

The background of the entire cover is a watercolor painting of a seascape. The sky is composed of horizontal washes of light blue, grey, and pale yellow. The middle ground shows dark, layered washes of purple, blue, and brown, suggesting distant land or mountains. The foreground is dominated by a vibrant, textured blue representing the sea. A bright yellow sun is partially obscured by a dark horizontal line, likely the horizon, on the left side of the image.

signum
CLASSICS

DAVID MATTHEWS
A VISION OF THE SEA

BBC PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
JAC VAN STEEN

A VISION OF THE SEA

DAVID MATTHEWS

1	Toward Sunrise, Op. 117: Lento e quieto	[9.42]
Symphony No. 8, Op. 131		
2	I. Andante – Allegro energico	[8.59]
3	II. Adagio, con molto sentimento	[10.35]
4	III. Allegretto giocoso	[9.13]
5	Sinfonia, Op. 67: Andante – Allegro	[8.18]
A Vision of the Sea, Op. 125		
6	Poco lento e calmo	[5.27]
7	Vivacissimo	[6.12]
8	Maestoso	[4.22]
9	Lento	[4.54]
	Total timings:	[67.47]

BBC PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
JAC VAN STEEN CONDUCTOR

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CONDUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

It has been a great privilege and pleasure to study, rehearse and finally perform David's symphonic music in a variety of programmes, not least because working on his music means working with David in person: exchanging thoughts on his orchestration, dynamics, tempi and orchestral colours ... The sound world he creates provides a conductor with the possibility to show the full capacities of a good orchestra shining for the maximum!

I will never forget David's own words in his "Thank You" to the members of the BBC Philharmonic orchestra: "I try to write music which you simply enjoy playing". That is a great challenge in itself – demanding to play but utterly rewarding.

Jac van Steen, June 2020

COMPOSER'S INTRODUCTION

Of the four pieces on this disc, only one is a numbered symphony, but three of them at least have a strong relation with the symphonic idea, which has obsessed me since I started composing at the age of sixteen (my first piece was a large-scale symphony, and I wrote several others before my 'official' No. 1). Hans Keller defined the symphony as "the large-scale integration of contrasts", and this concise definition has been as much my aim in the five works I have called symphonic poems as in my nine symphonies. The difference is that while symphonies for me have been purely abstract pieces, symphonic poems like *A Vision of the Sea* have in addition a programmatic aspect. I am here in agreement with Sibelius, who made a similar distinction between symphony and symphonic poem. *Toward Sunrise* is too short to be a symphonic poem; I suppose 'tone poem' would be the appropriate name for it, if I had to give one.

I have a deep regard for the BBC Philharmonic: it has given performances of eleven of my works, five of which it has commissioned, including the Eighth Symphony and *A Vision of the Sea*. Jac van Steen has previously recorded four of my pieces,

and I cannot praise him highly enough as an interpreter of my music. And I would also like to thank all the members of the BBC Philharmonic for their magnificent playing, and the orchestra's chief producer Mike George for the superb sound he has created for this CD.

The starting point of *Toward Sunrise*, which I wrote between 2011 and 2012, was hearing the sound of the sun, as recorded by scientists at Sheffield University and used as the coda to the last episode of Neil MacGregor's radio series *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. As reported by Richard Grey, science correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, these are "musical harmonies produced by the magnetic field in the outer atmosphere of the sun. [The scientists] found that huge magnetic loops that have been observed coiling away from the outer layer of the sun's atmosphere, known as coronal loops, vibrate like strings on a musical instrument." The recording I heard had the interval of a rising fourth, C-F, against a sustained harmony of these two notes. It seemed uncannily appropriate – an *Urmotiv* – and I transferred these sounds to low strings, with a contrabassoon playing the almost inaudible low B underneath the C-F harmony, and gradually

built up to a climax. The piece ends with this lowest possible B (the basses with their C string tuned down), sounding together with the highest possible B on string harmonics.

I had seen the films that Barrie Gavin has made to accompany George Benjamin's *A Mind of Winter* and Toru Takemitsu's *How Slow the Wind* with landscape imagery from Wales and Scotland. I decided to write a piece of my own that Barrie could accompany with film, and I was delighted when he agreed to this. He sent me a lot of footage of landscape imagery – much of it of mountains – which acted as inspiration. I imagined the piece as starting in late afternoon and proceeding through dusk and a short episode of night to a dawn at the end. In form it is a set of variations on the opening phrase, which incorporates the rising fifth. There is some birdsong, as in many of my recent pieces, including a curlew in the quiet section before the concluding sunrise. *Toward Sunrise* is dedicated to Barrie Gavin for his 80th birthday in 2015, when the piece was first performed at the Lichfield Festival by the City of Birmingham Orchestra conducted by Lahav Shani.

My *Eighth Symphony* was commissioned by the BBC Philharmonic, composed in 2014, and

premiered in 2015 at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, conducted by H. K. Gruber, to whom it is dedicated. The Seventh Symphony had been the culmination of my four attempts at a single-movement form. For the Eighth I returned to the three-movement form of my Sixth, but with the second and third movements slow/fast instead of fast/slow. The first movement has an *Andante* introduction, beginning with a descending phrase which is used in a varied form in all three movements, followed by a concise *Allegro energico*. A number of ideas rapidly lead to a more extended theme on the trumpets in a bright D major. This reaches a brief climax before a development section during which the theme tries but fails to restate itself in the movement's opening tonality of G. A big crescendo over a pedal D seems to be leading to the re-establishment of G; instead the trumpet theme reappears as a ghost of itself on piccolo, beginning in C sharp minor and wandering through various keys until the return of the *Andante* introduction, now extended into a coda, and ending on the chord with which the movement began.

The second, slow movement is clearly in G minor and its tone is elegiac. It became a memorial piece for my friend Norman Worrall, a composer,

a lover of music, and a Mancunian, who died while I was writing it. The central section is a fugue for strings before a powerful return of the opening section and a quiet, lamenting coda. In complete contrast, the finale opens in a carefree G major. It consists of four dance sections, each lasting just over a minute, all of them exuberant in tone. At the end of the fourth dance, a waltz, there is an interlude with a viola theme accompanied by downward glissandi on the violins, which was inspired by vapour trails in the sky over Deal on the Kent coast. The four dance sections then reappear in reverse order, the first three abbreviated and the last extended into a coda. At the very end, the theme of the first movement's introduction is heard again, now free of tension, and in the last three bars the opening of the trumpet theme is played by a bassoon, quietly affirming the G major it had always been searching for.

While I no longer feel the need to defend my use of tonality, since it seems obvious now that non-tonal music has not replaced it, perhaps I should say something about my light-hearted finale, with its use of melodic ideas that some might think naïve. Of course I'm aware that I'm going very much against the zeitgeist, and that most major art today is pessimistic in tone – which, given

the state of the world, is hardly surprising. Yet shouldn't it still be possible to express feelings of delight, love of life, elation? They will inevitably be mingled with other, darker moods. But if we cannot contrast one with the other, then surely we are not fully human.

I wrote the original version of *Sinfonia* in 1995 for the English Chamber Orchestra, who commissioned it to mark their 35th anniversary, and it was premiered by them at the Barbican Hall in London in 1996. At the time I was dissatisfied with the piece, but apart from a few minor revisions I did nothing with it until the summer of 2015 when I decided to rewrite it; in doing so I cut out over two minutes of music, and also made considerable alterations to the musical texture, including the addition of an extra pair of horns to the orchestra.

When I was asked to compose the piece, my original intention was to write an overture. Concert overtures, however, normally have some programmatic content, which this piece does not. So I decided on 'Sinfonia', which implies a relation with classical sonata form. The piece begins with a substantial introduction, featuring many of the instruments as soloists. In the main *Allegro*, purely rhythmic material (with

prominent timpani) is contrasted with more lyrical music (for the strings) and this juxtaposition provokes an energetic development and a modified recapitulation. There is a coda in a more flamboyantly lyrical style, and *Sinfonia* ends with the bitonal chord on which it began.

I dedicated this new version to my brother Colin on his 70th birthday, with love and admiration.

A Vision of the Sea was commissioned by the BBC Philharmonic for the 2013 BBC Proms, where it was conducted by Juanjo Mena. I wrote it partly in London and partly in Deal, where I compose much of my music. My house there is within sound of the sea, and I daily observed its changing moods and colours. *A Vision of the Sea* is the third piece I have written influenced by this particular part of the English Channel. The title derives from an unfinished poem by Shelley, which describes a violent storm. There is no actual storm in my piece, but I liked the title, and chose two lines from the poem as an epigraph:

*Round sea-birds and wrecks, paved with
Heaven's azure smile,
The wide world of waters is vibrating.*

The herring gull calls heard at the start are pervasive throughout the piece: as I was composing I could almost always hear them. And the view of the sea from Deal looks towards the Goodwin Sands, a notorious place for wrecks.

A Vision of the Sea began with a small piano piece I wrote in 2012 called *Cap Gris-Nez* after the highest point of the French cliffs, often visible from Deal. I was also thinking of Debussy finishing *La mer* in the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne and looking across the Channel towards France. I decided to open my symphonic poem with a transcription of the opening of *Cap Gris-Nez*, which evokes a calm sea and the sound of herring gulls. After this, the first main section suggests a gently moving sea, its initial violin theme growing out of the descending four-note phrase heard on high violins at the start of the introduction. This is followed by a substantial scherzo, which develops the material heard so far, and perhaps conjures the spirit of 'Jeux de vagues' from *La mer* without encroaching too much on Debussy's inimitable sound-world. The scherzo overflows into a brief but forceful recapitulation of the first section: the sea demonstrating its full power. The stern chaconne that follows is also a metaphor for the power of the sea. It reaches a climactic chord and subsides into stillness.

The last section of the piece begins with a portrait of a pre-dawn, calm seascape, ruffled only by herring gull cries. It leads to an evocation of sunrise, which, because Deal faces east, I have often observed on clear mornings. The sunrise is the same one as in *Toward Sunrise*, but with an expanded orchestration.

A Vision of the Sea is dedicated to Sally Cavender, Performance Music Director of my publisher, Faber Music, in gratitude for her many years of dedicated promotion of my music, and friendship, and also because, as a native of Whitstable, where the Thames Estuary meets the English Channel, she knows this sea as intimately as I do.

David Matthews

DAVID MATTHEWS

David Matthews was born in London in 1943. He learned the piano at an early age but did not start composing until the age of sixteen when, hearing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for the first time, he decided to write a symphony himself. As there was no music at his school, he read Classics at the University of Nottingham – which has made him an Honorary Doctor of Music – while all the time intending to pursue a career as a composer. In his twenties he studied composition privately with Anthony Milner, and was also much helped by the advice and encouragement of Nicholas Maw, and later by Peter Sculthorpe. He spent four years as an assistant to Benjamin Britten at Aldeburgh in the late 1960s. He was Music Advisor to the ECO in the 1980s and 1990s and Artistic Director of the Deal Festival from 1989 until 2003. He has largely avoided teaching, but to support his composing career has done editorial work (he collaborated with Deryck Cooke on the performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony and is currently editing major works by Vaughan Williams), orchestration of film music and arranging. He has also written books on Tippett and Britten and articles and reviews for various journals. His music is widely played in Britain and around the world, and is frequently broadcast.



His music includes nine symphonies (all of which have now been recorded), five symphonic poems, seven concertos and fourteen string quartets (which are being recorded on Toccata Classics by the Kreutzer Quartet). His vocal music includes a large-scale *Vespers*, recorded by the Bach Choir and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under David Hill on Dutton Epoch. His numerous chamber works include seven commissions for the Nash Ensemble, most of them recorded for CD. He is currently finishing an opera, *Anna*, to a libretto by the late Sir Roger Scruton.
www.david-matthews.co.uk



Based in Salford, Greater Manchester and having earned worldwide recognition as one of the most adventurous, innovative, and versatile orchestras in Europe, the BBC Philharmonic brings a rich and diverse variety of classical music to the broadest range of listeners. While performing more than 100 concerts a year for broadcast on BBC Radio 3, it undertakes its flagship season at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall every year from September to June - a residency that features world and UK premieres alongside the performance of landmark classics and little-heard repertoire rarities. One of the BBC's six orchestras and choirs, it also appears annually at the BBC Proms, performs across the North of England, tours frequently to Europe and beyond, and records regularly for Chandos, its catalogue now extending to more than 250 recordings and more than one million albums sold. In October 2018 the orchestra appointed the Israel-born Omer Meir Wellber, internationally recognised as one of the most exciting young conductors working today, as its new Chief Conductor - a move that Richard Morrison (The Times) hailed as 'arguably the most inspired musical appointment

the BBC has made for years'. The orchestra maintains strong relationships with the Finnish conductor and violinist John Storgårds, its Chief Guest Conductor, and the former BBC Young Musician of the Year Mark Simpson, its Composer in Association. Making bold moves to re-imagine the orchestral experience, the BBC Philharmonic enthusiastically explores new ways of making classical music accessible to the widest audiences. Working with the BBC's Salford-based Research and Development team, it records many of its concerts in Binaural Sound - creating high quality three-dimensional audio for headphone listeners - and has brought new technology into the concert hall through its Notes web-app, which beams free digital programme notes to smartphones during concerts.
www.bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

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Yuri Torchinsky Leader
Midori Sugiyama Assistant Leader
Thomas Bangbala Sub Leader
Alison Fletcher Principal
Kevin Flynn Sub Principal
Lucy Baker *
Martin Clark
Clare Dixon †
Julian Gregory
Austeja Juskaiyte *
Karen Mainwaring †
Catherine Mandelbaum
Frances Pye
Robert Wild *
Philip Brett †
Ian Flower
Austeja Juskaiyte *
Sarah Percy
Elizabeth Rossi *
Dorin Tuca †
Alison Williams

Violin 2

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Glen Perry Assistant Principal
Gemma Bass
Lucy Flynn
Sophie Hudgell †
Nigel Jay
Rebecca Mathews
Rachel Porteous †

Melody Prophet
Matthew Watson
Alyson Zuntz *
Sian Goodwin
Oliver Morris
Natalie Purton †
Willemijn Steenbakkens †
Ana Vale *

Viola

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Kimi Makino Assistant Principal
Bernadette Anguige Sub Principal †
Kathryn Anstey
Matthew Compton
Fiona Dunkley
Alexandra Fletcher
Nicholas Howson
Rachel Janes
Cheryl Law †
Ruth Montgomery
Roisin Ni Dhuill
Martin Wallington
Cheryl Law †

Cello

Peter Dixon Principal †
Maria Zacharaidou Assistant Principal
Steven Callow Sub Principal
Rebecca Aldersea
Melissa Edwards
Elinor Gow †

Abigail Hayward *
Abi Hyde-Smith †
Peggy Nolan *
Jessica Schaefer
Miriam Skinner
Elise Wild
Lucy Arch *

Double Bass

Ronan Dunne Principal
Daniel Whibley Sub Principal †
Alice Durrant
Ivor Hodgson
Miriam Shaftoe
Peter Willmott
David Burndrett †
Damian Gonzalez †
James Goode †
Marianne Schofield *
Mhairi Simpson *

Flute

Joshua Batty Guest Principal †
Victoria Daniel Sub Principal
Fiona Slominska *

Piccolo

Jennifer Hutchinson †
Holly Melia *

Oboe

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Kenny Sturgeon †
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Cor Anglais

Gillian Callow

Clarinet

John Bradbury Principal
Fraser Langton †
Matthew Dunn *

Bass Clarinet

Colin Pownall

Bassoon

Roberto Giaccaglia Principal †
Gretha Tuls Guest Principal †
Simon Durnford

Contra Bassoon

Bill Anderson

Horn

Stephen Craigen Guest Principal †
Alex Wide Guest Principal *
Rebecca Hill Associate Principal *
Phillip Stoker
Mark Wood
Jenny Cox †
Tom Kane *
Chris Pointon †

Trumpet

Jamie Prophet Principal *
Chris Evans Associate Principal
Gary Farr Sub Principal †
Peter Athans *
Tim Barber †
Richard Cowen †
Laura Wilson *

Trombone

Richard Brown Principal †
Gary MacPhee
Robert Burtenshaw †

Bass Trombone

Russell Taylor

Tuba

Harry Cunningham *
Richard Evans †

Timpani

Paul Turner Principal

Percussion

Paul Patrick Principal
Geraint Daniel
Rob Lea
Elizabeth Gilliver *
Harry Percy *

Harp

Clifford Lantaff Principal

Piano

Paul Janes †
James Keefe *

Celeste

Paul Janes †

† = 7th November 2017 only

* = 6th December 2017 only

JAC VAN STEEN

Jac van Steen was born in The Netherlands and studied orchestra and choir conducting at the Brabant Conservatory of Music.

Since participating in the BBC Conductors Seminar in 1985, he enjoys a very busy career and conducts the best orchestras in Europe, which included holding the posts of Music Director and Chief Conductor of the National Ballet of The Netherlands, the orchestras of Bochum, Nürnberg, the Staatskapelle Weimar, The Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra of Dortmund, Musikkollegium Winterthur and Principal Guest conductor at the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. At present he is Principal Guest conductor of the Ulster Orchestra and the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

He made his debut with Opera North in 2013, as well as with the Volksoper in Vienna. In 2015 he has made a very successful debut at the Garsington Opera. He returned to Opera North for several productions and developed a yearly relationship with the Volksoper Vienna and bi-yearly appearances for Garsington Opera such as with Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 2017 and Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* in 2019. In



© Simon van Bortel

the 2018-19 season he made his debut at the Oslo Opera with two Puccini productions. Jac van Steen visits the UK regularly with the British orchestras such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, the CBSO, Royal Philharmonic, Ulster Orchestra and made his debut in Tokyo with the New Japan Philharmonic and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. Jac van Steen participates in numerous recordings for the BBC, as well as live broadcasts of his concerts. There are a substantial number of CD recordings of his work with various orchestras.

Besides his activities as conductor, he is dedicated to teaching and is Professor of Conducting at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague. He also regularly works with the Royal Northern College of Music and Chetham School of Music (Manchester) as well as the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music (London). In May-June 2018 he led the Jette Parker Young Artists showcase as organised by the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, London.

© Solly Casadeu
A Vision of the Sea

*Based on birds and animals, paired with Holst's ocean sounds.
 The only world of water is shunting*
 Shelley

Poco lento e calmo $\text{♩} = 472$ David Matthews, op.125

Excerpt from the first page of 'A Vision of the Sea'. Reprinted by kind permission of Faber Music.

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A BBC Recording



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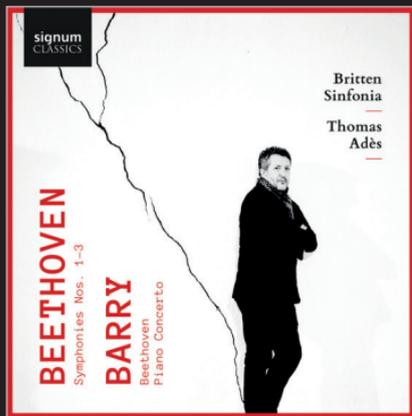
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SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middlesex, UB6 7LQ, UK.

+44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com

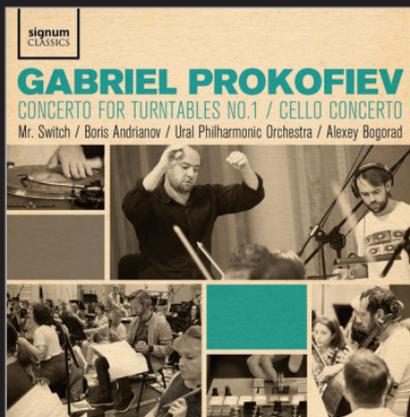
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