

Busy Bees and Birds

Works for recorder by **Mogens Christensen**



Pernille Petersen

Bjarke Mogensen, Per Pålsson, Messer Quartet

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Pernille Petersen, recorder

Bjarke Mogensen, accordion Per Pålsson, guitar Messer Quartet

1	Feuerspiegel (2012)	14:24
	<i>for recorder and accordion</i>	

NOCTURNAL BIRDS:

2	Birds of a Spring Night (1993)	5:38
	<i>for descant recorder</i>	
3	Birds of a Midsummer Night (1994)	8:49
	<i>for recorder, guitar and electronics</i>	
4	Birds of an Autumn Night (1998; rev. 2014)	5:11
	<i>for tenor recorder</i>	
5	Birds of a Winter Night (1996/2014)	13:11
	<i>for bass recorder and electronics</i>	

6	Arie(s) (2014)	2:13
	<i>for treble recorder</i>	

	Dansebagateller (2008)	17:59
	<i>for recorder and guitar</i>	

7	I	0:50
8	II	0:33
9	III	1:19
10	IV	1:53
11	V	2:49
12	VI	6:28
13	VII	1:15
14	VIII	1:06
15	IX	1:46

16	Busy Bees and Birds (2005; rev. 2013)	10:07
	<i>for recorder and string quartet</i>	

Total: 77:30

In 1993, at the end of his studies in the Royal Danish Academy of Music with Ib Nørholm, Per Nørgård and Poul Ruders, **Mogens Christensen** (b. 1955) wrote the stunning recorder concerto, "A Fancier's Delight", to be premiered as part of his debut concert in Copenhagen (followed by a concert tour of the other Danish music academies). The work, based on the 1717 collection of melodies intended to be taught to domestic birds, "A Bird Fancier's Delight", borrows freely from just about every composer who was ever associated with birds. It undoubtedly is a major contribution to the modern recorder repertoire, but the reason why I mention this work here is the "delight" present in its title. If one were pushed to encapsulate the sensation of listening to Christensen's music for the recorder (a good part of which is represented on this CD) into one word, "delight" would be the most apposite: a delight in sound, in melody, in dance, in birdsong, in Nature's phenomena ...

Christensen has written for the recorder extensively and expertly. The flair with which he approaches the instrument no doubt has its roots in the fact that he is married to the superb recorder player Helle Kristensen. Having received commissions from other luminaries such as Pernille Petersen, Michala Petri and John Turner has further deepened Christensen's intimate knowledge of the recorder's possibilities.

The fact that some of the works on this CD are being recorded for the second time (now in new editions, prepared or arranged by both Christensen and Pernille Petersen), while the composer is only in his 50s, is a sign of the importance of Christensen's contribution to the recorder repertoire.

Feuerspiegel

Christensen has long been fascinated by fire, mirrors and the everchanging play of light on objects and in Nature. Many of his works reflect these preoccupations, *Feuerspiegel* (2012) being one of them. The composer explains that in this work the two instruments (recorder and accordion) often mirror one another. This is most obvious in the opening section of the work where it is hard to distinguish between them, both playing in the same rhythm at a very high register: the combina-

tion of the two effectively creates a new instrument. Two parts become three, then four, until full harmony and a widening of the register are achieved in a sonic crucible of increasing color. Such is the symbiosis of the instruments that in the first minutes of the work it takes the listener time to notice the few times when the recorder temporarily abandons the proceedings. At about seven and a half minutes the music turns into a characteristic Christensen carefree dance, eventually leaving the recorder on its own for the first time. This section culminates in a fiery accordion solo followed by an exhilarating paroxysm *à deux*: the melting point is reached, and the final section of the piece is occupied by one of Christensen's most beautiful "timeless" passages. He has stated in an interview that he ranks these "Nirvana-like" passages in his works very highly. In the case of *Feuerspiegel*, after the unhinged euphoria that precedes them these final moments of stillness give the impression that fire has finally managed to turn base metal into gold. However, as is also characteristic of Christensen, the work concludes with a short, cheerful "outro". This may be the sound of the alchemist going out to celebrate after his hard efforts have achieved their reward.

Feuerspiegel is written for Pernille Petersen and Bjarke Mogensen.

Nocturnal Birds

Christensen wrote this series of night pieces between 1993 and 1998. Here be The Four Seasons, but at night time and with those capricious denizens of the air as observers and tellers of the story. Two of the seasons (Spring and Fall) are represented by an unaccompanied recorder, while Summer and Winter incorporate electronic reverberation.

Birds of a Spring Night is a feast of melody. Life has returned after the cold winter and the birds are only too willing to let us know. *Birds of a Midsummer Night* (the only piece in the series to include another instrument: a guitar) invites the listener into the mysterious balm of the summer night, full of echoes and semi-magical creatures. Haydn, Mendelssohn and Mahler make brief appearances. *Birds of an Autumn Night* returns to the sumptuous world of melody of Spring, but the rhythm has become more staid and the shivering cold is not very far away. The birds are making their plans to migrate to more clement environments. *Birds of a Winter Night* might aptly be called a bird's dream of winter, as by this stage the birds have long since fled from the inhospitable cold. This final, and longest, piece of the series incorporates increasing reverberation and an electronic tape that accompanies the solo bass recorder for the second half of the piece,

lending it greater depth. The effect is that of Time disappearing. The open ending suggests that the cycle of the seasons is unbreakable. The birds will soon return to tell us their stories of Spring.

Arie(s), the most recent work on this CD, is originally a version for solo oboe (here rearranged for treble recorder) of the piano piece of the same title ('arie' is the Danish word for 'aria'). It's easily one of Christensen's most jovial compositions, the piano version, **Arie(s)** is the first in a recently completed series of Zodiac pieces, some of which Christensen has also arranged for symphony orchestra and for a diversity of ensembles. Such is the infectious optimism of this miniature that it transpires even on the present unaccompanied version (specially prepared for Pernille Petersen).

Dansebagateller

Exceptionally, Christensen chose to base these 'Dance Bagatelles' from 2008 on a folk tune: an old wedding melody from Himmerland in Denmark (as described by Nobel Prize winner Johannes V. Jensen in recollections of his childhood). It is essentially a theme with eight variations played without interruption. These are, however, not variations in the traditional sense: each bagatelle focuses on a detail from the previous one and develops it. Dance and fun are the tenor of the piece, which is bookended by the recorder player's entrance into and exit from the performing space. The music moves through a variety of sonic spaces, covering overt tonality, free-tonal two-part counterpoint, unison playing, guitar harmonics and recorder multiphonics or, in the composer's description, "folk music, romance style and hardcore contemporary music". In the slow fifth bagatelle the recorder player sings and plays two instruments simultaneously, becoming a three-voiced wind player. This virtuosity is carried on to its extreme in the extensive tour de force that is the sixth bagatelle, with its quick tempo, jagged rhythms in both parts and the recorder player blowing two instruments the whole time. The attentive listener will perceive an array of melodic motives and harmonies that return from time to time, turning this highly varied and entertaining set piece into a cohesive and satisfying whole.

Busy Bees and Birds

This is Christensen's second recorder concerto, written for solo recorders and string quartet. In the present recording it is performed with an electric string quartet (the result of a revision in

2013 of the work, which was originally written in 2005). The indefatigable John Turner (for whom it was written) gave the work's first performance in Dartington.

From the first moment we are met by the life of the beehive: thousands of bees are busy with their work, oblivious of life outside their closed environment. Unstoppable tremolos and glissandi recall the continuous buzzing of the hive and the seemingly chaotic flight of the bees. These wondrous insects do, however, fall asleep every once in a while, and when the density of the buzzing thins out, that other relentless manifestation of wildlife comes into hearing: birdsong. The whole work (which in common with Christensen's two other recorder concertos incorporates scherzo elements and plenty of birdsong) can be heard as an intersection between these two worlds. The beehive is represented by the string quartet while the solo recorder represents birdsong. The birds fall silent from time to time, of course, and the activity of the bees experiences occasional lulls. At times both coalesce, creating a glorious cacophony. At one time one wonders whether one mischievous bird is creating havoc with its beak inside the peculiarly organized world of the beehive. However, in the expeditious ending, with its single "pips" from the recorder answered by single buzzing sweeps by the quartet (almost suggesting a sort of mutual bowing between the inhabitants of the two worlds), an agreement between bee and bird to share Earth space seems to be reached.

All of the above interpretations represent, of course, only one listener's understanding of this delightful music. You are invited to make up your own stories. However, the highly evocative nature of much of the music on this CD, as well as several of the works' titles, make the forming of visual images in the listener's mind inevitable. Happy listening!

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THE PERFORMERS

Pernille Petersen (b. 1983) had her acclaimed debut concert from the soloist class at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Southern Denmark, in Odense in September 2010. Since then she has gained attention as a prize-winning and exploring musician, most recently as a soloist with Concerto Copenhagen in concertos by Bach, Telemann and Vivaldi. Her repertoire covers both early and contemporary music, always with a twist of international or historical awareness.



Pernille Petersen

Among many projects are Izar Melting Pot Ensemble, a meeting between Arabic and Western Medieval music; Kottos, comprising progressive folk and new music; scenic performances with Woodpeckers Recorder Quartet as well as extrovert baroque cabaret with the young group Bastard Barock. In 2010 Pernille Petersen released her first solo CD, "Sonatas by Mr. Castrucci & Mr. Geminiani", which received international acclaim as the first ever recording of a unique collection of English baroque sonatas. In November 2009 Pernille won the prestigious Moeck/SRP Solo Recorder Competition in London as the first Dane ever. She won Prijs Mieke Van Weddingen i Mechelen, Belgium, in 2010 and most recently, in the summer of 2014, she won the "EAR-ly" competition for young early music ensembles. Pernille Petersen has received Odd Fellow Logerne in Odense's travelling scholarship, Børge Schrøder and hustru Herta Finnerup's music scholarship as well as the Léonie Sonning Music Award's scholarship.

Danish accordionist **Bjarke Mogensen** (b. 1985) studied with Geir Draugsvoll at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, where today he teaches accordion and chamber music. He has given solo concerts all over the world from New York to Moscow, from Iceland to Turkey. He has performed chamber music with violinists Augustin Dumay, Gidon Kremer and cellist Andreas Brantelid; as a soloist he has worked with several Danish and international orchestras such as the Moscow Virtuosi, Kremerata Baltica, Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra, The Tiroler Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Copenhagen Phil. Bjarke Mogensen's repertoire is almost unlimited, ranging from folk music and accordion classics, over his own arrangements and transcriptions to brand new works for accordion written for and dedicated to him. In 2011, Bjarke Mogensen had his solo debut at Carnegie Hall, New York, and in 2012 he received 1st prize in the prestigious European Broadcast Union "New Talent" competition in Bratislava.

Per Pålsson (guitar) studied at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Southern Denmark, in Esbjerg and at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen with Jørgen Bjørnslev and Per-Olof Johnson, having his soloist debut in 1990. Further studies with Karl Scheit at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna, as well as studies with Timothy Walker, the lutenist Nigel North and at the Early Music Centre in London. Per Pålsson engages

in extensive concert activities as a soloist and chamber musician in Denmark, USA, Japan and all over Europe. He took the initiative to and played in the performance of Hans Werner Henze's *El Cimarron* at the Royal Danish Theatre in 2009 with Sir Willard White as soloist. Per Pålsson is a prize-winner in several international guitar competitions and won 1st Prize in DR P2's chamber music competition in 1993 with "Scandinavian Guitar Duo", which that year also won the Sonning Foundation's "Segovia Prize". Since 1995, Per Pålsson has been teaching at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Southern Denmark.

The Messer Quartet consists of Andrea Rebekka Alsted (violin), Signe Ane Andersen (violin), Katarzyna Bugala (viola) and Therese Åstrand Radev (cello). The quartet is the first ever and only electric string quartet in Denmark, utilizing the opportunities of amplification to play the works of composers such as Daniel Wohl, Mbd73, Ejnar Kanding and George Crumb. The Messer Quartet also works with young composers who want to go beyond the conventional string quartet and explore a new sound tuned to the world we live in today.

PERNILLE PETERSEN'S RECORDERS

Feuerspiegel

Descant: Nikolaj Ronimus, palisander
Alto: Von Huene Rippert, grenadille

Birds of a Spring Night

Descant: Nikolaj Ronimus, palisander

Birds of a Midsummer Night

Descant: Nikolaj Ronimus, palisander; Moeck
Rottenburgh, palisander; Yamaha, plastic
Treble: Von Huene Rippert, grenadille; Yamaha,
plastic
Bass: Yamaha, maple

Birds of an Autumn Night

Tenor: Yamaha, maple

Birds of a Winter Night

Bass: Yamaha, maple

Arie(s)

Treble: Von Huene Rippert, grenadille

Dansebagateller

Descant: Nikolaj Ronimus, palisander, Moeck
Rottenburgh, palisander, Yamaha plastic
Treble: Von Huene Rippert, grenadille, Yamaha,
plastic

Busy Bees and Birds

Descant: Nikolaj Ronimus, palisander
Sopranino: Moeck Rottenburgh, palisander
Treble: Von Huene Rippert, grenadille

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MUSIKANTOLOGI

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