



Peter  
**MAXWELL  
DAVIES**

**Caroline Mathilde  
– Ballet Suites**

**Chat Moss**

**Ojai Festival Overture**

**BBC Philharmonic**

**Maxwell Davies**





## Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934)

### Caroline Mathilde – Ballet Suites • Chat Moss • Ojai Festival Overture

Few composers can claim to have composed in every genre as has Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and that includes two full-length ballet scores. Both of these ballets were collaborations with the controversial Danish choreographer Flemming Flindt – beginning in November 1978 with *Salome* (after the biblical story which had already been a sensational ballet with music by the French composer Florent Schmitt some seven decades before) and continuing in March 1991 with *Caroline Mathilde* (after a particularly poignant episode in Danish history). Whereas the former (written between the first two symphonies) draws directly upon elements of Maxwell Davies' earlier expressionist language, the latter is demonstrably more within the lineage of Romantic era ballets which has had relatively few major additions over the post-war era (it might be mentioned that neither ballet has received a full staging by any British company).

The present recording features both of the suites as adapted from each of the ballet's two acts. The first was premiered at the Town Hall, Cheltenham on 12th July 1991 – Maxwell Davies conducting the BBC Philharmonic, while the second was initially heard at the Royal Festival Hall, London on 6th October 1992 – Maxwell Davies conducting the Royal Philharmonic. The scenario concerns the fate of Caroline Mathilde (younger sister of George III), who married the unstable Christian VII of Denmark. The *First Suite* starts with a nuptial game that features king and princess on mobile pedestals. What follows portrays the king's treatment by Dr Struensee and the queen's uncertainty. The suite (as also the ballet) concludes with two pas de deux: the first is for the royal couple, while the second reflects the queen's growing attraction to the 'miracle' doctor.

A *Public Square* opens with lively martial music for woodwind and percussion, strongly redolent of the Renaissance setting of the ballet, but this is offset with more contemporary writing for the strings. These two musical types are then brought together as an ominous

climax is reached, only to subside as *Inside the Castle* gets underway. This commences with agitated writing from woodwind and brass, subsiding to leave strings with a halting threnody which quickly expands across the orchestra while retaining its ambivalent poise. More percussive elements soon emerge but the mood stays calm going into *The Queen's Chamber*, centred on a plaintive folk-inflected melody for oboe that is soon taken up by cor anglais then clarinet as the strings' regretful undertow slowly winds down to a pause.

From here *The Royal Chambers* (as long as were the earlier three pieces combined) opens with a songful idea for flute over a harp accompaniment, with occasional timpani rolls that ruffle the prevailing calm. The latter become more threatening when brass and percussion aggressively enter the fray, earlier ideas now returning in a distorted and parodistic manner that results in an intense response from the strings, thinning out to leave individual strings and woodwind musing uncertainly. A solo cello now unfolds a plangent melodic line that slowly expands across the strings as a whole, solo violin continuing above tremolo strings before the music builds inexorably toward a sustained climax over pounding timpani. This retains its emotional potency through to the anguished peroration with which the suite ends.

The *Second Suite* opens with *A Public Square*, a boisterous dance during which the populace cruelly mocks Caroline and Struensee. This confrontational music between wind and strings presently exudes elements of parody on the way to its tensile culmination. After this comes an adagio, *The Conspiracy*, whose variations evoke the contrasted attitudes of the conspirators, ruthlessly controlled by the Dowager Queen. Despite a more conciliatory tone on strings, strident elements are never far away on brass and percussion – the musical types gradually coming together for a violent outburst that begins *The Masked Ball: Court Dance*. The conspiracy duly plays out, represented here by a gavotte and a slow passacaglia that leads to a pas de deux for

Caroline and Struensee. The strings' earlier theme is taken up in rhythmically trenchant terms with brass, woodwind and percussion making up its sardonic continuation. Fanfaring gestures now cease, to leave harp and marimba at *The Masked Ball: Pas de deux*, their evocative interplay soon making way for the strings whose earnest response continues on solo bassoon then brass, before strings take this music through to its despairing climax.

From here *The Arrest*, at the end of which Christian, Caroline and Struensee are forcibly held apart in music of considerable violence, initiates a halting motion on strings which is soon given definition by percussion and solo trumpet. This activity spreads across the orchestra then culminates on strings and brass (underpinned by aggressive rim shots on side drum), before thunderous percussion reveal fragmentary remnants of what went before. *The Execution* starts with a variant of the earlier halting motion on strings, soon becoming more strident on brass and percussion as the previous intensity is regained and capped by another percussive outburst, underlining Christian's demise. This moves into *The Exile of Caroline Mathilde*, whose somnolent opening is replete with ethereal vocalise for offstage singers, as interjections from flexatone and percussion parody earlier ideas on wind and brass. Musing woodwind and strings provide an elegiac epilogue as Caroline is sent into exile.

This recording is rounded off by two shorter while very different orchestral pieces. *Chat Moss*, an area of marshy land between Manchester and Liverpool, near to Maxwell Davies's childhood home in Leigh and which a century before witnessed one of the most ingenious stretches of George Stephenson's railway line between the two cities, inspired one of the subtlest within his long sequence of pieces for amateur musicians. Written (though by no

means straightforwardly) for school orchestra, and first performed by pupils from St Edward's College Liverpool with John Moseley on 16th March 1994, this five-minute piece takes the form of a tone poem in which expressive evocation and formal ingenuity are deftly combined. The main theme is heard in the middle registers of woodwind and strings, providing the basis for the informal variations which follow. These feature solo oboe, trumpet and clarinet in turn – before the theme is taken up by trumpets and woodwind for an animated episode whose climax leads towards a subdued ending on lower strings, trumpets heightening the introspective mood.

By contrast, *Ojai Festival Overture* is very much a product of Maxwell Davies' fondness for American landscape and culture – specifically that of the Californian coast which he first encountered while on a Harkness fellowship during the summer of 1963. Commissioned by Robert Calder Maxwell Davies Jr, it was given its première by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with the composer at the Libbey Park Bowl, Ojai on 1st June 1991. Formally this piece is redolent of the concert overtures that were a mainstay of concerts through to the mid-twentieth century: Rossini has been mentioned in relation to its lightness and effervescence, though a more audible influence is that of Copland in the music's primary colours together with its vividly extrovert character. Over animated timpani, the music proceeds in an increasingly lively repartee for woodwind and strings. The central section features a ruminative folk-like theme for solo woodwind over tremolo strings, before the earlier activity resumes and is goaded on by the timpani towards a forceful culmination that brings a climactic statement of the main theme on brass and strings.

Richard Whitehouse

## BBC Philharmonic



Photo: Sussie Ahlberg

HK 'Nali' Gruber is Composer/Conductor and former Chief Conductor Gianandrea Noseda is now Conductor Laureate. The BBC Philharmonic has had its roots in the city of Manchester since its foundation in 1934 as the BBC Northern Orchestra. In 1982, soon after moving to the BBC's new building on Oxford Road in Manchester, it changed its name to the BBC Philharmonic. As an internationally-renowned orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic regularly tours in Europe and Asia.

## Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

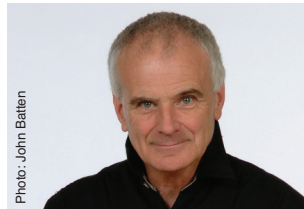


Photo: John Batten

Universally acknowledged as one of the foremost composers of our time, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies has made a significant contribution to musical history through his wide-ranging and prolific output. He lives in the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland, where he writes most of his music. In a work list spanning more than five decades, he has written across a broad range of styles, yet his music always communicates directly and powerfully, whether in his profoundly argued symphonic works, his music-theatre works or witty light orchestral works. Maxwell Davies' major dramatic works include two full-length ballets, music-theatre works *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, and operas including *Resurrection*, *The Lighthouse*, *The Doctor of Myddfai*, *Taverner* and *Kommilitonen!* (Young Blood!). His huge output of orchestral work comprises numerous symphonies and concerti, and light orchestral works such as *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* and *Mavis in Las Vegas* (8.572348). His substantial chamber and instrumental catalogue includes the landmark cycle of ten string quartets, the *Naxos Quartets* (8.505225), described in the *Financial Times* as "one of the most impressive musical statements of our time". Maxwell Davies has held the position of Composer/Conductor with both the Royal Philharmonic and BBC Philharmonic Orchestras. He has guest-conducted orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Russian National Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra. He retains close links with the St Magnus Festival, Orkney's annual arts festival which he founded in 1977, is Composer Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and is Visiting Professor at London's Royal Academy of Music and Christchurch University Canterbury. Maxwell Davies was knighted in 1987 and was appointed Master of the Queen's Music from 2004-2014, in which rôle he sought to raise the profile of music in Great Britain, as well as writing many works for Her Majesty the Queen and for royal occasions.

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Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' ballet *Caroline Mathilde* premièred in 1991 and has been highly acclaimed ever since. Its story concerns the tragic marriage of Caroline to Christian VII of Denmark and is cast in a musical language that embraces expressionism, drama, parody, and overt lyricism. The two concert suites chart the young queen's fall from grace and her eventual banishment into exile. *Chat Moss* is a richly textured tone poem, while by contrast the *Ojai Festival Overture* is a lively and extrovert concert piece reflecting Maxwell Davies' fondness for American landscape and culture.

## Sir Peter MAXWELL DAVIES (b. 1934)

<b>Caroline Mathilde – Ballet</b>		<b>7 III. The Masked Ball –</b>	
<b>Act I: Concert Suite</b>		<b>Court Dance</b>	<b>4:31</b>
<b>(1991)</b>		<b>8 IV. The Masked Ball –</b>	
<b>25:08</b>		<b>Pas de deux</b>	<b>6:28</b>
<b>1 I. A Public Square</b>	<b>3:43</b>	<b>9 V. The Arrest</b>	<b>5:12</b>
<b>2 II. Inside the Castle</b>	<b>5:19</b>	<b>10 VI. The Execution</b>	<b>5:13</b>
<b>3 III. The Queen's Chamber</b>	<b>2:48</b>	<b>11 VII. The Exile of</b>	
<b>4 IV. The Royal Chambers</b>	<b>13:19</b>	<b>Caroline Mathilde</b>	<b>9:11</b>
<b>Act II: Concert Suite</b>		<b>12 Chat Moss (1993)</b>	<b>5:36</b>
<b>(1992)</b>		<b>13 Ojai Festival Overture</b>	
<b>37:34</b>		<b>(1991)</b>	<b>5:35</b>
<b>5 I. A Public Square</b>	<b>2:48</b>		
<b>6 II. The Conspiracy</b>	<b>4:10</b>		

## BBC Philharmonic • Maxwell Davies

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