

CHANDOS

The Bassoonist's Songbook

*Amy
Herman*

*Tom
Poster*

**BACH • COLERIDGE-TAYLOR • DUTILLEUX • KERN
SAINT-SAËNS • ROBERT AND CLARA SCHUMANN**



Drawing by Samuel Friedrich Diez (1803 – 1873), now in the Kupferstichkabinett,
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / AKG Images, London

Clara Wieck, soon to be Schumann, 1840

The Bassoonist's Songbook

Clara Schumann (1819 – 1896)

- 1** **Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen, Op. 13 No. 1** (1840 – 43) 2:26
in E flat major • in Es-Dur • en mi bémol majeur
from *Sechs Lieder mit Begleitung des Pianoforte*
(Six Songs with Piano Accompaniment)
Ihrer Majestät der regierenden Königin von Dänemark
Caroline Marie ehrfurchtsvoll zugeeignet
Adapted for Bassoon and Piano by Amy Harman
in F major • in F-Dur • en fa majeur
Ziemlich langsam
- 2** **Er ist gekommen, Op. 12 No. 1** (1841) 2:30
in F minor / A flat major • in f-Moll / As-Dur • en fa mineur / la bémol majeur
from *Drei Lieder*
(Three Songs)
Also Op. 37 No. 2 by Robert Schumann
Adapted for Bassoon and Piano by Amy Harman
Leidenschaftlich – Ruhig

3	Liebst du um Schönheit, Op. 12 No. 2 (1841) in D flat major • in Des-Dur • en ré bémol majeur from <i>Drei Lieder</i> (Three Songs) Also Op. 37 No. 4 by Robert Schumann Adapted for Bassoon and Piano by Amy Harman in F major • in F-Dur • en fa majeur Nicht zu langsam – Bewegter	2:12
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Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921)

	Sonata, Op. 168 (1921) in G major • in G-Dur • en sol majeur for Bassoon with Piano Accompaniment À Monsieur Léon Letellier, Premier Basson de l'Opéra et de la Société des Concerts	13:21
4	I Allegro moderato	2:58
5	II Allegro scherzando	3:52
6	III Molto adagio – Allegro moderato	6:31

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Drei Romanzen, Op. 94 (1849)

13:14

*für Hoboe ad libitum Violine oder Clarinette
mit Begleitung des Pianoforte*

(Three Romances

for Oboe *ad libitum* Violin or Clarinet
with Piano Accompaniment)

Performed with Bassoon

- | | | | |
|---|-----|--|------|
| 7 | I | Nicht schnell
in A minor • in a-Moll • en la mineur | 3:58 |
| 8 | II | Einfach, innig – Etwas lebhafter
in A major • in A-Dur • en la majeur | 4:06 |
| 9 | III | Nicht schnell – Coda. Im Tempo
in A minor • in a-Moll • en la mineur | 5:09 |

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Sonata No. 2, BWV 1028 (before 1741)

13:47

in D major • in D-Dur • en ré majeur

for Viola da gamba and Harpsichord

Adapted for Bassoon and Piano by Amy Harman

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------|------|
| 10 | 1 | Adagio | 2:08 |
| 11 | 2 | Allegro | 3:26 |
| 12 | 3 | Andante | 3:57 |
| 13 | 4 | Allegro | 4:16 |

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912)

Five Fairy Ballads (1909) **13:30**
for Voice and Piano
Performed with Bassoon

- | | | | |
|------|-----|--|------|
| [14] | I | Sweet Baby Butterfly. Allegro moderato
in A flat major • in As-Dur • en la bémol majeur | 1:55 |
| [15] | II | Alone with Mother. Andantino
in E flat major • in Es-Dur • en mi bémol majeur | 3:12 |
| [16] | III | Big Lady Moon. Allegretto
in F major • in F-Dur • en fa majeur | 2:10 |
| [17] | IV | The Stars. Allegretto – Allegro
in E minor / G major • in c-Moll / G-Dur • en mi mineur / sol majeur | 3:15 |
| [18] | V | Fairy Roses. Vivace – Tempo di Valse –
Tempo I – Tempo di Valse
in A flat major / C major • in As-Dur / C-Dur • en la bémol majeur / ut majeur | 2:57 |

Henri Dutilleux (1916 – 2013)

19

Sarabande et Cortège (1942)

7:30

for Bassoon and Piano

[Sarabande.] Assez lent – Animez un peu – Animez toujours –

A tempo –

[Cortège.] Mouvement de Marche – Cadenza ad libitum –

A tempo

Jerome Kern (1885 – 1945)

20

All the Things You Are (1939)

3:03

from the Musical *Very Warm for May*

Libretto by Oscar Hammerstein II (1895 – 1960)

Arranged for Bassoon and Piano by Tom Poster

Gently flowing

TT 71:32

Amy Harman bassoon

Tom Poster piano

The Bassoonist's Songbook

Introduction

'Some people crave baseball – I find this unfathomable', wrote Frank Zappa. 'But I can easily understand why a person could get excited about playing a bassoon.' Amy Harman definitely agrees, and her début solo album is a glittering manifesto for her instrument. Working with her friend and long-time collaborator Tom Poster, she has devised a programme that brings together original works for the bassoon and piano with transcriptions and arrangements, dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

Johann Sebastian Bach: Sonata in D major, BWV 1028

Amy was a first-study cellist before she switched to the bassoon – so it seems entirely appropriate that this album includes the Sonata in D major for obligato harpsichord and viola da gamba by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750). It was probably adapted from an earlier work for use by Bach's colleagues in Leipzig in the 1740s. The pragmatism and instrumental flexibility of Bach's approach speaks directly to Amy's musical ethos. 'There

are so many versions of this piece, by different instrumentalists, that I think we can all claim it.' The trick for a bassoonist, however, is working out when to breathe in these endlessly unspooling musical lines. 'I don't circular breathe – I like breathing to sound as it would for a singer: breathing is punctuation. It's a real challenge, but it's glorious.' And of course, the balance with Tom is crucial too, stretching a phrase in one place and snatching a moment for air somewhere else. 'He's like a *pas de deux* partner who will never let you fall on the stage.'

Across four movements, the two knot and loop their way through intertwined lines, kick up a sprightly dance in the fast movements, and conjure a moment of deep pathos in the third-movement *Andante*, which seems to evoke the mournful solemnity of a Passion aria. How might a twenty-first-century bassoonist and pianist seek to capture something of the baroque style and colouration in their playing of this work? Amy took the piece to the conductor Peter Whelan to explore the possibilities. 'We tried all sorts of different things. I don't like to be bound by rules but I think it's important to respect people who are

historically informed, to listen to them and try to take inspiration.’

Saint-Saëns: Sonata in G major, Op. 168

The Sonata for Bassoon and Piano by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921) was among his last completed works, one of a clutch of three sonatas (the others for oboe and clarinet, respectively) finished in June 1921. Curiously, as Amy observes, late-period wind sonatas feature in the biographies of several other French composers, including Debussy and Poulenc – although neither made it to the bassoon, alas, before he died. ‘The bassoon’s history is a story of what could have been’, she reflects. At least there is the consolation that the writing of Saint-Saëns is ‘as good as Mozart for us: he knows everywhere on the instrument that sings, the registers that you can whizz around in... and it’s such a crowd-pleaser!’

It is easy to hear why: across the three movements, Saint-Saëns grants the bassoon dreamily high, singing lines, plenty of fast finger work, spiky energy from the central *Allegro scherzando*, and a finale that combines the lyricism of operatic writing with the fizzing final pages of a pocket concerto. The composer had been working concurrently on keyboard fugues and the realisation of figured bass parts to music by Tartini and Corelli; and there

is something of the clarity and interweaving textures of baroque music in this piece (not to mention the kind of seamless passing of lines between players that speaks of decades of creative care and experience). The result is a sound world that seems almost to float free of time – as one distinguished Saint-Saëns biographer willingly admits, these late sonatas ‘bear no resemblance to anything, not even the music of their composer!’

Dutilleux: Sarabande et Cortège

Henri Dutilleux (1916 – 2013) completed his studies at the Paris Conservatoire, winning the Prix de Rome (the top composition prize), in 1939. The outbreak of war and the French occupation turned the next few years into a difficult and dangerous time: Dutilleux was briefly a stretcher bearer before returning to Paris and joining the Front national, a group sympathetic to the Resistance.

A fellow member was Claude Delvincourt, Director of the Conservatoire, who offered Dutilleux a commission to write test pieces for a range of woodwind and brass instruments. The idea was, Dutilleux explained, ‘to make young composers explore instrumental technique (you can’t write any old thing for young players) and, at the same time, force instrumental students to work on new scores,

which Delvincourt wanted to be full of traps and technical difficulties.’ Although Dutilleux later disowned almost all of his works composed before 1947, a few have nonetheless remained in the repertoire; and his bassoon test piece of 1942, the *Sarabande et Cortège*, is one of them.

As in the case of Saint-Saëns’s Sonata, Amy points to the skill of Dutilleux’s writing: ‘it’s idiomatic in a way that is kind of miraculous.’ What does that actually mean in practical terms? First of all, ‘if you’re not using the complete range of the bassoon then you’re missing a trick’. Dutilleux obliges with a two-part piece including stratospherically high notes in each of its cadenzas and plenty of stomping low passages in the *Cortège*. (The witty, circling bassoon melody of Dukas’s *L’Apprenti sorcier* comes immediately to mind.) Then there is the instrument’s gorgeously singing tenor register, showcased here in the floating *Sarabande*. Last but not least, high-speed passagework in the *Cortège* makes clear the bassoon’s lightness and flexibility. ‘It’s difficult music to play,’ Amy observes, counting off the sheer variety of techniques, ‘as was intended.’

Robert Schumann: Drei Romanzen, Op. 94
The remaining pieces on the album are

transcriptions and arrangements – though the *Romanzen* by Robert Schumann (1810–1856), of 1849, were at least written for another double-reeded instrument, the oboe, and Amy was simply able to transpose the original score down the octave. She smiles when I ask if the score shows any evidence that Schumann understood what his soloist would need. ‘In Schumann symphonies, you almost need a bumper’ as a double reed player – they’re impossible. He doesn’t seem to realise that we need bars’ rest, one of the very basic rules of composition!’ And yet, despite their awkward lines and impossible breathing, she simply loves the music too much not to play it.

The mournful opening number, in A minor, is tender and intimate, the flexible melody written almost as if it were to be sung or spoken. This sense of fluidity and dialogue remains in the ‘Simple’ (*Einfach*) major-key second movement and the final piece of the set – a dramatic combination of halting uncertainty, gentle lyricism, and strident outbursts. ‘What did he mean by the weird, repeated unison figure that we play?’, Amy asks of this last movement. ‘It feels dark to me, with

¹ Amy is using a conventional term among musicians for a second or back-up player, so that one can breathe while the other plays.

such depth of character. I'm forever obsessed with listening to different interpretations.'

Clara Schumann: Er ist gekommen, Op. 12 No. 1; Liebst du um Schönheit, Op. 12 No. 2; Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen, Op. 13 No. 1

The virtuoso pianist and composer Clara Wieck composed these songs within the first few years of becoming Clara Schumann (1819 – 1896), after her marriage to Robert, in 1840. The idea of performing these Lieder came to Amy from her old schoolfriend the soprano Louise Alder, whom she regularly asks for advice and recommendations. 'She comes back to me with all sorts of things that I'd never have thought of.' Keen to find pieces by female composers to add to their recital repertoire, Amy and Tom read through Clara Schumann's song opuses and settled on a clutch of three as the most effective. 'We have the text written in our scores and really try to embody it when we play.' They particularly enjoyed the challenge of 'Liebst du um Schönheit', a poem by Friedrich Rückert about the purity of true love. 'I have to try and sound wealthy, young, and in love, all with the same musical figure', she grins. 'Er ist gekommen' is a showpiece for Tom, the composer's famed pianistic virtuosity shaping the swirling tempests of

the accompaniment. By contrast, the pulsing keyboard writing of 'Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen' leaves the bassoon to sing alone, a painfully bittersweet line of love and loss to a text by Heinrich Heine.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: Five Fairy Ballads

As members of the chamber ensemble Kaleidoscope, Amy and Tom have performed and recorded music by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912) and were eager to see if more of his works could be added to their repertoire. When Amy discovered the *Five Fairy Ballads*, she was struck by how neatly they fitted the bassoon's range – and by their lush harmonies. 'It's a bit jazzy showtune, a bit Dvořák, and has beautiful lyrical lines: all the things I like best!'

By the time he wrote the *Fairy Ballads*, Coleridge-Taylor was famous both as the composer of the choral work *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* and as a conductor of considerable standing – particularly in America, where he enjoyed opportunities to direct major orchestras of both white and Black musicians. The texts of these songs were written by a family friend, Kathleen Easmon, whose father was a distinguished doctor and probably trained alongside Coleridge-Taylor's own father in the 1870s. Kathleen was still

a teenager when her mother showed these poems to Jessie Walmisley, Coleridge-Taylor's wife. Samuel was taken with the imagery to the degree that, in 1909, he set them to music. They were a big success, and it is not hard to see why: the songs are intimate and flowing, full of memorable melodies and deeply touching evocations of the perspectives of both children and parents. 'I first played these songs when I'd just had my second baby, and I find them very emotional', Amy says. 'Particularly "Alone with Mother" – it's such a sincerely written text and captures motherhood in a way that so much literature about the topic just doesn't.'

Jerome Kern: All the Things You Are

Jerome Kern (1885 – 1945) wrote 'All the Things You Are', one of his most beloved songs, with Oscar Hammerstein II for the 1939 show *Very Warm for May*. It was a massive hit – unlike the show itself – and Richard Rodgers later reflected that of all the great songs he had not written, this was the one he most wished he had! Its inclusion here reveals another important facet of the long-standing performing relationship that Amy has enjoyed with her duo partner. 'Tom does an arrangement as an encore for every Kaleidoscope concert – and they are always such high-quality, brilliant arrangements that

it would have felt wrong to make this recording without one.'

Kern's original was seen as unusually daring at the time for its sliding harmonies and unusual chord progressions – a never-ending melody, each phrase of the chorus leading to a new key and to anticipation of another circle around the irresistible tune. The bassoon sings for us at first, Amy's tone almost saxophone-like, before taking up a countermelody over the piano. It is a perfectly balanced partnership: precisely the kind of *pas de deux* that these two musicians find so pleasurable.

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A note by the performer

The quality in all the musicians I have loved is the ability to make their instruments sing – to make a sound that is an extension of their voice and to communicate directly to the souls of their listeners. I was lucky enough to give many recitals during my time sponsored by the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT), in my early twenties, and when I was putting together programmes, I was always drawn to either transcriptions of songs or repertoire in which I felt that the bassoon could leave behind its sometimes comedic image and become a voice. I have been even luckier to perform many of

these recitals with Tom Poster, and we have over the years narrowed down our favourites to the pieces collected on this album.

The Bassoonist's Songbook is a showcase of the side of the bassoon that I love the most, and I hope that many of you, too, will enjoy the songs that nestle within this beautiful instrument.

© 2026 Amy Harman

A passionate advocate for the bassoon, **Amy Harman** is much sought after as a soloist, chamber musician, teacher, and communicator. She was a professor at the Royal Academy of Music from 2013 to 2024, when she was appointed professor of bassoon at the Robert Schumann Hochschule Düsseldorf, the first woman to hold such a position in Germany. She gives master-classes and coaches internationally. Appointed solo bassoon of the Philharmonia Orchestra aged twenty-three, she is currently principal bassoon of the Aurora Orchestra and much in demand as a guest principal with leading orchestras in Europe, including Paavo Järvi's Estonian Festival Orchestra and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. She was selected by the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2014. Among her solo highlights are the

première of Roxanna Panufnik's Concerto for Bassoon and String Orchestra with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, performances of Mozart's Concerto with the London Mozart Players and at the Festival Suoni dal Golfo, in Lerici, and of Strauss's Concertino with the English Chamber Orchestra, and the appearance as a flying soloist at the world première of Stockhausen's *Mittwoch aus Licht*. She was the first bassoonist to perform a live broadcast solo recital for BBC Radio 3 and regularly gives recitals in the UK and Germany with her collaborator Tom Poster. She has taken part at the Bath Mozartfest and Mizmorim Kammermusik Festival as well as international festivals in Pärnu, Spoleto (USA), Mexico City, Aldeburgh, Tbilisi, West Cork, and Ryedale, and regularly attends the International Musicians Seminar, Prussia Cove. The composers Olav Berg, Héroïse Werner, Brian Elias, Roxanna Panufnik, Robin Holloway, and Simon Holt have written works specially for her. Chamber music sits at the heart of her performing life. She was a member of Ensemble 360 for ten years, appears regularly with the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, Associate Ensemble at Wigmore Hall since 2020, and is a member of the Orsino Ensemble, founded by Adam Walker. Amy Harman records for Chandos Records.

Tom Poster is a musician whose skills and passions extend well beyond the conventional role of the concert pianist. He has been described as ‘a marvel, [who] can play anything in any style’ (*The Herald*), ‘mercurially brilliant’ (*The Strad*), and as having ‘a beautiful tone that you can sink into like a pile of cushions’ (*BBC Music*). He has performed more than forty concertos, from Mozart to Ligeti, with Aurora Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, China National Symphony Orchestra, Hallé, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, collaborating with conductors such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Nicholas Collon, Robin Ticciati, and Yan Pascal Tortelier. He has premiered solo, chamber, and concertante works by many leading composers and made multiple appearances at the BBC Proms. His exceptional versatility has put him in great demand at festivals internationally.

Tom Poster is founder and artistic director of Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, which was appointed Associate Ensemble at Wigmore Hall in 2020. Having a flexible

line-up featuring many of today’s most inspirational musicians, and an ardent commitment to diversity through its creative programming, the Collective has recently been ensemble-in-residence at the Aldeburgh and Cheltenham festivals, and has released seven albums on Chandos Records, recently appearing on shortlists for the *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone* awards. His extensive discography includes two solo albums, recordings with the Aronowitz Ensemble (former BBC New Generation Artists), and collaborations with Alison Balsom, Guy and Magnus Johnston, Jennifer Pike, Aurora Orchestra, and London Symphony Orchestra. He has made four duo recordings with Elena Urioste, with whom he won the Inspiration Award of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 2020 for the lockdown project #UriPosteJukeBox. Tom Poster studied with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and at King’s College, Cambridge. His compositions and arrangements have been commissioned, performed, and recorded by Alison Balsom, Matthew Rose, Yo-Yo Ma, and Kathryn Stott. He is a lifelong fan of animals with unusual noses. www.tomposter.co.uk

Kaupo Kikkas



Amy Harman

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