



The Lily of Killarney

Clarinet Fantasias from
England and Ireland

mór

ROBERT PLANE | CLARINET
BENJAMIN FRITH | PIANO

The Lily of Killarney

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England and Ireland

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| 1 | Fantasia on The Bohemian Girl MICHAEL BALFE
arr. Le Thière ed. Rogerson pub. Forton Music | 7:36 |
| 2 | Canzonetta ERNEST TOMLINSON
pub. Electroponic Music Company | 2:42 |
| | Phantasy Suite op. 91 THOMAS DUNHILL
pub. Hawkes & Son Ltd (London) | |
| 3 | i Andante espressivo | 1:51 |
| 4 | ii Allegretto | 1:20 |
| 5 | iii Allegro con fuoco | 1:18 |
| 6 | iv Andantino serio | 1:43 |
| 7 | v Vivace assai | 0:51 |
| 8 | vi Andante espressivo - Allegro animato | 3:18 |
| 9 | Cool Running Water, op. 77 RUTH GIPPS
pub. Emerson Edition | 6:09 |
| 10 | The Butterfly of the Ballet, op. 55 no. 6 JOSEPH HOLBROOKE
pub. Blenheim Press | 2:08 |

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- 11 **Fantasia on The Lily of Killarney** **JULIUS BENEDICT** 15:17
arr. Rogerson, pub. Forton Music
- 12 **Fantasia** **ELIZABETH MACONCHY** 9:50
pub. J&W Chester
- 13 **Conversation Piece** **THOMAS PITFIELD** 2:57
pub. OUP
- 14 **The Wistful Shepherd (A Reverie)** **CLARENCE RAYBOULD** 4:21
pub. Boosey & Hawkes Ltd.
- Four Short Pieces** **HOWARD FERGUSON**
pub. Hawkes & Son Ltd
- 15 i Prelude 1:01
- 16 ii Scherzo (Allegro molto) 0:38
- 17 iii Pastoral (Allegretto) 2:09
- 18 iv Burlesque (Con spirito) 1:10
- 19 **Canzonetta (Spring Song), op. 55 no. 8** **JOSEPH HOLBROOKE** 3:44
pub. Blenheim Press
- 20 **Fantasia on Maritana** **VINCENT WALLACE** 8:29
arr. Le Thièrè ed. Rogerson pub. Forton Music

Total Playing Time: 79:31

ROBERT PLANE | CLARINET
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Introduction

By Howard Rogerson

While on a concert tour for South West Arts with my London-based Cosmos Wind Quintet, and performing in Barnstaple in the mid-1970s, I discovered on a market stall, a copy each of a Fantasia on the operas *The Bohemian Girl* and *Maritana*, both arranged by Charles le Thièrre for clarinet and piano. I was thrilled to find these two works in this arrangement as I already knew of them in their opera format.

However, it was not until I was later working as a clarinetist with Opera North and my wife, mezzo-soprano Valerie Baulard, formed a *Soirée Musicale* group from within the company, to perform popular Victorian *Soirée Musicale* evening concerts, that I actually performed these works. We were four singers, a pianist and myself on clarinet - alias guest artiste, Henry Lazarus, (clarinet tutor at the newly-opened Royal College of Music in 1883 having been a tutor at the Royal Academy of Music from 1854) - and I assisted on piano in the quadrille duets! I so enjoyed performing these works as they readily displayed the melodic tone and technical prowess of the clarinet, and hitherto unknown to me, provided an extension to the existing clarinet repertoire.

On discovering that the two operas (*The Bohemian Girl* and *Maritana*) formed a part of what was then known as *The English Ring* (later to be known as *The Irish Ring* because of the Irish connections between all three

operas and composers), I decided to research into whether there had been a further Fantasia on *The Lily of Killarney*, to complete *The Ring*, only to discover that this was not the case. The Boosey and Hawkes Archive had no information on all three works, nor the publication of the first two under Hawkes and Co., clearly making my copies rare!

It therefore seemed appropriate to embark on making my own arrangement of *The Lily*. My wife already had a copy of the opera vocal score, so I worked through the entire opera for suitable and memorable arias and cadenzas in order to create a Fantasia in the same style as Charles le Thièrè - this was some thirty years ago!

However, when the Covid-19 lockdown happened in 2020, I decided this was the moment to complete the arrangement, by adding the accompaniment and transposing the arias into more appropriate keys for the Bb clarinet and writing bridge passages from the score in order to create a harmonic flow between arias.

I am delighted that Forton Music accepted my arrangement, and suggested that I edit the other two Fantasias to make all three worthy of publication and performance.

Howard Rogerson, February 2025

Howard Rogerson was born in Morley, Yorkshire, and after studies at the Huddersfield School of Music (now University) and the Royal Manchester College of Music, (now RNCM), Howard worked as a professional clarinetist for almost fifty years, with the Manchester Mozart Orchestra, Gilbert and Sullivan For All, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra in Manchester. While in London, he worked with Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, English Music Theatre, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra and for twenty-two years since its inception in 1978, Opera North. Throughout this period, Howard gave many solo and chamber music recitals, broadcasts and recordings, managing and performing in his own various ensembles (the Krishna Wind Quintet, the Cosmos Wind Quintet, the Spohr Trio, The Music Serenade, the Palm Court Concert Orchestra and the Aeolian Ensemble).

Howard was a clarinet tutor at the University of Huddersfield for nine years and for twenty-two years he taught and coached woodwind for the North Yorkshire Music Service, as well as conducting the Settle Orchestra for fifteen years and training and examining for the ABRSM. On 'retirement', having moved to Morecambe in 2007, he then formed his own Promenade Concert Orchestra, so far giving more than 60 concerts, mainly of light orchestral music to an audience totalling over 16,000.

Howard Rogerson, February 2025

A teal-tinted landscape photograph of a lake and mountains. The foreground shows the dark silhouettes of evergreen trees. The middle ground features a calm body of water reflecting the sky. In the background, there are several layers of mountains, with the closest ones being more defined and the further ones fading into a hazy atmosphere. The overall color palette is a monochromatic teal, creating a serene and naturalistic feel.

We should like to thank Howard Rogerson for devising this fascinating project and for his extremely generous financial support, without which none of this would have happened.

Additionally, we should like to thank the Ida Carroll Trust for their most welcome contribution towards ensuring that this delightful music can be heard.

Mike Purton, MPRS, May 2025





The Lily of Killarney

Clarinet Fantasias from England and Ireland

Phantasy is an evocative title that refers to a number of contrasted musical forms. Sitting centrally and bookending this varied collection of fantastical Anglo-Irish works for clarinet and piano are fantasias on themes from hugely popular operas of the mid-nineteenth century which constitute what is now often referred to as the 'Irish Ring'. Other works here, such as Elizabeth Maconchy's mature *Fantasia*, are inspired by the 16th Century Phantasy, a form which Walter Cobbett's prize, instigated some four hundred years later, did so much to revive. Whilst Thomas Dunhill did produce Cobbett-influenced single-movement works, he chose to cast his *Phantasy Suite* for clarinet and piano as six highly characterised miniatures. Other works in this collection are simply delightful miniatures of a fantastical nature; character pieces and canzonettas that are fantasias in all but name.

The Bohemian Girl is Dublin-born singer-composer **Michael William Balfe's** (1808-1870) best-known work, receiving its premiere in November 1843 at London's Drury Lane Theatre. He was the prolific composer of some thirty eight operas and over two hundred and fifty songs. In a distinguished singing career, Balfe sang in the first London performances of operas by Rossini and Meyerbeer, as well as in the first English performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and as Figaro in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Packed with memorable tunes, *The Bohemian Girl* includes such well-known arias as 'I dreamt I dwelt in Marble Halls', made famous by singers as contrasted as Dame Joan Sutherland and Enya, and 'When Other Lips'.

These and other 'hits' are lovingly combined into this operatic fantasy, typical of the style popular amongst parlour 'Soirées Musicales', by Charles le Thière (1859-1929).

Ernest Tomlinson's (1924-2015) ballet score *Aladdin* is made up of twenty-five orchestral dances. 'Young Man in Love', which Aladdin dances after his first glimpse of the princess, features a clarinet solo which the composer later transcribed as his *Canzonetta* in 1991. Tomlinson was a second study clarinetist during his student days at the Royal Manchester College of Music and Manchester University and shows a natural affinity for writing for the instrument in this heartfelt song.

Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946) was one of the many English composers of his day whose talent was nurtured in the composition class of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. Best known today for his light music, Dunhill was a fearless promoter of the new music of his compatriots (Joseph Holbrooke and William Hurlstone, amongst others) as well as dedicating himself to organisations supporting musicians' welfare. Dunhill had been commissioned by Cobbett to compose a *Phantasy Trio* in 1911, and he returned to the concept of the 'fantasy' in his late work for clarinet, the *Phantasy Suite* Op. 91 of 1941. Written in cyclical form, the suite's six highly contrasted movements are unified by the work's opening material, which returns as both the introduction to the sixth movement as well as its coda.

Ruth Gipps (1921-1999) initially conceived her *Cool Running Water* for the haunting timbre of the bass flute but her transcription for the dark-coloured clarinet in A is equally evocative. Gipps' husband was the clarinetist Robert Baker, and it is therefore unsurprising that the instrument features significantly in her output. Gipps was inspired by landscapes throughout her career, and this late work from 1991 aims to convey 'the joys of dipping one's feet in cool running water' in the countryside, the published score being adorned by a pencil sketch of yesteryear celebrating this delightfully simple pastime.

Joseph Holbrooke (1978-1958) was the son of music hall artists, and his *Butterfly of the Ballet* certainly feels like a nostalgic look back to his formative musical influences. *Canzonetta* meanwhile is a reworking of the slow movement of his earlier *Clarinet Quintet*, shortened and simplified into a delicious lullaby. Both works are from Holbrooke's set of *Mezzotints*, all delightful pictorial snapshots and each much more vivid than the titular reference to a monochrome printing process would suggest.

Julius Benedict (1804-1885) studied composition with Johann Nepomuk Hummel in Weimar and with Carl Maria von Weber in Leipzig, the latter even introducing him to Beethoven in 1823. He began writing operas whilst Music Director of the Opera in Naples, eventually reaching London when he became conductor of the English Opera at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, where *Maritana* and *Bohemian Girl* had already been performed. He was also an accomplished pianist and toured America with the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. *The Lily of Killarney* was first performed at Covent

Garden in 1862, its Irish story helping to place it alongside the works of Irish-born composers Balfe and Wallace in the so-called 'Irish Ring'.

Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994) composed for three leading figures of the British clarinet school, her *Clarinet Quintet* being premiered by Gervase de Peyer and her *Concertino* by Frederick Thurston. *Fantasia* is a late work, written for Thea King in 1979. The enigmatic opening statements uttered by an unaccompanied clarinet are the germ for much of this tightly wrought work's thematic and harmonic material. Whilst her love of Bartok is evident here, the jig-like sections also seem to reflect her proud Irish heritage.

Thomas Pitfield (1903-1999) was multi-talented as composer, artist, craftsman, and poet. His own autobiographical writings with substantial critical essays were published in *Endless Fascination* (Forsyth, 2014). Large scale works include two piano concertos, recorded by Peter Donohoe and Anthony Goldstone respectively, a *Sinfonietta* dedicated to and requested by Barbirolli for the Hallé Orchestra, and a *Concerto* and *Fantasia* both for violin and orchestra, all now recorded. There is also a substantial quantity of chamber and vocal music, much of which is also recorded. The delightful *Conversation Piece*, published in 1960, is one of several works for clarinet and is typical of his lighter style, with lilting irregular rhythms and an engaging dialogue between the two instruments. As a composer he was essentially self-taught, with some early assistance from Eric Fogg. Eventually he joined the staff of the Royal Manchester College of Music where his pupils included John Ogdon, John McCabe, David Ellis and Ronald Stevenson. He continued composing and writing well into his nineties.

Clarence Raybould's (1886-1972) principal career was as conductor, at the British National Opera Company and with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (as Associate Conductor), as well as with the London Symphony Orchestra, whom he conducted at the opening of the Royal Festival Hall in 1951. His repertoire was far-ranging, but Raybould was fond of the lighter end of the compositional spectrum and particularly enjoyed conducting Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas. Raybould subtitled *The Wistful Shepherd* of 1939 'A Reverie', the gentle piece unfolding as a daydream, the shepherd lost in his own regret-tinged thoughts.

The Irish thread of this programme now takes in Belfast-born composer **Howard Ferguson** (1908-1999), whose *Four Short Pieces* were written for the esteemed clarinetist Pauline Juler, muse to British composers Finzi, York Bowen and Robin Milford before marriage cut short her performing career. Ferguson had already written for Juler, a stalwart of Dame Myra Hess's wartime National Gallery concerts at which Ferguson worked as an assistant, in his *Octet* Op. 4. The star-studded 1943 recording of this work for Decca Records is sadly just a tantalising glimpse of what her career could have been in more enlightened times. Ferguson uses four distinct modes to characterise each miniature of this set, perhaps emulating his teacher Vaughan Williams' own *Six Studies in English Folksong*.

Completing this survey of the Irish Ring fantasies is that on **William Vincent Wallace's** *Maritana*, an opera that premiered at Drury Lane in 1845 and whose plot was to inspire Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Yeoman of the Guard*. Wallace himself composed a *Grand Fantasia* on some of its most famous

melodies before Charles le Thière worked them into his own compilation. Both *Maritana* and *The Bohemian Girl* were huge successes, performed overseas to great acclaim at a time when British opera is often cited as being dormant between the works of Purcell and Britten. The inclusion of these re-edited and reconstructed 'Irish Ring Fantasies' on this disc pays homage to a now largely forgotten chapter in the history British opera.

c. Robert Plane/Howard Rogerson 2025

Charles le Thière (1855-1929) was christened Thomas Wilby Tomkins and was the son of a goldsmith and jeweller, from Clerkenwell, London. A renowned piccolo player, he composed a number of piccolo solos as well as orchestral, band, chamber and piano music. The *Fantasia on themes from Maritana* was written and published in 1912, but there appears to be no recognition of a *Fantasia on themes from the Bohemian Girl*, whose piano score includes a flute line, rather than a clarinet part, hence this republication and the subsequent addition of the *Fantasia on themes from The Lily of Killarney*.

Howard Rogerson



Robert Plane

Robert Plane's career as a solo and chamber clarinetist is rich and varied. Concerto appearances have included Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto K622* in A major in Madrid with the City of London Sinfonia, in Beijing with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and in the USA with the Virginia Symphony. His varied repertoire has embraced Christian Jost's concerto *Heart of Darkness* with the Dortmunder Philharmoniker, Simon Holt's *Centauromachy* at the 2011 BBC Proms and the first modern-day performance of Iain Hamilton's mighty *Clarinet Concerto* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, as well as clarinet concertos by Finzi - with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Stanford - with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Copland - with the London Mozart Players. He has given the world premieres of concertos by Judith Bingham, Diana Burrell, Piers Hellawell and Mark Boden.

Rob's discography is extensive, ranging from cornerstones of the repertoire such as Weber's *Clarinet Quintet* on EMI and Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* on Chandos to classics and new discoveries from the wealth of British repertoire for his instrument, which is his particular passion. Rob has also recorded an album with the BBC Philharmonic for Resonus Classics, *Isotonic*, featuring a selection of his many commissions from the past thirty years. His account of Finzi's *Clarinet Concerto* won a Gramophone Award and his album of chamber music by Arnold Bax received a further shortlisting. He is currently engaged in a research project exploring the life and music of the British composer Pamela Harrison and recording her chamber music.

Rob is the clarinetist of Ensemble 360 and enjoys exploring chamber music of all kinds with this RPS nominated group at their home in the Crucible Playhouse, Sheffield and countryside. He has explored the repertoire for clarinet quintet with distinguished string quartets, forging a particularly close relationship with the Elias String Quartet, with whom he made his debut at the 2023 Schubertiade Schwarzenberg and performed the Brahms and Bliss quintets at the Wigmore Hall. The Marmen, Castalian, Heath, Maxwell, Maggini, Brodsky and Sacconi Quartets, have all been recent chamber collaborators. Rob has performed and recorded with the Gould Piano Trio for over thirty years, and they direct the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival together in Northumberland.

Rob is Head of Woodwind at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and was Principal Clarinet of BBC National Orchestra of Wales for twenty-one years. He has also held the Principal Clarinet positions of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Benjamin Frith

A prolific recitalist and recording artist, Benjamin Frith is one of the most versatile, respected and engaging pianists in the UK. With over 80 recordings - from Scarlatti to MacMillan - and many acclaimed reviews, Frith is at the forefront of the craft of music making. Gold Medal winner of the Artur Rubinstein Piano Masters International Competition, Tel Aviv, and Top Prize Winner in the Busoni International Piano Competition, Frith has performed with many of the world's finest orchestras and conductors. Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic and Mosche Atzmon and the Warsaw Philharmonic are amongst Frith's many memorable musical experiences.

Renowned for his critically acclaimed recordings, including a best selling John Field piano concerto cycle, Frith made *Gramophone* 'Disc of the Year' with his recordings of C.V. Stanford's *Piano Concerto no. 2* and Schumann's *Daidsbundler Op. 6*, the latter winning top recommendation in the BBC Radio 3's record Review.

In high demand as both soloist and chamber musician, Frith enjoys a busy and versatile career. As pianist in the Gould Piano Trio he has toured extensively throughout North America; and as guest pianist in the illustrious Nash Ensemble he has performed and recorded to critical acclaim. Solo tours have taken him to America, Europe and the Middle and Far East, with upcoming solo tours to Japan.

Current recording projects include the complete solo piano music of British composer Martin Ellerby and a Marschner Piano Trio cycle for NAXOS. Benjamin Frith lives in Yorkshire with his wife and piano duo partner, Heidi Rolfe.

*'Does any pianist draw a lovelier sound from
the keyboard or phrase more naturally...'*

BBC Music Magazine

*'...he possesses a formidable talent both
musically and technically'*

Gramophone





Left to right: Howard Rogerson, Robert Plane, Benjamin Frith and Mike Purton

MPR118 The Lily of Killarney: Clarinet Fantasias from England and Ireland. Artists: Robert Plane - Clarinet, Benjamin Frith - Piano. Venue: The Carole Nash Recital Room, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, England. Dates: 3rd - 5th January 2025. Producer: Mike Purton. Recording Engineer and Mastering: Ben Connellan. Editing: Mike Purton. Recorded at 24/96 resolution. Design: Hannah Whale, www.fruition-creative.co.uk.
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www.mikepurtonrecording.com