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CLASSICS

Around Britten

Matthew Barley

Britten Bryars Tavener



AROUND BRITTEN

MATTHEW BARLEY

Third Suite for Cello, Op 87 (1971)

1	I	Introduzione: <i>Lento</i>	[2.10]
2	II	Marcia: <i>Allegro</i>	[1.49]
3	III	Canto: <i>Con moto</i>	[1.19]
4	IV	Barcarola: <i>Lento</i>	[1.33]
5	V	Dialogo: <i>Allegretto</i>	[1.42]
6	VI	Fuga: <i>Andante espressivo</i>	[2.55]
7	VII	Recitativo: <i>Fantastico</i>	[1.07]

14 **Greensleeves** (1941)

15 **The Salley Gardens** (1941)

Tre Laude Dolce (2007)

16	I		[6.26]
17	II		[5.18]
18	III		[5.47]

19 **Since she whom I loved** (1945) Benjamin Britten arr. Barley [3.28]

20 **Threnos** (1991) John Tavener (b.1944) [7.12]

21 **Chant** (1995) John Tavener [4.25]

22 **Concord** (1953) Benjamin Britten arr. Barley [2.26]

23 **Improvisation** (2012) Matthew Barley [9.52]

24 **Oliver Cromwell** (1941) Trad, arr. Britten arr. Barley [0.49]

Total timings: [72.30]

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

8	VIII	Moto perpetuo: <i>Presto</i>	[0.57]
9	IX	Passacaglia: <i>Lento solenne</i>	[4.25]
10		<i>Mournful Song</i>	[0.33]
11		<i>Autumn</i>	[0.19]
12		<i>Street Song</i>	[0.26]
13		<i>Depart in peace, with the Saints (Kontakion)</i>	[2.42]

Trad, arr. Britten arr. Barley [2.06]

Trad, arr. Britten arr. Barley [2.33]

Gavin Bryars (b.1943)

AROUND BRITTEN

To celebrate the centenary of the greatest English composer of the twentieth century I wanted to focus on, and expand from, a very specific part of his music for cello: the last minute of his

Third Suite for Cello. This ending is Britten's rendition of the Kontakion – the Hymn for the Dead from the Russian Orthodox Church, and is peaceful, mysterious and profound. At the time of composing Britten had five years to live and other works from this time are also pre-occupied with mortality. But despite his rapidly deteriorating health, in this work at least, Britten finds a quietly radiating peace in the face of death. The Kontakion's peaceful spirit and associations with death and religion permeate this disc, and inspired my choice of other works, all by English composers.

Britten writes: “I wrote this suite in the early spring of 1971 and took it as a present to Slava Rostropovich when Peter Pears and I visited Moscow and Leningrad in April of that year. The occasion was a week of British Music, and our programme with the London Symphony Orchestra was made memorable by the fact that both Richter and Rostropovich joined us – surely a unique gesture of Anglo-Russian friendship.

As a tribute to a great Russian musician and patriot I based this suite on Russian themes: the first three tunes were taken from Tchaikovsky's volumes of folk-song arrangements; the fourth, the ‘Kontakion’ (Hymn for the departed), from the English Hymnal.”

Based on these four melodies the suite is a set of variations with the themes only heard in their complete versions at the end of the journey. One or more of them are present in every one of the nine movements. The suite begins simply, invoking the *Kontakion* (the most frequently used of the themes), and then continues on its fascinating peregrinations: the urgent *Marcia*, the winding, searching *Canto*, the Bach-like *Barcarola*, the alternately ‘grotesco’ (Britten's marking) and measured *Dialogo*, the impassioned *Fuga*, flighty *Recitativo*, and scurrying, sinuous *Moto Perpetuo* – and finally the turbulently argued *Passacaglia* comes to a close, whereupon the four themes are played in the original form, bringing peace to the end.

Five of the pieces on this disc are my arrangements for multiple cellos of Britten songs that I multi-tracked in my home studio. The first two of these are folk songs: **Greensleeves** and **The Salley Gardens**. Both of

MATTHEW BARLEY CELLO

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them show Britten's genius for adding just the right amount of something unusual to make the piece unmistakably his own, bringing out a little more mystery than you knew a piece contained to start with.

Gavin Bryars' **Tre Laude Dolce** comes with the following programme note by the composer: *"Over the last few years I have written a number of pieces for unaccompanied voice based on the texts and format of the "lauda", a large collection of which appears in a manuscript collection from 13th-century Cortona. These laude are religious (but non-liturgical) songs that were performed outside churches and in other public places. In setting these texts for voice I do not imitate the style of the original but rather the spirit and form, and also relish the challenge of writing something quite austere and self sufficient.*

Like the vocal laude these instrumental pieces are essentially solo melodic lines, though here using the string instrument's capacity to add other notes for harmonic implication or decoration."

Since she whom I loved is from *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* by Britten. It's one of

the most touching songs I know – it can bring tears to my eyes just to imagine it, and took many, many hours to record, painstakingly recording each line of the piano part one at a time – nine cello parts in all. The song is sung by a man whose lover has died young, so his thoughts turn, jealously, to heaven and God.

Sir John Tavener has famously written masterpieces for the cello, including the mighty *Protecting Veil*. Here are two pieces that both commemorate the passing of close friends of Tavener's, who writes: *"The title Threnos has both liturgical and folk significance in Greece - The Threnos of the Mother of God sung at the Epitaphios on Good Friday and the Threnos of mourning which is changed over the dead body in the house of a close friend".* In both **Threnos** and **Chant**, Tavener asked that the small grace notes be played in a non-Western manner, so with his permission I chose to play them with one finger sliding between the two notes quickly – more like Indian ornamentation.

Concord is the Second Choral Dance from Britten's opera, *Gloriana*. I find the term choral dance an interesting one – it conjures a beautiful picture with the slow movement of the chords.



Only the five songs for multiple cellos were recorded in my home studio; the recording of the rest of this CD was a special moment in my life. My maternal grandfather was Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the brilliant and controversial 'Red' Dean of Canterbury Cathedral from 1931–1963, and I attended a book launch of a new biography about him at Canterbury's Deanery in 2010. In conversation with the current dean, The Very Revd Robert Willis, I was offered the chance to record in the cathedral. Since childhood I have been powerfully drawn to this majestic and life-affirming building because of family history, so being there alone at night, making music, was one of the most exciting privileges of my life. Also on the occasion of the book launch, in conversation with Hewlett's biographer I discovered to my amazement that at his funeral in 1966 in the cathedral, the music that was played was the *Kontakion*, as also chosen by Britten a few years later to underpin his third solo suite. I doubt it was played again live in that space before the night I was there to record. The sessions were magical, with Hewlett's grave lying just yards away in the cloister – I had wondered if it might be frightening to be there alone at night, but it was anything but that; the building has an extraordinarily benign soul.

When we had finished recording I asked my producer to keep the red light on for a while as I improvised – I have included some of that improvisation here as a memory of that moment in time, around 2.30am one summer night in Canterbury Cathedral.

"Oliver Cromwell is buried and dead, hey-ho buried and dead." It's always good to smile after so much seriousness.

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MATTHEW BARLEY

Matthew Barley is internationally known as cellist, improviser, arranger, music animateur, and Artistic Director of Between The Notes. His musical world is focused on projects that connect people in different ways, blurring the boundaries that never really existed between genres and people.

As a soloist and chamber musician he has performed in over 50 countries, including appearances with the BBC Scottish (Volkov) and Philharmonic (Hazlewood), the Melbourne Symphony (Tortelier), New Zealand Symphony (Tan Dun), Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Czech Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony, Kremerata Baltica, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic,



Royal Scottish National (Alsop), and London Chamber Orchestra. He has performed at festivals in Lucerne, Schleswig-Holstein, Bonn-Beethovenfest, Hong Kong, Lanaudiere, Abu Dhabi, Krakow, City of London and in recent seasons has performed at some of the world's great concert halls: London's Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Kumho Hall in Korea, Pablo Casals Hall in Tokyo, The Rudolfinum In Prague, and the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. A key aspect of his recitals is mixing repertoire in unusual ways, pairing Bach suites with jazz and improvisation. He is particularly interested in music with electronics, having commissioned works from many composers including Dai Fujikura, DJ Bee, John Metcalfe and Jan Bang.

In 2005 he toured Brett Dean's ballet score *One of the Kind* (for solo-on-stage-cello and electronics) with the Netherlands Dans Theatre; in 2010 with the Basel Ballet and in 2012 with Lyon Ballet.

Collaboration – whether chamber music or with different styles of music – is an enduring passion, and, amongst others, Matthew has worked with Matthias Goerne, The Labeque Sisters, Martin Frost, Viviane Hagner, Thomas

Larcher, Kit Armstrong, Amjad Ali Khan, Julian Joseph, Django Bates, Ross Daly, Talvin Singh, Jon Lord, Sultan Khan, Kathryn Tickell and Nitin Sawhney.

In 1997 Matthew Barley founded *Between The Notes*, a performance and education group that has appeared at the Sydney Opera House, the Royal Opera House (with the Royal Ballet) and the International Symposium of Contemporary Music in Hong Kong. In 2005 the group took the lead role in a devised work, *Invisible Lines*, which culminated in a live-television performance at the Royal Albert Hall for the BBC Proms, alongside players from the BBC Symphony Orchestra. More recently BTN took centre stage for the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Köln Philharmonie as soloists with the Gürzenich Orchestra under Markus Stenz.

A major project called *The Peasant Girl* with his wife, Russian violinist Viktoria Mullova has seen over 40 performances worldwide. The programme features Matthew's arrangements of gypsy and jazz as well as Bartok and Kodaly and has been recorded for CD and DVD on Onyx Classics.

2007 saw Matthew's debut on television as the Music Director of BBC 2's widely acclaimed 'Classical Star'.

His first CD on Black Box, *The Silver Swan* was a critical success, followed by *Reminding*, a disc of Soviet music. *Constant Filter* (music for cello and electronics by John Metcalfe) is Matthew's second release for Signum Records, following the five-star success of *The Dance of the Three Legged Elephants* with jazz pianist Julian Joseph.

Future plans include performances at London's Wigmore Hall, the BeethovenHaus in Bonn and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, projects with the Kremerata Baltica, Nederlands Radio Symphony, and Sinfonia Viva and a 100-event tour of the UK to celebrate Britten's centenary. He will be guest artist at the 2013 Rio International Cello Encounter.

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I would like to thank all at Signum for dealing with my inability to keep to deadlines, Simon Kiln for wonderful editing, and Mike Hatch for his fantastic musicianship in helping to mix the multiple cello tracks.

This disc is dedicated to two Deans of Canterbury Cathedral: Robert Willis for so generously allowing me to record there, and Hewlett Johnson, my Grandfather, for always inspiring me and, somehow, looking after me.

Third Suite for Cello, Tre Laude Dolce, Threnos, Chant and Improvisation recorded at Canterbury Cathedral, 30-31 July 2012

Produced and Edited - Simon Kiln

Recording Engineer - Mike Hatch

Recording Assistant - George Pierson

Greensleeves, The Salley Gardens, Since she whom I loved and Oliver Cromwell recorded by Matthew Barley at the Home Studio.

Album Mastering - Simon Kiln

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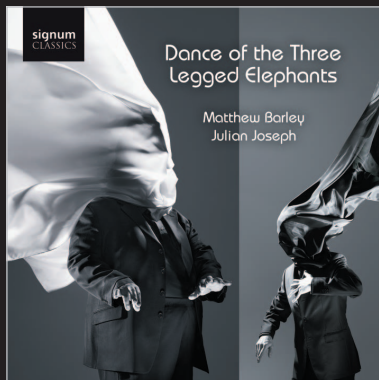
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