

GLASS

RUTTER • FRANÇAIX

Harpsichord Concertos

Christopher D. Lewis, Harpsichord

John McMurtery, Flute

West Side Chamber Orchestra • Kevin Mallon



HARPSICHORD CONCERTOS

John Rutter (b. 1945) • Philip Glass (b. 1937) • Jean Françaix (1912–1997)

The three Harpsichord Concertos were composed by three composers of different generations and nationalities over the space of four decades. It may be safe to assume that each composer was attracted by the natural beauty of the harpsichord's historic timbres and aware of the magnificent precedent of J. S. Bach's seven complete concertos for a single harpsichord (BWV1052–1058), as well as his other concertos for two or more harpsichords (BWV 1060-1065).

Thus three composers of the twentieth century have attempted the delightful fusion of the harpsichord's characteristics with modern tonalities and instrumentation. The results prove to be amazingly varied and rich in musical inventiveness with the solo instrument able to revel in contemporary expressiveness. Of course Manuel de Falla's *Harpsichord Concerto* (written 1923-1926), composed in response to Wanda Landowska's request for new works for the harpsichord, was a further significant precedent for creating a twentieth-century musical context for an essentially baroque instrument, as well as similar concertos by Walter Leigh (1934), Frank Martin (1951-52), Roberto Gerhard (1955-1956), Bohuslav Martinů (1935), Michael Nyman (1995), and Jean-Jacques Coetzee (2008/2009), among others who have used the harpsichord in their work for textural purposes.

John Rutter is a prolific British composer, conductor, editor and record producer. A graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, he became director of music at the college from 1975 and under his guidance the choir soon achieved an international reputation. He founded the Cambridge Singers in 1981 and recorded with them on the *Collegium Records* label. Illness restricted his composition activities between 1985 and 1992 but over the years since then, particularly as a choral composer, Rutter has become internationally renowned.

In 1979 John Rutter was commissioned to write an instrumental work for the Cookham Music Festival, Berkshire, England. The concert programme for the event included a *Brandenburg Concerto* and thus the composer chose to pay homage to Bach and to 'the forms and styles

of Bach's day' by writing a Concerto. Rutter's 'homage', however, is full of surprises with many varied moods and textures. The work might well be considered as more of a concerto for flute than for harpsichord, but the elegant presence of the latter endows the music with distinctive colours. Thus the composer can offer homage to the great Baroque maestro from a twentieth-century perspective but with subtle nuances of 'early music' atmospherics.

Prelude opens with a slow tempo and presents a rich flute theme with the harpsichord in figurations delivered in a witty style. The contrasting *Ostinato* begins with an upbeat repeated bass line which ushers in an animated flute solo that could well have been written for a modern musical. *Aria* is a gently sombre slow interlude where the flute performs a plaintive haunting theme in minor mood. The jazzy *Waltz* which follows brings forward a catchy and energetic melody more reminiscent of Brubeck than Bach. After an introduction by the harpsichord the *Chanson* introduces a further lovely flute theme. The strings too have their moment here before the reprise where the harpsichord provides an arpeggiated accompaniment as the piece proceeds. The vigorous, dance-like *Rondeau* concludes the work, and includes, at last, some moments of solo harpsichord as well as some lively interplay between flute and harpsichord backed by the omnipresent strings.

Philip Glass, one of the most eminent and influential composers of the late twentieth century, was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and represents the second generation of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He studied at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, the University of Chicago, and The Juilliard School of Music, and in 1960 took lessons with Darius Milhaud. Between 1964 and 1966 Glass studied with Nadia Boulanger on a Fulbright Scholarship in Paris. Later, while working on a film score, he was influenced by the music of the great sitar player, Ravi Shankar, and in 1966 went to India. On returning to New York in 1967, Glass changed his compositional orientations once more after hearing the music of Steve Reich, which stimulated him to write in 'minimalist' concepts, though the

composer dislikes this label. Since that time his massive output has encompassed operas, instrumental music, concertos, symphonies, theatre and film scores, and choral works.

The *Concerto for Harpsichord and Chamber Orchestra* was finished in the spring of 2002 and given its première by the soloist Jillon Stoppels Dupree, who also made the first recording of the work, in the Benaroya Hall, Seattle on 21st September of the same year. Glass has commented about the concerto as follows: *Several years ago I was invited by Charles and Diana Carey to compose a work for harpsichord and chamber orchestra to be performed by the Northwest Chamber Orchestra in September 2002. I found the invitation intriguing for several reasons. For one, I have always been an admirer of the literature for harpsichord and studied some of the music from the Baroque period quite thoroughly, and have played a bit of that music myself. Secondly, I knew that the modern day harpsichord was capable of a fuller, more robust sound than was available in 'period' instruments and might make a handsome partner to a modern chamber orchestra ...*

I came up with a traditional three movement work. ... Concertos always are a tricky affair. ... The best result is always when the soloist and the orchestra both have had the chance to shine in the musical spotlight. I will be delighted if this new work in some manner succeeds in that way.

Glass's *Concerto for Harpsichord and Chamber Orchestra* certainly does succeed in its vigorous blend of contemporary harpsichord sounds with the driving power of the orchestra. From the opening entry by the harpsichord in the first movement, followed by the energies of both ensemble and soloist together, to the virtuosic concerto writing of the third movement, the composer provides an exciting experience of instrumental blending and solo expressiveness. The second movement treats us to a lyrical

quasi-Baroque theme in an extended dialogue between the two partners of the concerto form. The presence of the harpsichord has stimulated the composer to give the instrument its full potential both as a reminder of past musical glories and as a living medium in the modern age.

Jean Françaix began writing music at the age of six and also developed his talents as a very accomplished concert pianist. Like Philip Glass (only many years earlier), Françaix studied with Nadia Boulanger. His career was successfully launched in 1932 when his *Piano Concertino* was acclaimed at the Baden-Baden contemporary music festival. By the end of his life he had written some two hundred works including film and theatre scores, oratorios, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, ballets, ensemble pieces and instrumental works. Françaix composed mainly within the neoclassical tradition preferring to steer clear of atonal experimentation however fashionable it was for much of his career.

The wit and elegance of Françaix's style are evident throughout his Concerto. The first movement, *Toccata I (Allegro)* is energetic with perpetual activity with repeated chords from the harpsichord while *Toccata II* features a Bach-like harpsichord solo with accompaniment from plucked basses. *Andantino*, the slow movement, begins with harpsichord against the orchestra in gentle tones before the progression to a faster, more excitable, tempo. Some poignant themes make their presence felt here leading towards a serene finale. *Minuet* begins with a simple statement from the soloist before the orchestra replies. The following dialogue between harpsichord and orchestra, each with concise entries, build in intensity like an extended conversation. The *Finale* is a lively discourse between soloist and partners in vivacious and felicitous mood.

Graham Wade

Cover image

The harpsichord pictured on the cover is a reproduction of a 17th-century Flemish original and was built to special order by Zuckermann Harpsichords International. The lid art is by Tanyana Nivina, inspired by a Guardi view of Venice. The glass 'Split Wall' sculpture, behind the instrument, is by Danny Lane of London. The photograph is by Drew Kelly.

Christopher D. Lewis

Christopher D. Lewis is described as the Welsh Contemporary Harpsichordist and is currently based in San Francisco, California. Born in Rhiwbina, in Wales, he moved to North America in 2005 to study harpsichord with Luc Beauséjour and Hank Knox at McGill University, Montreal. In 2010 he moved to California and completed a Master's degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Corey Jamason, specialising in contemporary music. In his 2010 début as a recording artist he released *The New Fangled Clavier* through the New Mix Music label, featuring old and new music and works commissioned especially for this CD. In late summer 2012 he completed his first orchestral album and joined the Naxos label in 2013.

John McMurtery

John McMurtery is section flautist of the New York City Opera and Assistant Professor of Flute at Western Illinois University. He is principal flautist with the Opera Orchestra of New York and has served as acting piccoloist with the Oregon Symphony. He performs regularly with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the New Jersey Symphony, and has appeared as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble, the Artemis Chamber Ensemble, the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra, and at the 2005 Lincoln Center Festival. He performs with Memphis-based ensemble Luna Nova, the Society for Chromatic Art (New York), and UpTown Flutes.

Kevin Mallon

Conductor, Kevin Mallon was brought up in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He attended Chetham's School of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music and Dartington College of Arts, studying composition with Peter Maxwell Davies and conducting with John Eliot Gardiner, and specializing in baroque violin. He became concertmaster with Le Concert Spirituel and Les Arts Florissants in Paris and led and directed The Irish Baroque Orchestra before moving to Canada to take up posts with Tafelmusik and Toronto University. In 1999 he founded the Aradia Ensemble, with which he has toured widely, and became conductor of the Toronto Chamber Orchestra. He has made some fifty recordings for Naxos. From 2005-2009, he was Artistic Director of Opera 2005 in Ireland. In 2010 he was appointed Music Director of the Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra, Ottawa and in 2011, Conductor of New York's West Side Chamber Orchestra. Mallon is also Conductor of the Centre for Operatic Studies in Italy. He is also a frequent guest conductor in Canada and around the world.

West Side Chamber Orchestra

The West Side Chamber Orchestra is based in New York City's West Side. Founded by the oboist Kathy Halvorson, this new orchestra is a collection of the city's finest classical musicians, banding together in a bold initiative to counter a faltering work environment. Greeted with critical praise after its inaugural concert in September 2011, the orchestra plays all periods of music, from baroque to modern (including new commissions), but is making a speciality of the classical repertoire of the Enlightenment period. The approach is to extend to all periods of music the lightness, transparency and purity of tone it has achieved in the earlier repertoire. Under the influence and leadership of the enthusiastic Irish conductor Kevin Mallon, the orchestra presents a series of concerts in the historic St Peter's Church in Chelsea, New York City. The orchestra is proud to be releasing its first recording for Naxos, with plans for further projects.

1st Violins: Asako Matsuya *Concertmaster*, Amelia Roosevelt, Abigail Karr, Ralph Allen, Adda Kridler

2nd Violins: Mioi Takeda, Marika Holmqvist, Zoe Auerbach, Aniela Eddy

Violas: Stephanie Griffin, Andrea Andros, Eva Gerard • **Cellos:** Amy Laing, Katie Rietman, Katherine Chervas

Double Bass: Troy Rinker • **Flute:** John McMurtery • **Oboes:** Kathy Halvorson, Karisa Werdon

Bassoon: William Hestand • **French horns:** Eric Davis, Sara Della Posta

John McMurtery
Photo: Richard Blinkoff



Special thanks from Christopher D. Lewis to Edward Brewer, Kathy Daly, Dash Henley, Corey Jamason, Nicole Paiement, John Spitzer and Robert Tiff for their invaluable help and advice.

Christopher D. Lewis
Photo: Drew Kelly



Kevin Mallon
Photo: Emily Lockhart



West Side Chamber Orchestra
Photo: Thomas Deneuille / I CARE IF YOU LISTEN



Attracted by a delightful fusion of early music sonorities with modern expressiveness, the three composers in this amazingly rich and varied programme build on the magnificent harpsichord concerto legacy of J.S. Bach. John Rutter's beautiful *Suite Antique* is full of rich and haunting themes, with a significant solo flute part and a jazzy *Waltz* which is as much Brubeck as Bach. Philip Glass delivers an exciting experience of virtuoso instrumental blending and solo expressiveness, and with typical wit and elegance. Jean Françaix's *Concerto* is terrific fun throughout.

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Harpsichord Concertos

John RUTTER (b. 1945)

Suite Antique* 20:11

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| 1 | 1. Prelude: Moderato con moto tranquillo | 4:16 |
| 2 | 2. Ostinato: Vivace | 1:42 |
| 3 | 3. Aria: Andante | 3:33 |
| 4 | 4. Waltz: A Jazz waltz | 3:37 |
| 5 | 5. Chanson: Andante espressivo ma con moto | 4:06 |
| 6 | Rondeau: Vivace | 2:54 |

Philip GLASS (b. 1937)

Concerto for Harpsichord and Chamber Orchestra 24:08

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| 7 | I | 8:26 |
| 8 | II | 10:51 |
| 9 | III | 4:51 |

Jean FRANÇAIX (1912–1997)

Concerto pour Clavecin et Ensemble Instrumental 19:37

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| 10 | I. Toccata I | 2:39 |
| 11 | II. Toccata II | 2:44 |
| 12 | III. Andantino | 4:13 |
| 13 | IV. Menuet | 5:42 |
| 14 | V. Finale | 4:17 |

**Christopher D. Lewis,
Harpsichord**

John McMurtery, Flute*

**West Side Chamber
Orchestra • Kevin Mallon**

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, 10–12 September 2012
 Producers: Norbert Kraft & Bonnie Silver • Engineers: Norbert Kraft, Jeanne Velonis • Session Production & Editing: Norbert Kraft • Publishers: Oxford University Press (tracks 1–6); Dunvagen/Schirmer (7–9); Schott Music International (10–14) • French style harpsichord by D. Jacques Way, 1994 • Booklet notes: Graham Wade
 Cover photo by Drew Kelly of a reproduction of a 17th-century Flemish harpsichord (see booklet for details)
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