

Matthew TAYLOR

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME TWO
CLARINET CONCERTINO
VIOLIN CONCERTINO
SYMPHONY NO. 6
OBOE CONCERTO



FIRST RECORDINGS

James Turnbull, oboe
Poppy Beddoe, clarinet
Mira Marton, violin
BBC National Orchestra of Wales
Matthew Taylor

WRITING MUSIC FOR FRIENDS

by Matthew Taylor

I was born in London in 1964 and won a music scholarship to Queen's College, Cambridge, where I studied with Robin Holloway. In 1986 I was awarded a conducting scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music in London and studied with Vilém Tauský. The following year I was invited by Leonard Bernstein to appear at the Schleswig Holstein Festival, where I conducted concerts with him. I received special encouragement from Robert Simpson, who proved a crucial and stabilising influence on my earlier music. My First Symphony, the *Sinfonia brevis*, Op. 2, was championed by George Hurst in 1987 and performed several times by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, leading to a continual stream of commissions.

Exposure to the Beethoven symphonies from a very young age provided the initial desire to compose, and they were quickly followed by a lifelong fascination with the music of Schumann, including the still-controversial later works. In addition, I've always been strongly drawn towards Scandinavian civilisation and Nordic culture as a whole, particularly the music of Sibelius and Nielsen, as well as that of more recent figures such as Vagn Holmboe. When in 2014 a first volume of my orchestral music¹ was released on Toccata Classics, *Gramophone* wrote that 'For proof that the Symphony is alive and well look no further than Matthew Taylor's Second Symphony'.

To date I have written six symphonies, concertos for piano, violin, viola, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet and two for horn, as well as eight string quartets, two piano trios, much chamber music for other forces and a piano sonata. The symphonies have now been performed by orchestras which include the BBC Symphony Orchestra,

¹ TOCC 0175; the Second Symphony, Op. 10, was paired with the Viola Concerto, *Humoresques*, Op. 41, where the soloist was Sarah-Jane Bradley; the BBC Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Garry Walker.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia and the English Symphony Orchestra. A recent recording of my Fourth and Fifth Symphonies on Nimbus Alliance² won the Audiophilia Award in 2020.

I have been a guest conductor with many leading British orchestras, among them the City of London Sinfonia, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; I was pleased to conduct the Czech Philharmonic for the first time in 2018. My recording of Robert Simpson's Symphony No. 11 – its first, and so far only, recorded account – won a *Gramophone* 'Record of the Year' Award in 2004.

Over the years I've developed a strong affinity for the Classical repertoire, the German Romantics and the Nordic symphonic tradition, and I've given premieres of works by James Francis Brown, Arthur Butterworth, Vagn Holmboe, David Matthews and Robert Simpson – several of them personal friends – and arrangements of works by Schumann, Nielsen and Bernstein.

As with many other composers, I take much satisfaction from working with festivals and from teaching. I've been Artistic Director of Malvern Festival, Tunbridge Wells International Music Festival and the St Petersburg Festival of British Music. And I teach Composition at the Junior Academy of the Royal Academy of Music in London, and I'm also a teacher and staff conductor at the Yehudi Menuhin School in Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey – not far from my own home in Farnham.

Symphony No. 6, Op. 62 (2019–21)

My Sixth Symphony was commissioned by the Malcolm Arnold Trust to mark the composer's centenary in 2021. It is dedicated to the memory of Sir Malcolm Arnold, with grateful thanks to his family, and was composed between December 2019 and March 2021. It was first performed by BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Martyn Brabbins, at the BBC Hoddinot Hall, Cardiff, on 9 May 2021. The Symphony is dedicated to Katherine Arnold.

² The Fourth Symphony, Op. 54, and *Romanza* for strings, Op. 36a, were played by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and the Fifth Symphony, Op. 59, by the English Symphony Orchestra; the conductor was Kenneth Woods – Nimbus Alliance N16406 (2020).

No. 6 is scored for smaller forces than its two predecessors and favours predominantly transparent, chamber-like textures with prominent parts given to piano, timpani and harp, which often play as a self-contained group. These are the first sounds heard [1], very softly in their low, deepest registers; the tempo marking is *Adagio teneramente*. From these sounds emerges a wistful clarinet solo which influences the course of much of the work. The music gradually builds to a lyrical climax before easing into gentle phrases where piccolo joins harp and piano. The main *Allegro leggiero* that now follows is at first dominated by higher strings with light, active textures perhaps a little Mendelssohnian in style. The quiet energy continues, eventually leading to a long string ascent, a full orchestral climax and then a short reminiscence of the opening *Allegro* dominated by solo muted strings.

The central part is a calm fugue, *Andante tranquillo* [2], the subject of which is introduced by the first violins. This theme continually transforms itself into new shapes, encompassing a variety of different colours, instrumental textures and sonorities, many of which are very delicate in expression. The last part features a further transformation of the initial subject, now in canon on piano and harp.

The Finale, *Vivo*, which fuses the roles of scherzo and finale [3], begins without a break with clarinets, timpani and bass *pizzicati*. Much of this music is a freely composed variant on the clarinet tune that opened the Symphony, but this time the mood is capricious and jolly. In fact, this music is perhaps the most obviously Arnoldian in spirit, though not necessarily in idiom, paying tribute to the magnificent, 'effervescent' Arnold of *Beckus*, *Tam O'Shanter* and the earlier suites of orchestral dances. The last part is a long, controlled *crescendo*, which begins very quietly on unison strings. There is plenty of revelry here – with the odd deftly placed banana skin which I think Malcolm might have enjoyed.

Oboe Concerto, Op. 60 (2020–21)

The Oboe Concerto was commissioned by my old friend Keith Stanley who, over a very agreeable lunch in Malvern, suggested that I should compose one. Having played the oboe during my youth (though never with much flair), I found the idea most appealing.

I was thrilled when George Vass premiered the work at the Presteigne Festival in 2021, especially since James Turnbull was the soloist. I have admired James' artistry since I first met him at the Junior Academy many years ago.

The Oboe Concerto is scored for the slightly unusual combination of two cors anglais and strings, the exact pairing that Haydn used so imaginatively in his 'Philosopher' Symphony, No. 22. By including cors anglais rather than oboes, the tone qualities of the oboe soloist can be more vividly exposed.

The Concerto begins, *Largamente* [4], with a slowly unfolding ascent which leads to the first entry of the soloist. The oboe introduces the main idea. A faster middle section, *Poco Allegretto*, introduces new combinations of colours, culminating in a brief climax, after which the original tempo is resumed over softly sustained chords. The final phrase of the oboe kick-starts the central Scherzo, *Allegro molto* [5], which is full of wry humour and bubbling textures, often demanding much agility and flamboyance from the soloist. The *Adagio* finale [6] is nature-painting, inspired by Colmer's Hill, one of my favourite places in Dorset where I often go for walks with my family. I have tried to capture the sense of inner peace and stillness at the beginning and end of this movement. The oboe seemed to be the natural instrument to convey such beauties. The Concerto is dedicated to our eldest daughter, Emily.

Clarinet Concertino, Op. 63 (2021)

Ever since performing the magnificent Second Clarinet Concerto of Malcolm Arnold with Poppy Beddoe, I have been compelled to compose a piece for her which reflects the distinctive qualities of her performing style that I and many others treasure: rich, broadly flowing melodic lines and the unique colour of her hushed playing.

The three movements play without a break. The opening movement, *Andante sereno* [7], is mostly chamber music. The clarinet introduces the main idea, a tune which assumes a similar shape to the *Adagio* of Brahms' Clarinet Quintet. The textures become fuller until the clarinet is joined by all the solo strings. Only near the end of the work do the full strings appear, when a modified return of the opening melody is presented. The central movement [8] adopts a slow/fast/slow pattern (*Largamente – Vivace agitato –*

Più Largamente) and provides the emotional core of the work, the repose of the slow sections being balanced by the more effervescent nature of the middle part. The simplest music in the Concertino is reserved for the brief finale, marked *Allegretto semplice* [9], most of which is dominated by an amiable, carefree little tune on clarinet which saunters casually through the music.

Violin Concertino, Op. 52 (2016)

The Violin Concertino was commissioned by Sussex House School, and was first performed in May 2016 at Cadogan Hall with James Murray as soloist and an orchestra specifically engaged for the occasion. The work is in three short movements which are all linked. The opening Hornpipe, *Deliberato* [10], is assertive and full-blooded, the solo violin assuming centre-stage throughout. Its climax is a series of repeated G major chords on strings which gradually fade into the distance as the violin solo introduces the Aria, *Andante con moto* [11], a sort of song-without-words. The soloist shares the ideas with solo strings before the full string orchestra is used in widely spaced textures. An explosive three-note motif opens the *Energico* Finale [12], which is a recomposed version of the Hornpipe but the character is more extravert and upbeat, featuring some prominent jazz double-bass *pizzicati*.

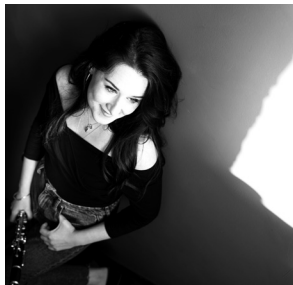
For some years now, I have been much impressed with the artistry and musicianship of the young violinist Mira Marton, and was so delighted when she agreed to perform and record this Concertino. It is dedicated to the composer Tom Hyde.

Described by *The Independent* as ‘a worthy champion’ of contemporary oboe music, **James Turnbull** has dedicated much of his performing life to promoting and extending the oboe repertoire. He has performed frequently throughout the UK and Europe, with a solo recital at the Wigmore Hall and a live broadcast on BBC Radio 3. He has released solo recordings on Toccata Classics, Champs Hill Records, Quartz Music and the ABRSM as well as featuring on a disc of Thea Musgrave’s works for Harmonia Mundi USA. *Gramophone* described his debut recital disc, *Fierce Tears*, on Quartz as a ‘notable debut’ and it was selected as the ‘Editor’s Choice’ recording by *Classical Music Magazine*.

He is deeply committed to expanding the oboe repertoire. In 2015 he launched the New Oboe Music Project (NewOboeMusic.org) which promotes 21st-century oboe repertoire across the world. He is also the founder of the Leon Goossens Prize for Emerging Composers to help encourage a new generation of composers to write for the oboe. As part of this project he has curated a special collection of previously unpublished oboe repertoire in partnership with Composers Edition. www.james-turnbull.com

Working as a soloist, orchestral and chamber musician, **Poppy Beddoe**, clarinet, performs extensively throughout the UK and internationally. She studied music at King’s College London, graduating in 2014, followed by a Masters at the Royal Academy of Music in 2016.

She released her debut album, *Soliloquy*, in 2021, with Ulysses Arts which features her own transcriptions of Bach and Hildegard of Bingen. In November 2022 she was a visiting artist at the University of Houston, Texas, where she gave solo recitals, lectures, master-classes and premiered music commissioned by the university and the Texas New Music Ensemble. She is now the clarinetist



Photograph: Chris Dawes

for the Texas New Music Ensemble. She has a longstanding relationship with the Clifton International Festival of Music and enjoys frequent engagements in London, Cambridge, Bristol, Nottingham, New York and various venues in the South of France. She is the Artistic Director of the Berkshire Chamber Music Festival and an annual concert series in the South of France. She often performs with MishMash Productions, a company which tours concerts targeted at younger audiences.

She teaches at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music and also works extensively with the 'Widening Participation' team at the Academy to make classical music more accessible to all. She was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in their 2023 honours list.

The Polish violinist **Mira Marton** spent ten years in specialist music schools in Poland before gaining a place at The Yehudi Menuhin School under the tutelage of Lutsia Ibragimova. After winning a full scholarship to the Royal College of Music and graduating with a First Class B.Mus. (Hons) degree, she is now studying for a Masters degree at the same institution with Radu Blidar. She is generously supported by the Munster Trust and Zetland Foundation.

She has performed in major venues around the world, including the Royal Albert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, the Philharmonie in Berlin and the Musikverein in Vienna. Her performance of the Mendelssohn E minor Violin Concerto with Sinfonia Tamesa was described by Robert Matthew-Walker in *Musical Opinion* as 'as fresh and life enhancing as when it was first heard'. As a soloist and chamber musician, she has benefited from master-classes and lessons with Ning Feng, Alina Ibragimova, Roman Simovic, Maxim Vengerov and Oliver Wille. As an orchestral player, she has performed under such conductors such as Martyn Brabbins, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Antonio Pappano and Vasily Petrenko. In December 2023 she was selected for the Chamber Orchestra of Europe Academy and subsequently was invited to join them for their European tour. She frequently performs with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra.



For over 90 years, the **BBC National Orchestra of Wales** has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both broadcast and national symphony orchestra. Part of BBC Wales and supported by the Arts Council of Wales, it performs a busy schedule of live concerts throughout Wales, the rest of the UK and the world. The orchestra is an ambassador for Welsh music and champions contemporary composers and musicians. The orchestra performs annually at the BBC Proms and biennially at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, and its concerts can be heard regularly across the BBC: on Radio 3, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru.

BBC NOW works closely with schools and music organisations throughout Wales and regularly undertakes workshops, side-by-side performances and young-composer initiatives to inspire and encourage the next generation of performers, composers and arts leaders.





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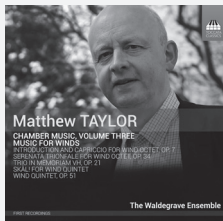
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‘Matthew Taylor is a consummate string quartet composer. His music enshrines a personal voice that may reflect influences but has deeply absorbed them. It is fluidly constructed and generates its own sense of time and direction. It is marked by strong characterisation and genuine craft and it honours the past without being in any way dependent on it.’

— Jonathan Woolf, MusicWeb International, on TOCC 0144



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BBC National Orchestra of Wales



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I would like to thank Katherine Arnold, Nicholas Kaye and all my friends at the Music Appreciation Classes at the Blackheath Halls for their generous assistance towards this recording, as well as the conductor Daniel Hogan for his assistance and suggestions during the recordings of the Sixth Symphony.
—Matthew Taylor

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