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CLASSICS

THE
NORTH
WIND
WAS A
WOMAN

Chamber Works by
DAVID BRUCE

THE NORTH WIND WAS A WOMAN

DAVID BRUCE (b. 1970)

Cymbeline

Avi Avital *mandolin* / Dover Quartet

[1]	I. Sunrise	[1.11]
[2]	II. Noon	[6.26]
[3]	III. Sunset	[7.35]

The North Wind was a Woman

Nora Fischer *soprano* / The North Wind Ensemble

[4]	I. The Snow is Completely Without Hope	[4.25]
[5]	II. The North Wind is a Woman	[3.43]
[6]	III. The Night Wants You to Forget	[5.05]
[7]	IV. The Crescent Moon is a Dangerous Lunatic	[3.10]
[8]	V. The Mountain Shares her Solitary Dreams	[5.31]

The Consolation of Rain

Camerata Pacifica

[9]	I.	[4.49]
[10]	II.	[3.17]
[11]	III.	[6.18]
[12]	IV.	[3.50]
[13]	V.	[4.50]

Total Timings	[66.11]
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The three pieces on this disc represent David Bruce's highly personal musical and spiritual responses to nature.

Cymbeline (an old Celtic word meaning 'Lord of the Sun') draws on ancient religious attitudes to the sun, and is framed as a trinity of birth, life and death, as represented by sunrise, noon and sunset.

The North Wind was a Woman song cycle treats various aspects of nature as human characters, as if they were manifestations of human emotions. So the North Wind for example, is a jilted lover who 'rattles your windows, bangs at your doors'. Scored for a folk-imbued ensemble, featuring prominent parts for mandolin and harp, the cycle ranges from the wild rage of the 'lunatic moon' to the sombre and tender loneliness of the mountain contemplating her only friend throughout the years – the night sky.

The Consolation of Rain is a moving reflection on loss and the restorative power of nature. When a loved one passes away the atoms of their body literally become

part of the natural world, which means that just by observing nature, rain, weather, you are in a very real sense 'with your loved one'; a fact which is immensely consoling.

Bruce has a close relationship with many of the featured artists, he has collaborated with Avi Avital on 5 pieces, most recently a commission from NDR in Germany. Avital has toured *Cymbeline* (commissioned by San Diego Symphony) around the world including a recent North American tour with Dover Quartet. Camerata Pacifica have also worked frequently with Bruce and commissioned *The Consolation of Rain* from him in 2017. *The North Wind was a Woman* was commissioned by Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and features many of the same players involved in the 2009 premiere, including harpist Bridget Kibbey (another close collaborator, who also features on the Camerata Pacifica recording).

CYMBELINE

C*ymbeline* is a new work for Mandolin and String Quartet, written specially for mandolin virtuoso Avi Avital. The title is an old Celtic word meaning 'Lord of the Sun'. I think the idea of the piece being about the sun emerged out of the colours of the string quartet and the mandolin together. Although I don't think of myself as a synaesthetic person I kept having a strong sense of the colour gold in the early sketches for the piece. The mandolin itself has always seemed to me to create a 'golden' sound, and when combined with the warmth of the strings it seems now obvious that I should be drawn towards something warm and golden.

The sun was one of the first objects of worship and it has been surmised that the idea of a holy trinity (found not just in Christianity, but in numerous earlier religions) relates to the three distinct positions of the sun – sunrise (= father), noon (= son), and sunset (= spirit). Sunrise is 'the father of the day'; midday represents the fullness of energy, the

son; and sunset is a time for contemplation and reflection – the spirit. To me, these three states represent not just "father, son and spirit" but also perhaps, the reflection upon an action about to happen (sunrise), the action itself (noon), and the reflection on the action that happened (sunset).

Cymbeline accordingly is in three movements, with two contemplative outer movements surrounding an energetic central movement. I see the piece as a contemplation of our relationship with this fiery giver of life, whose significance to us is often overlooked in the modern world, but who still really does rule over us all.

THE NORTH WIND WAS A WOMAN

I have been lucky enough to spend some time recently collaborating with the writer Aimee Bender. By chance I came across Aimee's extraordinary collection of short stories 'Willful Creatures' and I instantly felt we shared many artistic goals and ideals. Aimee's stories are often described as 'modern fairytales', they have something of the tone of a fairytale (a generalised sense of place and time, a willingness to incorporate the magical or supernatural, and often, a rather savage streak), but are unmistakably modern in tone, and a million miles from the Victorian sensibilities and morals of Hans Andersen or the Brothers Grimm. Aimee creates unique and extraordinary worlds, full of color and magic, tangential to our own, but somehow, in an often witty and understated way, reflecting back on our own world, returning us to it with fresh eyes. It is an approach to art which I find highly invigorating and inspiring.

Aimee showed me the libretto to an opera she had written for the composer

John B Hedges and I was captivated as soon as I realized it was the Sea itself singing the opening lines - it was saying sorry to all the ships it had to let sink because its shoulders were too heavy and not meant for carrying boats. I loved the idea of an 'element' singing, and some time later the idea occurred to me that it could make for an interesting song-cycle to have a series of different elements, each singing in the first person. I approached Alasdair Middleton (the librettist for my opera *A Bird in Your Ear*) with this idea. Alasdair latched on to the concept immediately - the first poem he produced was Wind who, marvellously, was in unrequited love; followed by a rather melancholy and mysterious Night, and a crazed Moon who 'wants to kill'. I later added two of my own poems to the collection, a rather bleak Snow that sees itself as 'frozen tears', and a Mountain that contemplates its only friendship over the years - with the night sky.

I. The Snow is Completely Without Hope (text by David Bruce)

*Frozen tears are all I weep
And where they fall nothing grows.
I close my eyes and think of sleep,
But tears of ice are all that flow.
Pain in crystal
Piercing bright
Pain in endless white
Just pain.*

*With frigid hands I reach in vain,
I cover you with my distress.
I paint you white
I paint you dead
A blizzard of anguish around your
head;
I have no water with which to bless,
Just my frozen tears of pain,
Just pain.*

II. The North Wind is a Woman
(text by Alasdair Middleton)

*I still love you,
Though you don't love me anymore.
You used to,
You once let me kiss you-
Remember that time on the sea-shore?
I still miss you.*

*Remember how we used to dance?
I still love to dance,
I still must,
Just, no-one will dance with me now;
Just newspapers now;
Just leaves,
Just dust.*

*I still love you.
I still want you to be mine,
That's why I ravish your clothes on the
washing-line.
I still love you.
I rattle your windows.
I bang at your door.
I still love you.
Though you don't love me anymore.*

III. The Night Wants You to Forget
(text by Alasdair Middleton)

*Past the sunset's flaming wreckage
Up to you I quietly creep;
Forget about the smoke and trouble,
Lean on me, my love, and sleep.*

*Now the starry Lion's stalking
To the Virgin's glittering breast
Mother murmurs 'Don't remember.'
Lean on me, my love, and rest.*

*Planets, shrieking, see the future.
Stars are grieving o'er the past.
Constellations mourn the present.
Lean on me and rest at last.*

IV. The Crescent Moon is a Dangerous Lunatic (text by Alasdair Middleton)

*I am the moon.
I am steel.
I've forgotten how to feel.
I am the moon.
I want a knife.
I want a knife
To take a life.
I am the moon
I want blood*

*Blood is hot
I am not.
I am the moon.
I want to kill
And one night soon
I will.
I will*

V. The Mountain Shares her Solitary Dreams (text by David Bruce)

*My only friend through all the years
Looks down on me and holds my gaze,
Without purpose, without tears,
Without judgement or praise.*

*Her giant eye reflects a million tones
Of simple flutes and crystal
tambourines.
She reminds me, though I am alone,
That countless others share my dreams.*

*And though her beauty makes me
tremble and despair,
Her look contains the honesty of rain.
She answers every question with her
infinite stare,
And In her darkness I feel small again.*

THE CONSOLATION OF RAIN

Commissioned for Camerata Pacifica by Bob Klein & Lynne Cantlay.

We all take consolation from different things, and without wanting to be overly morbid, I would like to think

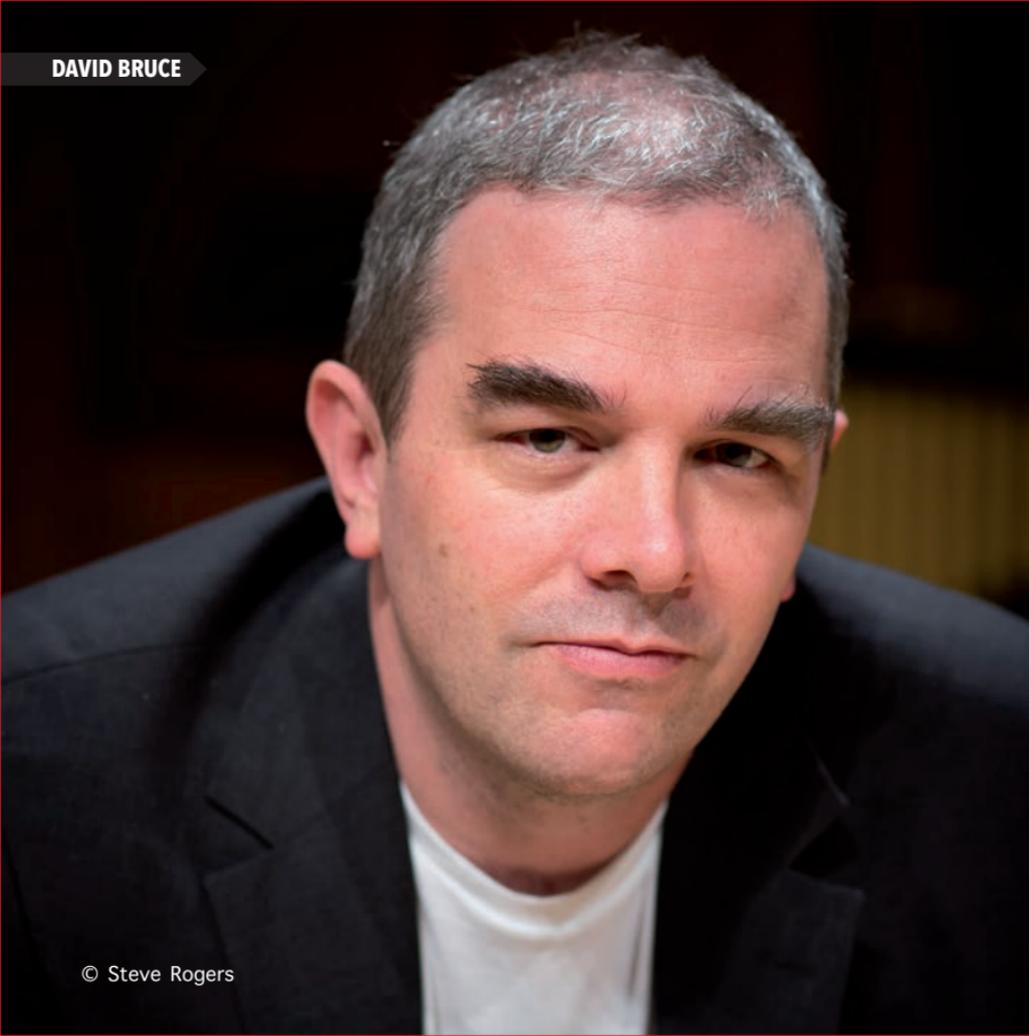
that after I die, my loved ones could take consolation from the sense that I was quite literally all around them, in the air, water and earth as part of the natural cycle of things. There are numerous poems on this theme, including the famous “Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep” by Mary Elizabeth Frye in which, rather than being dead, the deceased speaks directly to us: “I am a thousand winds that blow, I am the diamond glints on snow, I am the sunlight on ripened grain, I am the gentle autumn rain. “ Clearly I am not alone in my way of thinking there is something very moving about the idea that you can reconnect with someone you’ve lost simply by looking at nature.

Perhaps an inevitable topic for an Englishman, the focus in this piece is rain.

Taking Debussy’s method of portraying the sea in *La Mer* as something of a model, the piece is primarily an abstract musical construction, but one that constantly and variously evokes different aural images of rain, whether it be rippling, glistening, dripping, rumbling, swooshing or showering; gathering pace or subsiding; distantly echoing or vigorously present. But throughout, the impression is of rain not as dark and depressing, but as something positive, consoling, life-affirming and renewing - the ‘gentle autumn rain’ mentioned in the Frye poem.

The *Consolation of Rain* is in five short movements, each in a way, a kind of ‘song without words’.

B I O G R A P H I E S >



David Bruce has achieved recognition as a composer on both sides of the Atlantic for music that is richly colourful, poetic and joyful. Recent commissions include from the BBC Proms, Carnegie Hall, Covent Garden and Glyndebourne.

Born in Stamford, Connecticut in 1970 David Bruce grew up in England and now enjoys a growing reputation on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the 2013/14 season David was Associate Composer of the San Diego Symphony, for whom he wrote three pieces, including *Night Parade* for the orchestra's highly successful Carnegie Hall debut in October 2013; and the violin concerto *Fragile Light* for Gil Shaham for 2014.

His fourth Carnegie Hall commission *That Time with You* (2013) for mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor follows *Steampunk* (2011), *Gumboots* (2008) and *Piosenki* (2006), which have all gone on to be widely performed by leading ensembles around the world.

In the UK, David's piece *Sidechaining* was featured in the 2018 BBC Proms, and he was 2012-13 Composer-in-Residence with the Royal Opera House, who co-commissioned with Glyndebourne the opera *Nothing* (after the book by Janne Teller), which premiered in Glyndebourne in February 2016. Bruce's chamber opera *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (after the Philip Pullman story) toured the UK and New York in 2013 and was shortlisted for both the British Composer Awards, and the 2014 Olivier Awards for Best New Opera Production. Alongside composing, David runs both the sheet music website 8notes.com and the popular YouTube channel 'David Bruce Composer'.

davidbruce.net



AVI AVITAL

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical Grammy, Avi Avital is one of the foremost ambassadors for his instrument. Passionate and “explosively charismatic” (New York Times) in live performance, he is a driving force behind the reinvigoration of the mandolin repertory. More than 90 contemporary compositions, 15 of them concertos, have been written for him, while his inspired re-imaginings of music for other instruments include the arrangements heard on his 2014 recording *Between Worlds*.

Enhanced by his infectious spirit of adventure and the warm rapport he fosters with his audience, Avital’s championship of his instrument is taking the mandolin centre stage. “The exciting part of being a classical mandolin player,” he says, “is that it opens a wide field for creative freedom. When I commission new pieces and engage with different musical styles, I feel that I am bringing to light new faces of this unique instrument, uncovering what is hiding there.”

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An exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, he has made four recordings for the label including his ECHO Klassik Award-winning Vivaldi (2015).

Recently released *Avital meets Avital* (2017) with oud/bassist, Omer Avital, explores their shared cultural heritage and brings their differing classical and jazz musical backgrounds into dialogue.

Earlier releases featured his own Bach concerto transcriptions (2012) and *Between Worlds* (2014), a cross-generic chamber collection exploring the nexus between classical and traditional music. He has also recorded for Naxos and SONY Classical winning a first ECHO Klassik Award for his 2008 collaboration with the David Orlowsky Trio.

Avi Avital appears courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon.

aviavital.com





Joel Link *violin*

Bryan Lee *violin*

Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt *viola*

Camden Shaw *cello*

The phenomenal Dover Quartet catapulted to international stardom following a stunning sweep of the 2013 Banff Competition, at which they won every prize. Named the Cleveland Quartet Award-winner, and honored with the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Dover has become one of the most in-demand ensembles in the world. The Quartet's rise from up-and-coming young ensemble to occupying a spot at the top of their field has been "practically meteoric" (Strings). With its burnished warmth, incisive rhythms, and natural phrasing, the Quartet's distinctive sound has helped confirm

its status as "the young American string quartet of the moment" (New Yorker). The Quartet serves as the quartet-in-residence for the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University, Chamber Music Northwest, Artosphere, the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, and Peoples' Symphony in New York, and was recently named the first-ever quartet-in-residence for the Kennedy Center.

Hailed as "the next Guarneri Quartet" (Chicago Tribune), the Dover Quartet draws from the lineage of that distinguished ensemble, as well that of the Cleveland and Vermeer Quartets; its members studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, where they were mentored extensively by Shmuel Ashkenasi, James Dunham, Norman Fischer, Kenneth Goldsmith, Joseph Silverstein, Arnold Steinhardt, Michael Tree, and Peter Wiley.

It was at Curtis that the Quartet first formed, and its name pays tribute to Dover Beach by fellow Curtis alumnus Samuel Barber.

The group has since returned for residencies to Rice in 2011-13, and to Curtis, where it became the conservatory's first Quartet-in-Residence, in 2013-14.

In addition, in 2015 the Dover was appointed the first Resident Ensemble of Peoples' Symphony Concerts in the 116-year history of New York City's oldest concert series.

doverquartet.com

Nora Fischer is challenging the way we listen to the voice. The Amsterdam-based singer is renowned for her adventurous approach to live performance and her creative projects fusing classical and contemporary repertoire. This can range from traditional concert programmes to genre-defying collaborations – such as her debut album HUSH, which was released on Deutsche Grammophon in April 2018, and her work with Yo-Yo Ma’s legendary Silkroad.

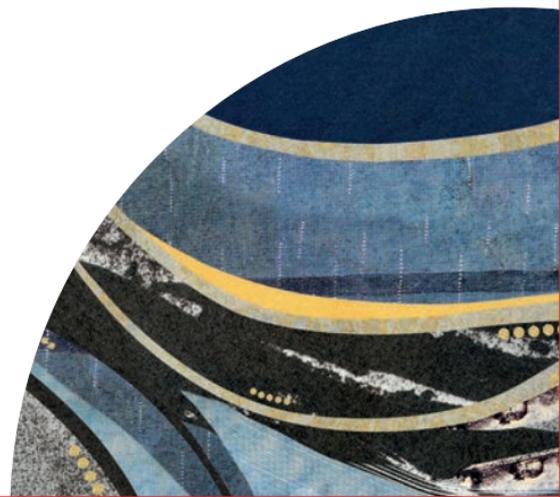
Using her voice as a versatile instrument, Nora’s repertoire ranges from Monteverdi to the many compositions that have been written for her in the present day. Her “affinity with experimental classical styles and sharp dramatic instincts” (New York Times) have led to many collaborations with leading contemporary composers, including Osvaldo Golijov, David Lang & Michel van der Aa. During the 2017/18 season, Nora signed with Universal Music and was nominated by the Concertgebouw to perform in major concert halls across Europe for the ECHO Rising Stars Tour.

© Sarah Wijzenbeek Photography



Nora’s unique approach has taken her around the globe, from the Philharmonie de Paris and Walt Disney Concert Hall to the Lowlands Pop Festival or a mysterious forest at the Oerol Theatre Festival. She has premiered many new operas, most recently working with the Dutch National Opera and Pierre Audi for the world premiere of Andriessen’s *Theatre of the World*. Other contemporary collaborations include performances with the Kronos Quartet, AskolSchönberg Ensemble and l’Arpeggiata.

norafischer.nl





THE NORTH WIND ENSEMBLE

Avi Avital *mandolin*

Bridget Kibbey *harp*

Dover Quartet

Tara Helen O'Connor *flute*

Romie de Guise-Langlois & Moran Katz *clarinets*

Britton Matthews *percussion*

Kris Saebo *double bass*

CAMERATA PACIFICA

Nicholas Daniel *oboe*

Ani Aznavoorian *cello*

Bridget Kibbey *harp*

Svet Stoyanov *percussion*

“Induce a dozen and more high-ranking soloists to take time out of their busy global schedules to give chamber-music concerts in California, and you have the miracle of modern artistic organization that is Camerata Pacifica.” The Irish Times.

Camerata Pacifica is *“the best chamber music reason to get out of the house in these parts,”* says the Los Angeles Times. Drawing the finest chamber artists from around the world, Camerata Pacifica explores the breadth of the chamber music genre in live, dynamic performances presented for a live, dynamic 21st-century audience.

cameratapacifica.org

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