

DAVID GORTON ORFORDNESS

ZUBIN KANGA | CHRISTOPHER REDGATE | NEIL HEYDE | KREUTZER QUARTET



MSV
28550





DAVID GORTON | ORFORDNESS

I ORFORDNESS

18:06

Zubin Kanga piano

II AUSTERITY MEASURES II

13:34

Christopher Redgate oboe | Kreutzer Quartet | live recording

III FOSDYKE WASH

16:52

Zubin Kanga piano | Kreutzer Quartet

IV 2ND SONATA FOR CELLO

12:48


Neil Heyde cello | Milton Mermikides electronics

album duration

61:21

The taped extracts in Track 1 originate from a dictated commentary allegedly made by Lt. Colonel Halt, Deputy Base Commander of RAF Bentwaters while experiencing a UFO encounter in Rendlesham Forest, near Orford, in 1980. The producers believe that this recording is now in the public domain having been released to researchers in 1984/5, and is now available on many UFO-spotter websites, on YouTube, and has been broadcast on a number of TV programmes. The use of the recording in the composition is purely for artistic and satirical purpose.

THE MUSIC



The music on this CD shares a common approach of being written for specific people and particular instruments. It is all exploratory and it all pushes performers to rethink their interactions with other performers as well as with their instruments. All the music also shares a sense of resistance as it escapes from straightforward meanings and simple forms. Ideas that other music often takes for granted, such as the repeatability of a composition's structure across multiple performances, are questioned in each of the pieces.

Much of the music is restrained, or partial, or fragmented, which challenges the listener to make sense of what is going on. Sometimes the music does this through highly detailed and verbose material. And at times its verbosity is withheld, so that fragments of highly evocative sentences stand against silenced sound. Sometimes the music seems hardly present, as solitary chords become monuments to vast landscapes. And at times the wealth of detail is overwhelming, as virtuosity itself rises as the music's chief idea.

The five movements of **Orfordness** relate to a former military base on the Suffolk coast. The area is now owned by the National Trust, and therefore open to the public, though its present accessibility is to the place itself, rather than to complete explanations of its former purpose. The history of Orford Ness (as the place is also known) is one of sensational (conspiracy) theories.

The first movement is titled 'Evacuation of the Civil Population from Shingle Street, Suffolk', which takes its name from an event that took place for unknown reasons in the 1940s. Against a backdrop of a single droned note the pianist's hands are frantic. They play a series of ever-louder and ever more hectic arcs. The music offers no definitive theory for the residents' evacuation, though the tempo, ♩=103.7 carries a footnote, explaining that 103.7 degrees Celsius is the boiling point of seawater, which references a theory about an experimental weapon that was being developed and that would be capable of boiling the sea itself.

The second movement ('Cobra Mist', named after an over-the-horizon radar system) is heavily redacted. The tempo is given as 'Censored: Section 40'. All that we hear are the crackles and noises of the pianist scraping and striking the piano with a mallet. The music is earthed with a constant hum, continuing from the first movement, of a single pitch.

In the third movement ('You Can't Tell The People') tape recordings of the 'Rendlesham Forest Incident,' made by Deputy Base Commander Lt. Colonel Halt, are played back alongside equally fractured piano interjections. Like all UFO reports these recordings hover between paranoia, mystery, intrigue and far too much irrelevant detail. Halt's recording would be a strange

match for a piano piece, were it not for a brief piano chord on the tape, which suggests that the tape Halt was using was at another time used for music.

The fourth movement's tempo measures out terajoules, and its title, *Blue Danube*, is about the nuclear weapon of the same name, rather than a reference to Johann Strauss. The bomb was used in an experiment at Orford Ness which involved no fissile material, and in the composition one hears no cataclysmic explosion.

The fifth movement ('The Island') comes after the end of the military operations, and their absence leaves a quiet, empty, lonely landscape. The drone from earlier in the piece now returns in the form of two mobile lines, which step repetitively, pause frequently, and wander into silence.

Austerity Measures II, for 'Howarth-Redgate oboe and string quartet' began with Christopher Redgate and the oboe he designed, itself a collaboration that was taking shape in the period leading up to the composition. *Austerity Measures II* can only be played on the specific model of oboe.

The composition is formed in a modular way, containing Gorton's *3rd String Quartet*, his *Passacaglia* for violin and cello, and the *Cadence* for violin and viola, all heard at the same time. Despite the title, there is little sense of this as a patchwork that 'makes do,' since their combination produces extravagant, highly virtuosic music. Each of the components derives from a different collaboration, though all the performers involved are interlinked through other pieces that Gorton has composed.

The formation of the components as *Austerity Measures II* maintains the radical independence of the constituent parts, and the oboe, for example, is harmonically and rhythmically unrelated to the strings. In contrast to the string parts (there is no score) that are notated with time signatures, the oboe part is a set of short segments, each based on an unstable multiphonic. These multiphonics were developed in the initial stages of collaboration, and are newly invented for the piece.

All the components are about repetition and difference: the broad repetitions of the *Passacaglia* extend the dance form's looping spirals; the *Third String Quartet* is formed from four repetitions of material at different tempi and dynamics; the oboe part is a series of increasingly complicated elaborations. They also all explore non-equally-tempered tunings. The combination makes for an unstable and unpredictable piece, which will be different in structure and detail with each performance.

Fosdyke Wash, for piano quintet, also uses non-equally-tempered tunings, to which the piano contributes through the extensive use of harmonics. The piano also uses an e-bow (as it does in *Orfordness*), to sustain the piano's sound.

Like much of Gorton's work this composition is located in the East of England. Gorton grew up in Spalding, 10 miles or so from Fosdyke Wash, and the piece captures the flat consistency of the landscape. The music is of a place that is 'bleak and desolate' but also productive, and the tightly packed pitches in the opening clusters sit alongside the sounds of the agriculture that has shaped the landscape.

There is nothing overtly dramatic about this piece, but nor is there anything otherworldly. Although the work is very much about the landscape of Fosdyke Wash, the places of the work's composition – Nashville, Tennessee, St. Neots – connect Gorton's work at the Royal Academy of Music (which maintains close connections with Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University) with his home in Cambridgeshire.

For the final work, the **2nd Sonata for Cello**, the visual dimension of a performance is withheld by the medium of the CD. The composition is based on the physical movements of the cellist, which in live performance will contribute to the experience of hearing the music. Nevertheless, there is an audible physicality to the recorded sound. The sense of disconnection between what one hears – the sound of a cellist playing – and what one can infer – the cellist producing those sounds – is a productive disconnection for the piece.

The composition's pure virtuosity is staggering, involving lightening fast moves around the instrument as well as unorthodox configurations of the hands and fingers. Their physical 'choreography' as the composer and performer term it, develops from the lengthy composer-performer collaboration. The cello is central to this collaboration, and pushes performer and composer during planning and performance.

The composition is formed from a cycle of ten sections, and the cellist can choose where to begin. This recording is therefore one of many possible configurations. The electronics contribute to the idea, since its algorithms respond to the performance by recalling sounds from an earlier recording of Gorton's *Sonata for Solo Cello* (recorded on *Trajectories: Music by David Gorton*, Métier, 2010). The disjunctions, again, are all important, and the *2nd Sonata* interacts with the first at a distance.

The electronics (originally programmed by Michael Casey, and here realised by Milton Mermikides) are designed to reconfigure both pieces by tying them together through the in-the-moment algorithmic analysis. This is a kind of performed reading that underlines the non-linear ways in which the music operates.

These four compositions have an air of being ancient, even as they push towards new, unknown, possibilities. They all focus intensely on small details, of fingers on strings and keys, and they all do this to keep the big picture in view, to write new historical progressions, and to bring together long-time collaborators in new ensembles.

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THE MUSICIANS



David Gorton (b.1978) first came to public attention in 2001 when he was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize. Commissions followed for ensembles that include the London Sinfonietta, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Exposé, Jane's Minstrels, the Kreutzer Quartet, and CHROMA. His music has been performed throughout Europe and America, in China, and in Vietnam. It is recorded on the Métier label on *Trajectories: Music by David Gorton* (2010) and *Electrifying Oboe* (2013).

Equally at home in museums and art galleries as well as the concert hall, Gorton has composed pieces for a number of gallery spaces, with performances in the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain, Tate St Ives, the David Roberts Art Foundation, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Musei di Strada Nuova, Genoa. Much of his output comprises series of works for solo performers with whom he has built a collaborative relationship over a period of years, including the violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved, cellist Neil Heyde, oboist Christopher Redgate, pianist Zubin Kanga, and guitar player Stefan Östersjö.

As a researcher Gorton is interested in exploring new instrumental techniques, alternative tuning systems, performer virtuosity, and developing diverse models of collaborative practice. In 2004-06 he held a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship

for a compositionally-driven project about musical time, structure, and performance. He has presented his work at conferences and universities in Europe, America, and Canada, and in 2012 was a visiting researcher at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent.

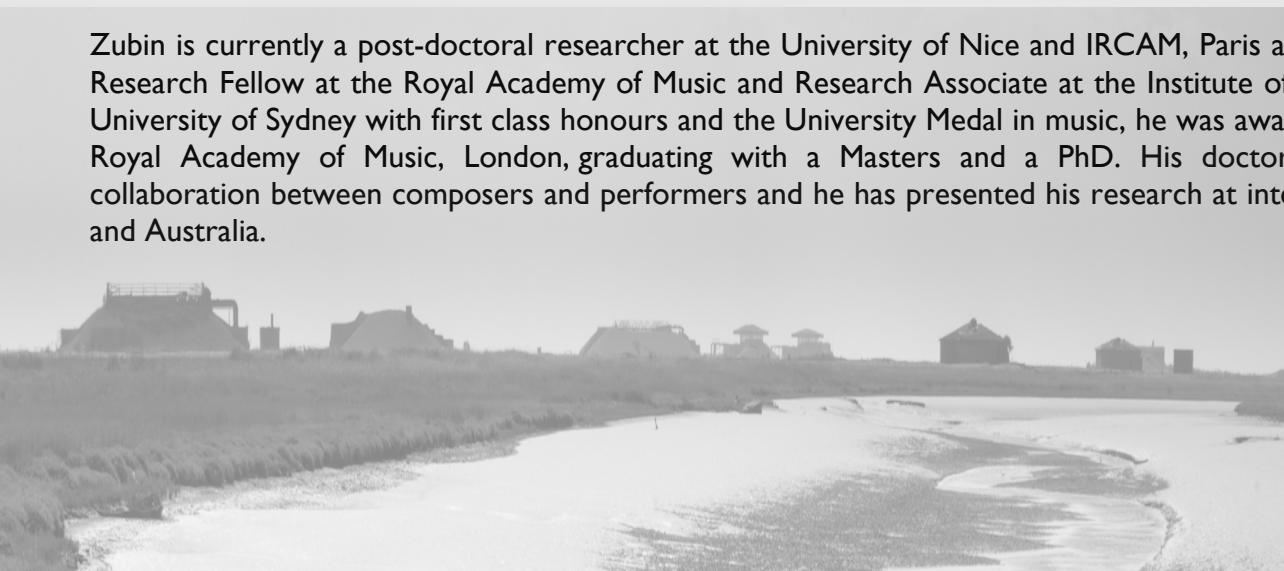
David Gorton studied composition with Harrison Birtwistle and Simon Bainbridge. He is the Associate Head of Research at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

London-based Australian pianist, **Zubin Kanga** is internationally renowned for his performances of contemporary music. He has performed at the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, York Late Music Festival, London 2012 Festival (UK), ISCM World New Music Days, Metropolis New Music Festival, BIFEM (Australia) and Borealis Festival (Norway) as well as appearing as soloist with the London Sinfonietta and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Kanga has collaborated with many of the world's leading composers including Thomas Adès, Michael Finnissy, George Benjamin, Steve Reich, Beat Furrer, Howard Skempton, Liza Lim and Ross Edwards and commissioned more than 50 new works. He has performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Kings Place and the Purcell Room (London), the Sydney Opera House, the Melbourne Recital Centre as well as many other major venues in the UK, Europe, USA and Australia. He is a member of Ensemble Offspring, one of Australia's leading contemporary music ensembles, and has also performed with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Ensemble Plus-Minus, Endymion Ensemble, Halcyon, Synergy Percussion, and the Kreutzer Quartet, as well as performing piano duos with Rolf Hind and Thomas Adès.

Kanga has won many prizes for his performances, including the 2012 Art Music Award for Performance of the Year (NSW), the 2010 ABC Limelight Award for Best Newcomer, the Michael Kieran Harvey Scholarship, and the Greta Parkinson Prize from the Royal Academy of Music.

Zubin is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Nice and IRCAM, Paris as well as having two roles in London: Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music and Research Associate at the Institute of Musical Research. A graduate of the University of Sydney with first class honours and the University Medal in music, he was awarded a full scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music, London, graduating with a Masters and a PhD. His doctoral thesis examined the process of collaboration between composers and performers and he has presented his research at international conferences across Europe and Australia.



Christopher Redgate is currently the Evelyn Barbiroli Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music and the designer of the Howarth-Redgate system oboe on which he now performs exclusively.

Since his time as a student at the Royal Academy of Music (1975-79), he has specialised in the performance of contemporary oboe music and developed significantly several aspects of oboe technique, leading him to a re-evaluation of a number of performance practices. His work in this field has led many composers to write for him.

Christopher Redgate has performed both as a soloist and chamber musician across the world working with many major ensembles. He regularly gives oboe master classes, composition classes and research seminars and, from 1986 to 1992 he was Professor of oboe at the International New Music Course in Darmstadt. He broadcasts regularly and his recordings can be found on the Oboe Classics, Metier and NMC labels. Chris also writes extensively including chapters for a number of multi-authored books. He is currently writing a book: *21st Century Oboe*.




As a soloist and chamber musician **Neil Heyde** has appeared throughout Europe, and in the USA and Australia, broadcasting for the BBC, WDR, ORF, Radio France, RAI, NRK, DR, Netherlands Radio and many other networks.

Since the mid 90s he has been the cellist of the Kreutzer Quartet and he currently heads the postgraduate programmes at the Royal Academy of Music, where his work focuses on the relationships between performers and composers past and present.

He has commissioned and premiered many solo and chamber pieces and edited Faber's series of 19th-century music for stringed instruments.

A DVD film and documentary of his work on Brian Ferneyhough's extraordinary *Time and Motion Study II* for solo cello and electronics is now available on YouTube.



Milton Mermikides is a composer, guitarist, producer and writer with a particular interest in the intersection of music technology and traditional music practice. He has published and presented research on improvisation, data sonification, microtiming, microtuning and other musical elements that escape standard notation and analysis.

His works are performed and broadcast internationally and he is currently Head of Composition at the University of Surrey, Professor of Guitar at the Royal College of Music and Deputy Director of the International Guitar Research Centre.



Zubin Kanga and David Gorton working on
'Cobra Mist',
the second movement of *Orfordness*



The **Kreutzer Quartet** (Peter Sheppard Skærved, Neil Heyde, Mihailo Trandafilovski, Morgan Goff) has forged an enviable reputation as one of Europe's most dynamic and innovative string quartets. They are the dedicatees of hundreds of new works by composers of all generations. In the past few years alone, they have premiered works by Michael Finnissy, Nicola LeFanu, Edward Cowie, Mihailo Trandafilovski, David Matthews, Michael Hersch, Elliott Schwartz, Gloria Coates, John McCabe, Robin Holloway, Rolf Martinsson, and they are particularly proud of their long collaboration with David Gorton.

As recording artists they have won critical acclaim for their discs on the Naxos, Toccata, Guild, New Focus, Tadziki, Move, Metier, and Chandos labels. Recent recordings range from a cycle of Reicha Quartets, to a pioneering collection of Australian quartets from the 60's and 70's. They are artists in residence at Goldsmiths College, and at Wilton's Music Hall.



ORFORDNESS

Tracks 1, 3 & 4 were recorded at the Royal Academy of Music, London
track 1: 22 June 2013 track 3: 26 April 2011 track 4: 14 February 2008

Track 2 was recorded at Wilton's Music Hall, London on 12 June 2013

Track 4 2nd *Sonata for Cello* was originally recorded as part of a project at the Royal Academy of Music and appears here by kind permission of the Royal Academy of Music

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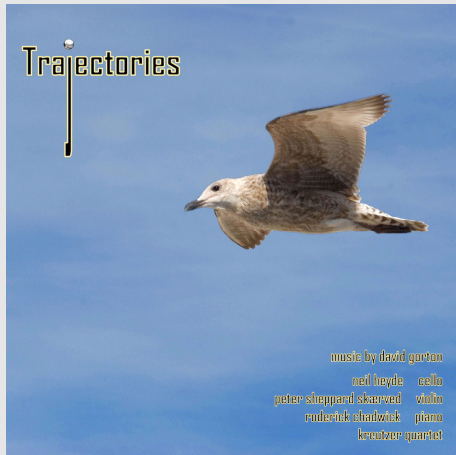
Sound engineering (tracks 2 & 3) Jonathan Haskell (Astounding Sounds)
(tracks 1 & 4) Kirsten Cowie

Editing and mastering Jonathan Haskell

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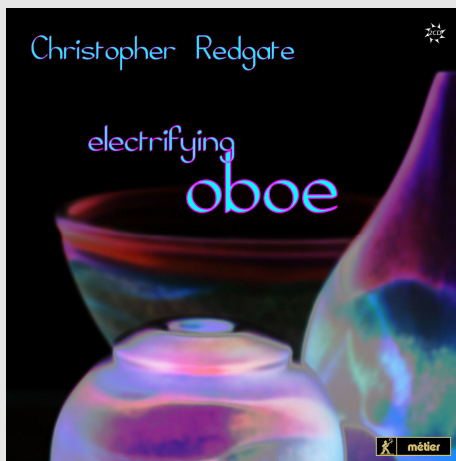
The producers gratefully acknowledge the assistance and support of the Royal Academy of Music in making this recording project possible, and the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the development of Austerity Measures II

Music by David Gorton from Metier



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