results. Na Zdrowie (Polish for “Cheers”) has a distinctly Eastern European flavour, effervescent and joyous with a “tango-feeling”.

The three works intended originally for the flute (by Telemann, J.S. Bach and Cyril Scott) are included as a reminder that the end-blown recorder and side-blown flute share much of their musical DNA and history.

Georg Philipp Telemann was one of the most resourceful and inventive composers of his time. His twelve fantasias for solo flute were published in around 1728 and were the first of their kind for the instrument. This fantasia marks the beginning of the second half of the collection and is cast ambitiously as a French overture – a suitably grand way to open the programme. Telemann might easily have scored the work for lavish forces including timpani, brass, woodwind and strings, yet he skilfully implies all the harmony, texture and colour (not to mention imitation fugue entries in the Allegro) through a single melodic line. The final rustic folk dance might be imagined played on a hurdy gurdy or musette. The collection as a whole constitutes one of the most important contributions to the repertoire of the solo flute, and, by extension, to that of the recorder.

Separated by over 250 years are the two substantial works by J.S. Bach and Markus Zahnhausen. Both draw on established musical forms to produce works that are pioneering for their time.

J.S. Bach's Partita for solo flute took the instrument, and the French-style suite of dance movements, to new levels of musical expression and it remains one of the defining works for the instrument. That Bach achieved this emancipation for the flute as well as the cello, violin and harpsichord through the medium of the solo suite or partita is one of the great accomplishments of musical history, and one of which the recorder is a fortunate beneficiary. In many ways, the partita for solo flute is the most remarkable of all. The flute offered no means of producing counterpoint or harmony, other than through a so-called implied second voice. In terms of scale, virtuosity or concentration, there was no precedent for any music of this kind. Where Telemann consciously aimed his music largely at the increasing amateur market, Bach was concerned, first and foremost, with the pursuit of the ultimate musical expression, with little regard for the technical challenges this might impose on his musicians. His style, unlike his contemporaries, was to leave little to the performer. In this way too, he might be thought of as decades ahead of his time.

The partita opens as if already in the middle of a long narrative. The almost unbroken stream of semi-quavers of the Allemande ebb and flow through constant cycles of tension and release. The courante is characterised by the contrast of scalic passages and large jumps, reminiscent of a violinist or cellist bouncing from one string to another. The sarabande has a serene quality with long, meandering phrases. The partita closes with a playful English dance.

Markus Zahnhausen is a renowned player, composer, teacher and broadcaster based in Munich. He has written extensively for solo recorder, including an epic cycle of the Four Seasons.

Musica Inquieta takes the form of a substantial sonata for solo recorder. In his preface to the work, Markus Zahnhausen writes that it “constitutes an attempt ... to write expressive recorder music using traditional, not avant-garde, musical means.” Such is the reliance of many contemporary composers on the use of “special effects”, that Zahnhausen’s approach and expressivity may be seen as innovative rather than conservative.

The opening fanfare-like introduction is bold and commands attention. This leads into a passionate and agitated Allegro. Perhaps the almost two-part texture is a respectful nod back to Telemann's fantasias. The contrasted musical subjects, and the form of the movement over all, are only slightly modified ingredients of Sonata-form developed by Haydn and Mozart two centuries before. On its return, the main theme quickly decays into a fading, minimalist coda. The Aria Interrotta has a gentle

rocking motion lending it the air of a slightly sinister cradle song. This is interrupted by several contrasting interludes serving as short dream-like episodes, including a brief reminiscence. The final interruption of the aria is the shortest and most shocking as the imagined protagonist reaches a dramatic breaking point at the very top of the instrument. The remnants of the aria fade away where it started on a low trill. Out of these dying whispers emerges the most virtuosic and exuberant rondo. A final calm cannot suppress the raw energy and the work bounds to an abrupt and triumphant close.

Cyril Scott's *Extatic Shepherd* was written in 1921, just a few years after Debussy had written his celebrated *Syrinx*. The two pieces are similar in atmosphere and tonality and were both dedicated to Louis Fleury. There are moments of mystery, awe and wonder as well as calm and tranquillity. It is unlikely that Scott had yet encountered the recorder (though he later did) so the fact that its range fits exactly that of the tenor recorder must be attributed to the good nature of the goddess Pan. As a young man Cyril Scott studied in Frankfurt while in Britain his music was championed by Thomas Beecham and Henry Wood. He was a prolific composer and writer. His expertise extended to osteopathy and homeopathy, poetry and humour while later in life he was led to study Indian philosophy and occultism. Scott's instruction is for the piece "to be played off stage with the door ajar." My thanks to Desmond Scott for his blessing to include this piece, which was originally for solo flute.

Music for a Bird draws on the recorder's well-established avian associations. But rather than music inspired by, or even to inspire, birdsong, this is music which depicts the many exotic sounds of the forest and jungle. The eagle-eared listener may pick out many unusual creatures. Was that a woodpecker? Rain drops falling from the branch? Behold! A pair of chromatically-integrated cuckoos...

Linde was a flautist before turning to the recorder. His numerous recordings with his own consort are amongst the finest of his generation and his compositions have become favourites among students and professionals alike.

Medieval Nights by the American Pete Rose is a quotational piece based largely on the 14th century anonymous Italian *Estampie Belicha*. The original dance tune is recast into four movements, or nights, with descriptive and humorous titles. The first night opens with percussive effects and exaggerated slides. After a brief and troubled meditation where the player sings and plays simultaneously, more of the original material is heard in alternating languid slow and rhythmic fast sections. The gradual introduction of quarter tones depicts that wonderful state

between consciousness and sleep and the movement is concluded by a rather comical yawn. The distant strains of a wild party draw near and we are soon in the midst of some raucous and rowdy medieval revelry. Rose's interest in jazz and improvisation are both evident throughout the piece, as is a gentle wit, all of which have earned him a world-wide reputation as a composer and performer.

Lullay and Lament was first conceived for a solo recital in the chapel of Westcott House, Cambridge, during Advent 2012. It was inspired by the tender lullaby "By By Lullay" which was written around 1534 as part of the music for the Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors performed by the town guilds in Coventry. It is from here that the lullaby gained the name by which it is better known today. The lullaby was sung by a mother to her young child, gripped by the terror of King Herod's murderous decree. Although not strictly programmatic, elements of the story might be discerned in the four episodes or "moods" on this most simple yet moving lullaby.

The innocence of the simple melody is first interrupted and fragmented, before being distorted through irregular and uneven metres in a frenetic dance and flight. Eventually all that is left is the distant strains and echoes of the lullaby, fragile and incomplete. Framing each of these is the pipe of an imagined shepherd, echoing across the valley in a tone of lament. The improvised character of the variations is a small homage to the 17th century recorder player Jacob Van Eyck, while the pipe calls are influenced by the sounds of the Fijara flutes of Eastern Europe.

Ende was written, appropriately enough, as an encore for the incomparable Frans Bruggen in 1981. It takes the recorder's limited range to the extreme using only those notes which can be obtained with one hand thus allowing two instruments to be played simultaneously. In fact, Andriessen restricts himself to just five notes, fewer than half those theoretically available to him.

The whole piece, save the final line, is built on a series of oscillating and ever-changing patterns using just three notes played one step apart. For nearly two minutes, this musical deadlock plays out with subtle ebb and flow, tension and release, in a battle of nerves between recorder and recorder, performer and audience. The effect is excruciating yet oddly captivating. The exaggerated musical gestures within this confined space and the element of surprise along the way add to an almost unbearable tension, only partly countered by the incongruously humorous markers along the way, such as "Like a stupid waltz" and "aggressive little waltz". The unison passage at the end, far from offering relief, ends in a scream.

And yet, with this most daring and “modern” work, I am reminded of a curious footnote in the recorder’s history, namely the echo flute, tantalisingly referred to by no less a figure than J.S. Bach in his 4th Brandenburg Concerto. This was effectively a pair of recorders bound at head and foot, and voiced differently to give a slight imbalance of timbres and volumes. Coincidentally, Andriessen asks for the upper recorder to be a little louder than the lower. And then what about the Aulos on which Marsyas challenged Apollo in Greek mythology. Was this not also a form of double pipe? It is certainly tempting to hear a little of his desperation to impress the Muses as Ende reaches its final frenzy. It seems that the recorder’s contemporary voice has not drowned out the echoes of Arcadia

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About the Performer

James grew up in Devon taking up the recorder aged seven and the clarinet two years later. He studied with Nancy Daly, Alan Davis and latterly Rebecca Miles, gaining his LRSM diploma with distinction. He has performed in master classes with Piers Adams, Dan Laurin and Pamela Thorby. His studies have been supported by the Walter Bergmann Memorial Fund and the Elizabeth Eagle-Bott Memorial Fund. In 2011 he was runner-up in the international competition for blind musicians held at the Jan Dale Conservatoire in Prague.

He has given performances of concertos by Telemann, Vivaldi and J.S. Bach with the Prague Chamber Orchestra, London Musici alongside Piers Adams and Devon Baroque under its founding director Margaret Faultless. Solo performances have taken him to, among others, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Regent Hall and The Handel House Museum in London; The Great Hall, Dartington; the Treasury Music Society; King's Lynn Minster; Anglesea Abbey; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester and Eton Hall, Chester. More unusual engagements have included an eco centre, numerous barns, the Tin Hut in Huntly, a pod on the London Eye and a performance for the Japanese government in Sopor.

James is a member of the Paraorchestra under its founder Charles Hazlewood with whom he has performed at the TED conference in Brussels; the Queen Elizabeth Hall and at the closing ceremony of the 2012 Paralympic games in London with Coldplay.

Since 2008, James has been the Music Officer at the RNIB supporting blind and partially sighted musicians. This varied work has seen him lead workshops at the Handel House Museum; feature on Radio 3 for a celebration of Louis Braille's bicentenary; perform with members of the RPO at the London Aquarium and appear as a frog at the Wigmore Hall. He maintains a small amount of private teaching and has written occasional articles and reviews.

In a former life, James was a seven time national goalball champion and represented Great Britain at the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta.
www.jamesrisdon.co.uk

Credits

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January, 22nd and 23rd April 2014.

Instruments used in this recording

'Transitional' soprano recorder after Kynsecker by Stephan Blezinger (1)
Voice flute (tenor recorder in D) after Stanesby by Heinz Ammann (2-7)
Tenor recorder by Yamaha (8 & 10-13)
Treble recorder by Michael Dawson (9, 15-17 & 19)
Alto recorder after Genassi by Carl Hanson (14)
Treble recorder by Musima (19)
fourth flute (descant recorder in B flat) by Kung (18)

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Emily and Brian Nisbet for their hospitality and encouragement.

Mum and dad for leading the horse to water.

And last, but not least, my wife, Caroline for her love and support and for being immune to the less melodious parts of my preparation.

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Music for solo recorder

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Fantasia and Echo
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Fantasia No. 7 in D Major
- 4-7 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)**
Partita for solo flute
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The Extatic Shepherd
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Music for a Bird
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