

WORLD
PREMIERE
RECORDINGS

CLARINET &
SAXOPHONE
CLASSICS

ORFEO calms the FURIES

VICTORIA SAMEK | CLARINETS

MUSGRAVE | WILLIAMS | HARRIS | KEELEY
RALPH | SHRAPNELL | FINGERHUT | HOWAT

ORFEO CALMS THE FURIES

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1.–6. THEA MUSGRAVE Orfeo IV; an improvisation on a theme for solo E flat clarinet and digital effects (1975, revised 2013) *	15:53	19. GEORGE SHRAPNELL Tombeau (After Bach) For solo B flat clarinet (2022)	8:24
1. Orfeo Laments	3:42	20.–23. PAUL HARRIS Sonatina for solo E flat Clarinet (2023)	4:42
2. Orfeo crosses the River Styx	2:14	20. Allegro assai	1:01
3. Orfeo calms the Furies	2:33	21. Poco adagio, espressivo	1:43
4. Orfeo searches amongst the Shades for Euridice	2:36	22. Scherzando	0:58
5. Orfeo hears Euridice's pleas for him to turn towards her	1:28	23. Allegro energico	1:00
6. Orfeo is attacked by the Bacchantes	3:20	24. BENJAMIN FINGERHUT Monody for solo B flat clarinet (2023)	4:33
7.–11. GRAHAM WILLIAMS Autumn Episodes for Solo B flat clarinet (1981)	11:23	25.–28. PAUL HARRIS Sonatina for solo Bass Clarinet (2023)	7:11
7. Con espressione	3:11	25. Vivace e vigoroso	1:31
8. Cantabile	1:29	26. Cool and light (gentle swing)	1:45
9. Con moto	2:07	27. Intense and slow	1:39
10. Briosso	1:57	28. Allegro drammatico	2:16
11. Canto	2:39	29.–31. ROB HOWAT New-Cross Counterpoint for nine multitracked clarinets (2017, revised in 2022) *	13:39
12.–15. PAUL HARRIS Sonatina for solo B flat clarinet (2021)	5:41	29. Very quick	7:16
12. Allegro assai non troppo	1:30	30. Slower	2:33
13. Scherzo e leggiro	0:54	31. Quick	3:50
14. Andantino e molto espressivo	2:16		
15. Allegro molto energico	1:01		
16. ROB KEELEY Shine for E flat clarinet (2021)	4:12		
17.–18. RICHARD RALPH Two Studies on Twelve Tone (2024)	3:01		
17. Allegro grazioso	2:19		
18. Misterioso	0:42		

Total Time: 78:50

* Also available on streaming platforms in surround sound

PERSONAL NOTE



I have been privileged as a player to have enjoyed close associations with composers since my very earliest years as a very young piano student. My new piano teacher, Graham Williams, was the first composer to write little piano pieces specially for me which so kindly matched my ability. I still so vividly remember his beautifully tidy notes written on manuscript paper with his pieces always carrying a title along with a dedication. He was later to start my training on the clarinet to which new compositions for clarinet were to follow.

The seeds for **Orfeo Calms the Furies** originated over a coffee meeting I had with the distinguished composer Thea Musgrave with whom I've been incredibly fortunate to have enjoyed a friendship over several decades. My first commission *Threnody* for clarinet and piano was

commissioned to mark the untimely passing of my teacher and mentor Roger Fallows. With several commissions, including *Autumn Sonata*, a bass clarinet concerto by Thea Musgrave, as well as dedications which followed and with my insatiable love of all the clarinets, it was in a meeting with Thea that I raised the question of commissioning a piece for E flat clarinet. I had recently recorded *Narcissus*, originally scored for flute and digital delay which Thea had transcribed for clarinet. When Thea proposed the idea of transcribing *Orfeo* for E flat clarinet and dedicating this new version to me, I was deeply honoured.

With *Orfeo IV* waiting in the wings to be recorded, the coronavirus hit with devastating health consequences. The enforced lockdown years during 2020 and 2021 also imposed collaborations with other musicians impossible. This planted the seed of an idea to record a solo album to celebrate the close collaborations I've had, and continue to have, with composers. I have commissioned concertos and chamber works with composers, enjoying the delicious range of clarinets to choose from – E flat to bass clarinet. This fruitful relationship between composer and player can never be underestimated.

With time to scrutinise existing solo pieces, while I made some wonderful new discoveries buried deep in my extensive library of manuscripts (most particularly Graham William's *Autumn Episodes*) I felt there was room to expand and enhance our solo clarinet repertoire. Approaching composers who had already written for me in a chamber capacity, I was deeply thankful and extremely excited to receive favourable responses from Benjamin Fingerhut, Richard Ralph and George Shrapnell to my request. With Paul Harris's solo B flat Sonatina having already been written for me, my suggestion to write additional Sonatinas for E flat and bass clarinet needed little persuasion in true Paul enthusiasm!

With my love of the E flat clarinet, I was delighted when Rob Keeley gave me permission to record a recent piece of his entitled *Shine!* By the same token, Rob Howat gave me permission to record *New Cross Counterpoint*. This was the piece that extended my digital competence. Learning the parts on the iPad and turning pages with a pedal was totally new to me, as was the process of building layers in the recording studio, a skill which I had experienced, albeit with less complex repertoire, during lockdown.

During my sixty years (at the time of writing) I have been privileged as a player to enjoy inspirational associations with many composers which I share with listeners and players in **Orfeo Calmes the Furies**.



THEA MUSGRAVE

Orfeo IV – an improvisation on a theme for solo E flat clarinet and digital effects (1975, revised 2013)

Thea Musgrave transcribed *Orfeo IV* for E flat clarinet in 2013 and dedicated it to Victoria Samek. *Orfeo I* was originally commissioned by James Galway and was written for solo flute and tape in 1976. Whilst staying close to the composer's original instructions, the new digital sound-world of enhanced B flat and bass clarinet benefits from advanced technology. This includes the tape being replaced by a max patch software which is driven by a pedal. This allows for a certain flexibility for the solo part which was not an option when *Orfeo I* was first written.

Orfeo is a retelling of the Orpheus myth, where the flute, or in this version the E flat clarinet, represents Orfeo, and the electronically treated recording of B flat and bass clarinet, represents other characters and elements of the story. The work explores Orfeo's mourning for Euridice and his attempts to retrieve her, with the tape part incorporating "memory elements" or quotations from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* to represent the underworld and Euridice.



GRAHAM WILLIAMS

Autumn Episodes for solo B flat clarinet (1981)

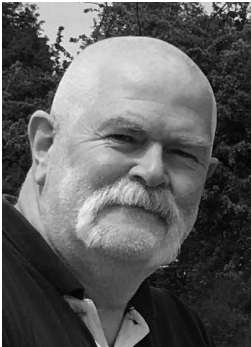
The winter of 1981-1982 in the United Kingdom was a severe cold wave, that lasted until mid-January 1982. During that December time I stayed in my warm house and composed the episodes over the following weeks and finished them well before Christmas on 18th December 1981. I always enjoy composing solo works for the sound and playing of the musicians I know. These pieces were composed in 1981 and because of other works was sidelined for many years and rediscovered recently. It was a surprise when Victoria mentioned that she would love to record these pieces. There are five contrasting movements.



PAUL HARRIS

Sonatina for solo B flat clarinet (2021)

I was delighted to write this sonatina for Victoria. Much of the first movement explores the warm chalumeau register with a gentle swaying melody developing expressively. The second movement is a humorous scherzo oscillating between keys a minor second apart. The middle section suggests a conversation where the characters are continually interrupting each other! The lyrical third movement begins in the beautiful clarinet register on that F which launches many great clarinet works. The final dance-like movement occasionally gets a bit jazzy!



ROB KEELEY

Shine for E flat clarinet (2021)

When I hear Victoria Samek's playing, her tone gleams and glows as it swoops and nudges magnificently over the registers of the instrument. Virtually all my music for clarinet(s) has been conceived for her, and her understanding of my music is second to none. So, in this tiny but I hope significant tribute to her versatility, I have given her music that speaks, cajoles, sings and flies at high altitude and always with the greatest confidence. I like short suggestive titles: the title came after the notes were written, but I think sends both listener and player in the right direction.



RICHARD RALPH
Two Studies on Twelve Tone (2024)

These two studies were written using the serial technique style, sometimes referred to as twelve tone, and was originated by Arnold Schoenberg. Although this style has the reputation for that can prove challenging for the listener, I wanted to write music with a strong melodic element to demonstrate the versatility of this style of writing. *Two Studies on Twelve Tone* was written for Victoria Samek. The first piece has a mysterious quality. The outer sections share an improvisatory feeling, and the middle section is dominated by trills. The second piece, marked *Allegro grazioso*, has a playful character. The outer sections employ a wide dynamic range with the middle section again, dominated by trills.



GEORGE SHRAPNELL
Tombeau (After Bach) For solo B flat clarinet (2022)

Written for Victoria Samek, *Tombeau* is a response to Bach's seminal Violin Partita No.2, specifically the Chaconne. The title, *Tombeau*, is itself a compositional style commemorating the death of a notable individual. Bach's Chaconne is thought to be a *Tombeau* in memory of his first wife, Maria. My music references elements of the original work and uses these and other compositional styles to fuse a link between 'classical' and 'jazz', creating essentially a written-out improvisation.

PAUL HARRIS

Sonatina for solo E flat clarinet (2021)

One can't help being influenced by the perky tone of the Eb, however I've included lots of expressively lyrical moments to avoid typecasting it in its more traditional *Till Eulenspiegel* role! The first movement, though fast, is lyrical with juxtaposed triplet figures. The slow movement is expressive, exploring the warm middle register. The dance-like scherzo uses short notes providing a witty diversion. The final movement contrasts accented notes with short lyrical phrases and changing time-signatures giving a buoyant character. What a versatile instrument the Eb can be!



BENJAMIN FINGERHUT

Monody for solo B flat clarinet (2023)

Monody was written for Victoria Samek and is an exploration of harmony through a single melodic line. It is based mainly on an arpeggiatic motif which acts as the central idea throughout the piece and which gives the clarinet the chance to showcase its warm and mellifluous sonority. This piece incorporates a melody within the harmonic bed of quavers, indicated by the tenuto markings, so that both melody and harmony are included within a single line. Though a steady pace is required, a little movement is encouraged throughout.

PAUL HARRIS

Sonatina for solo bass clarinet (2021)

What a flexible and versatile instrument the bass clarinet is! The first movement uses the instrument's broad ranges of pitch, dynamics and timbres, contrasting two ideas, big leaps and descending intervals, using triplets rhythms. The second movement is rather cheeky and jazz-inspired. Triplets are present again, and the broad pitch range is exploited. The third movement is serious and introspective, there is a deeply questioning feeling but a happy resolution. The final movement is a real *tour-de-force* exploring all the bass clarinet does so well.



ROB HOWAT

New Cross Counterpoint for nine multitracked clarinets (2017, revised in 2022)

New Cross Counterpoint is written for live Bb clarinet, six pre-recorded Bb clarinets and two bass clarinets. While inspired by Steve Reich's *New York Counterpoint*, *New Cross Counterpoint* is an attempt to capture the frenetic energy of New Cross, South London, where the composer lived for several years. This three movement work broadly falls under the post-minimalist label, with not only rhythmic, but harmonic inspiration from the minimalist greats of the last century as well as those from electronic music and jazz of this century. *New Cross Counterpoint* was originally commissioned by Caterina Dellabona in 2017 and re-worked for Victoria Samek in 2022.

Victoria Samek is a critically acclaimed international artist, a highly respected educator and a thoughtful and caring mentor. Combining breath-taking technicality and musical integrity in her performances and recordings she is driven by her commitment to musical excellence. Born of Czech and Hungarian parents, she was a pupil at The Purcell School and studied clarinet with Roger Fallows before winning a Foundation Scholarship to the Royal College of Music studying clarinet with Colin Bradbury and bass clarinet and saxophone with Steve Trier. She later studied clarinet with Antony Pay. Prize winner of the prestigious Frederick Thurston Memorial Prize, she graduated with honours.

The power of communication in performance, the discipline of practice and the love of music through her chosen instruments have all shaped her distinguished musical career as a performer and recording artist. In 1992 she founded Clarinet & Saxophone Classics as an international recording label celebrating the clarinet and saxophone in all its richness and diversity. The label launched with her first recording of the World Premiere Recording of Copland's Clarinet Sonata alongside the complete music of 'les Six' which was voted 'most sheerly seductive record of the year' by the Sunday Times. The label's significant catalogue by artists encompasses new and period performances as well as carefully restored historical recordings.

Holder of a master's in performance science from the Royal College of Music, she has combined a lifetime of experience as player, teacher and educator with her continued scientific research. This has culminated in a musician's handbook - Organise, Prioritise, Commit; The Training, Testing and Performing Process. OPC is set to revolutionize training and performing for students, teachers, musicians and performers.

Victoria is a D'Addario Performing Artist and an official endorsee for Selmer Paris clarinets.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Engineering and Production: Mark Hartt-Palmer (Willowhayne Records). Orfeo IV: Digital transformation of Bb and bass clarinet programmed in MaxMSP and recorded at Sussex University by Sam Billow, produced by Simon Weir. New Cross Counterpoint was recorded in Lime Tree Studio, Great Bowden, Leicestershire on 23rd August & 7th September 2022 and October 2024. All remaining works were recorded at The Church of St Peter & St Mary, Fishbourne, West Sussex, August & September 2022. Artwork: Hannah Whale - Fruition Creative Concepts. Thea Musgrave photo credit for p.6 © Andrew Palmer. Victoria Samek photo credit for P.11: Olivia Wild. Clarinet & Saxophone Classics (formerly Clarinet Classics) was founded in 1992 by Victoria Samek. © 2022 © 2025 Clarinet & Saxophone Classics. Manufactured in the UK.

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