



Robert FÜRSTENTHAL

CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

SONATA FOR TWO OBOES AND PIANO IN D MINOR, OP. 56

CELLO SONATA IN C SHARP MINOR, OP. 58

VIOLIN SONATA IN B MINOR, OP. 43

VIOLA SONATA IN D MINOR, OP. 57

PIANO TRIO, OP. 65

The Rossetti Ensemble

FIRST RECORDINGS

ROBERT FÜRSTENTHAL: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

by Françoise Farron-Fürstenthal

My husband, Robert Eugen Fürstenthal,¹ was born in Vienna on 27 June 1920, into a Jewish family. He showed an early love for music and for playing the piano. He was a frequent weekend guest in the home of Françoise, his first cousin and his first love (me). There he accompanied my father, who had a beautiful tenor voice and loved to sing, mainly Schubert songs. At that time, Robert also composed a few songs, some to his own poetry. They were mostly simple love-songs, some dedicated to me.

Robert left Vienna in 1939 – without his family, because an unhopd-for opportunity had presented itself. A distant relative of ours, who was living in England and whom no one within our close family knew, was aware of the mortal danger in which the Jews of Vienna lived after Hitler had marched into Austria. This good-hearted relative furnished Robert with an affidavit to go to America and also provided a temporary visa to England to wait there for his journey to the USA – waiting in Vienna would have been too dangerous.

Robert arrived in New York in October 1940; the Jewish Agency asked him where he wanted to settle, and he chose San Francisco. From there he was able to help his mother to join him, but the Nazis got to his father first, and that wonderful man, whom I loved dearly, perished in a concentration camp.

Once in America, Robert joined the US Army (1942–45), serving in the intelligence division in Europe to interrogate German prisoners-of-war. After his return to the US, he married Jane Alexander, an American girl (not Jewish), and they settled in San Francisco. They had a son, Joseph.

Back in civilian life Robert entered the civil service as an accountant and rapidly ascended the professional ladder. But his marriage turned sour. He sought solace

¹ He dropped the umlaut on his arrival in the United States but resurrected it for his dealings with Austria.

in the arms of other women, but none seemed to be compatible enough to try another union.

Robert eventually discovered that I, his first love, might be the answer to his unhappy situation. He found out that I was living in Boston, phoned me and learned that, although I was married, I had not lived with my husband for the previous six years. He had last been in contact with me, by mail, in 1939. I was then in Switzerland and he proposed that we get married by proxy, I at the American Consulate in Zurich and he at the Consulate in London. But I never received that letter: the Swiss, always very efficient, had sent it back to him, many months later. He showed it to me when we finally got back together again, in 1973, and we mused on what turns our lives might have taken, had I received that letter at the time it had been sent.

One of the first questions I asked was whether he was still composing music. There followed a long silence, and then came the answer: 'No!'. Robert had not written a single song or any kind of music since he had left Vienna. Knowing how much music meant to him, I was devastated. From that phone call onwards, Robert, who still lived in San Francisco, wrote me long letters every single day: he had to catch up on what had happened during 35 years of separation. In addition, he called me on the phone every single evening.

After a few weeks of getting re-acquainted by correspondence and phone conversations, Robert asked me to remain on the line and listen. He had composed his first song since our separation and he played it for me on the piano while I listened on the telephone. I was unspeakably happy. I had always believed – although his first compositions were simple and amateurish – that he was gifted.

When we finally met again in person – Robert found an excuse to go to Boston 'on business' – we discovered that the old flame was readily rekindled, and we got married in November 1974.

A reshuffle at the Naval Audit Service, where Robert had worked for about 30 years in San Francisco, necessitated that we relocate to San Diego, where he became head of the office. Once installed there, Robert used every free minute, evenings and weekends, to compose. His endeavours really went into high gear, as he discovered the poetic treasures of Rilke, Eichendorff, Weinheber, Hofmannsthal, Bethge and many others. But

only poetry in the German language seemed to inspire him – until his later years, when he discovered that of James Joyce and of William Butler Yeats.

Robert worked at the Naval Audit Service until his retirement in 1985. From then on, he composed full-time and his output grew considerably. His work comprises about forty chamber works, among them sonatas for violin and piano, cello and piano, flute and piano, oboe and piano, clarinet (or viola) and piano, a sonata for two pianos, a string quartet, two string trios and about 160 songs and vocal pieces, including two works for choir and string orchestra. A first album of his songs was released by Toccata Classics in 2016,² just weeks after Robert's death, from congestive heart failure, on 16 November. He was 96. The last words he said while he was still lucid were: 'I am happy to have you by my side'. Although he didn't live long enough to hold the CD in his hands, he was sent a copy of the master and so was able to hear that first-ever recording of his music and take pleasure in it.

Some of the songs were performed in the USA, in California and in New York, to enthusiastic audiences. In 1975 there was a performance of Robert's songs to poems by Joseph Weinheber, at the occasion of a Weinheber memorial, in the Palais Palfy in Vienna. The audience went ballistic! But the 'music world', as it were, at least here in California, is enamoured of newer stuff, less melodic, original for the sake of originality, without soul – or so it seemed to Robert.

We were often asked to explain what inspired each individual work; in the case of songs, the answer is simple: the poetry. What inspired his instrumental works, Robert did not know. As you will hear, his style is avowedly and proudly late-Romantic, for which he made no apology. It seemed to us that there is still room for it in this world.

An Autobiographical Addendum

Now Françoise Farron-Furstenthal, I was born Franziska Trinczer on 19 September 1923 in Vienna. When Hitler marched into Austria, I was fifteen years old and attending the Realgymnasium in the Albertgasse. I was able to find refuge in Switzerland with my

² Performed by the baritone Rafael Fingerlos and pianist Sascha El Mouissi on Toccata Classics TOCC 0354.

mother in 1939. I wanted to go to Palestine into a kibbutz and help build the country, but my mother would not let me go.

As soon as I was able to emigrate to America, in 1956, I worked during the day and attended night college in the town of White Plains, New York, was accepted to Berkeley in 1960, and obtained my Ph.D. in biochemistry from New York University in 1969. After a post-doctoral stay at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, from 1969 to 1970, I joined Harvard Medical School Faculty as an Assistant Professor for Research. When Robert got in touch with me after 35 years of separation and re-ignited the old flame, I left Harvard to get married to Robert and share his life from then until death us did part.

As well as being the wife of Robert Fürstenthal, Françoise Farron-Fürstenthal was, until her retirement, Associate Professor for Research at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, where her chief interest was, and still is, the mechanism of gene expression in the development of the embryo.

‘WHEN I COMPOSE, I AM BACK IN VIENNA’

by Michael Haas

Robert Fürstenthal’s songs and chamber music started to emerge again from the moment he and Françoise re-established contact. His only ‘teachers’ were the scores of his favourite composers, the most important of whom was Hugo Wolf. In retrospect, the 160 songs and some forty chamber works that resulted from this period represented a learning curve. He composed for himself and Françoise, with the hope of an occasional performance by friends and acquaintances. He was always happy to supply the piano accompaniment. By performing his works himself, much of the surviving material is missing detailed instructions regarding

tempo, articulation and expression. To the composer, such issues seemed self-evident; to performers, ambiguity has more often been the result.

When I asked Fürstenthal why he chose in the final quarter of the twentieth century to compose in the style of the late nineteenth, he answered that composing transported him back to Vienna ('Wann ich komponiere, bin ich wieder in Wien'). Nevertheless, such wilful disregard for style and period confronts the listener with a certain degree of disjunction as well as questions of aesthetics and, indeed, ethics. If Fürstenthal's works were only exquisitely well crafted, it would be easy to dismiss them as derivative. Hollywood itself can offer any number of skilful composers and arrangers who can rattle off works in the style of any composer required. Yet Fürstenthal offers much more than craftsmanship and much that is highly individual, defying one-to-one comparisons with any of his nineteenth-century templates. In the intolerant days of high serialism in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, some music-historians used to argue that such defiantly conservative works are 'the musical language of the perpetrator' – by which is meant music that the Nazis would have accepted had the composer not been Jewish. The argument was used against a number of composers who were banned by the Nazis under their Nuremberg race laws and yet who eschewed twelve-tone composition and atonality. It is made worse in the case of Fürstenthal because of his frequent settings of the poems of Josef Weinheber, an Austrian poet who held unapologetic Nazi sympathies. Yet such arguments imply that the only acceptable music composed by victims must represent the antithesis of a so-called Nazi aesthetic, meaning aggressive atonality (considered 'un-German' by Nazi dogmatists), or replace diatonic tonality with synagogue or *shtetl* folkloric modes – a narrow-minded outlook which swaps one form of intolerance for another. For most composers banned by Nazi race laws, their natural voice had been commandeered by the Nazis in an aggressive attempt to deprive them of any sense of Austro-German cultural identity. Why, one could argue, should they compose the way a Nazi believed a Jew should compose? An analysis of Fürstenthal's music would have to ignore all the norms of time and place, as well as those of identity. Indeed, if anything, Fürstenthal is defiant in his assertion of identity with the very deepest aspects of Austrian culture – a culture he valued only from a pre-Hitler vantage point, even

going so far as to see Weinheber as an exponent of a nobler age. When I asked why he set Weinheber, his answer was straightforward: he heard music upon reading the words.

As such, Fürstenthal's music may be understood as a personal immigration into his own, better world where bad things had yet to happen. Although his music grows out of persecution and exile, he is unable to produce a howl of outrage, preferring gentler reverie to a nobler place where World Wars and anti-Semitism weren't allowed to shape destiny. Such works may flummox the musicologist; and yet to the social archaeologist pondering the effects of cultural dislocation, they ask a multitude of questions. Paradoxically, despite being music of sensitivity and warmth, it's no less a product of anger and loss – and a gently dignified response to barbarity.

Michael Haas is Senior Researcher at the exil.arte Zentrum at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna. He is the author of Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis (Yale University Press, Yale and London, 2013), as well as having been the initiator and producer of the 'Entartete Musik' series of recordings released by Decca. He was also formerly Music Curator at the Jewish Museum in Vienna. His blog can be found at <https://forbiddenmusic.org/>.

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST: ROBERT FÜRSTENTHAL'S CHAMBER MUSIC

by William Melton

Although all of the music on this recording recalls the style of the waning years of the nineteenth century or the opening of the twentieth, it would be useful to match the works here to the composer's own biographical stations. Unfortunately, Françoise Farron-Fürstenthal has concluded that 'putting Robert's works in any realistic time sequence is a futile undertaking, nay, impossible! I have the originals, and the opus numbers make no sense at all, even in Robert's own handwriting'.¹

¹ E-mail dated 24 March 2019.

She went on to explain that Fürstenthal's Vienna output culminates in Op. 90, and yet one of the earliest works he composed in San Francisco was numbered Op. 72. All the works in this album have lower opus numbers than that and yet there seems to be little doubt that some, at least, were composed for performance with friends in California. In the absence of reliable signposts, the listener can only regard these works as generic postcards from 1890s Vienna or, as Martin Anderson has called them, 'an exercise in time travel.'² For John Lenehan, the pianist on this recording, 'To be presented with a large body of work, all of which was unfamiliar to us, was both exciting and daunting. We soon discovered music which touched us in its honesty and integrity, harking back to a world long gone but forever present in this composer's imagination.'³

The **Sonata for Two Oboes and Piano in D minor**, Op. 56, is a particularly light work, the oboe inspiring playful experiments in sonority, but not deep investigations of the traditional sonata-movement structure (shorn of piano accompaniment, the solo lines would make a respectable duet for two oboes). The *Allegro moderato* [1] begins in common time with the oboes exchanging a D minor theme in a way familiar from soprano and mezzo duets, with much imitation and each voice at times surging into the upper line. Fürstenthal's loose sonata-form approach retains its vestigial harmonic scheme, with a developmental region reaching towards far-flung keys (A flat major at bar 104) and a truncated recapitulation with triplet rhythms in D minor (bar 120). The charm lies in his giving the oboes melodies they play so well, their garrulous melancholy in minor keys laced with quirky leading tones. A *Lento* in C minor [2], again in common time, wanders away chromatically in its second bar, and traverses a semiquaver-laden contrasting section (bar 17) before closing in a codetta based on the opening but in the key of C major (bar 32). The churning *Scherzando* theme in D minor (³/₈) [3] recalls the *Allegro appassionato* from Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2. A gentler *legato* 'trio' (bar 41) features a yodel-like melody before the restless opening returns (bar 65) for a D minor *sforzando* close. A truncated, ternary Intermezzo marked *Cantabile* [4] offers B major stolidity (³/₄) sandwiching a G minor middle section marked with long-breathed *legato* oboe

² E-mail dated 15 March 2019.

³ E-mail dated 27 March 2019.

lines arrayed over regular chordal accompaniment. The closing rondo, an *Allegretto* in A minor [5], varies its piercing dotted $\frac{6}{8}$ theme with sprawling *legato* melodies in $\frac{3}{4}$ (bar 38). The rondo in A minor ultimately prevails, both in a full repeat (bar 72) and *Presto coda* (bar 88).

The cellist Timothy Lowe writes of the **Cello Sonata in F minor**, Op. 58: ‘The thematic material gets passed from instrument to instrument in long musical lines. It juxtaposes the rich mellow tone of the cello with faster meandering passages intertwining with the piano. The structure of most of the movements isn’t uniform.’⁴ The *Allegro moderato* in $\frac{6}{8}$ begins with an incisive dotted motif in the solo cello [6], an F minor opening that soon devolves into chromatic wanderings that reach to B major (bar 30). D flat major appears at a slower pace in $\frac{3}{4}$ (bar 57), but a lack of differentiation of thematic material makes it difficult to fix structural points ($\frac{6}{8}$ returns at bar 74, but the theme is neither repeated nor wholly new). At bar 104 the movement ends abruptly in A flat minor. An *Andante* in $\frac{6}{8}$ [7] settles more securely into one key, A flat major, repeating the opening material with cello semiquaver filigree (bar 14) before a section loosely in E flat major gives way to an ending codetta in A flat major based on the opening. A brief *Scherzando* ensues in $\frac{3}{8}$ and A flat major [8]. A *legato dolce* section in D flat major fills in for a trio, before another abrupt ending, this time in F minor. The finale, unusually marked *Grave* in common time [9], begins its slow procession in D minor. A contrasting section in B flat major arrives at bar 17, and after some developmental interest the opening in D minor returns in the final bars.

The violist Sarah-Jane Bradley has written performer’s notes to Fürstenthal’s **Viola Sonata in D minor**, Op. 57:

The first movement [*Lento*; [10]] begins with a starkly dramatic outburst from the solo viola, rising from the depths of the lowest register and climbing to a resolute piano entrance. The ensuing *Allegretto* in $\frac{12}{8}$ is at turns darkly romantic, lilting and whimsical, with an overriding flavour of Brahmsian melancholy.

⁴ E-mail dated 26 March 2019.

The second movement, an incisive *Scherzando* [11], enfolds the brief diversion of a tilting Ländler in F major.

The heart of the work is surely the impassioned slow movement [*Lento* 12], its gloriously sweeping and sighing melody worthy of epic sentiment. A more hopeful central section in D major follows, culminating in a wonderfully ecstatic transformation of the main theme.

The final movement, *Vivace* [13], begins with a flourish of grandiose chords in the piano and the viola response reminiscent of a hunting horn call. Several brief episodes, one calling to mind a lullaby, offer momentary respite before hurtling to the close.⁵

The **Violin Sonata in B minor**, Op. 43, opens its first movement *Allegro con fuoco* ($\frac{3}{4}$) with a B minor tremolo in the piano [14], followed with a *fortissimo* upwards leap of a ninth in the violin which then falls in dotted rhythms before finishing in triplets. The head and tail motifs of this theme dominate the entire movement, fragmented ambiguously in the developmental phase. Harmony consequently becomes the major engine of the section, with its fluid, far-ranging keys (including B flat minor at bar 67). The recapitulation, which is heralded by eight bars of homophonic chords in the piano that emphasise the return of B minor, occurs quite late (bar 134), only twelve bars before the *poco ritando* close of the movement. A *Lento* ($\frac{3}{4}$) offers a soulful B major theme [15], the exploration of which spans the movement. A light contrast is offered in a middle section in $\frac{9}{8}$ time (bar 36), which passes through D sharp minor before a return of the opening material, still in $\frac{9}{8}$ though in the key of the opening. A seven-bar codetta over a bass B ostinato in quavers, again in $\frac{3}{4}$, seals the movement. The *Scherzando* ($\frac{6}{8}$) that follows presents a Brahms-evoking silhouette [16]: a robust *forte* theme welling up from the bass of the piano countered by a delicate descending violin *pianissimo* (Ex. 1). The *fortelpianissimo* material is reprised in B major (bar 55) as well as the original G sharp minor, before ending the fleetingly brief movement in the former key. The finale is an *Andante con variazioni* ($\frac{6}{8}$), the opening theme [17] subsequently presented in six different garbs, using quavers in common time (Variation I, bar 17), semiquavers (II, bar 33), a

⁵ E-mail dated 29 March 2019.

Ex. 1

The musical score for 'Scherzando' (measures 49-54) is written for piano (p) and violin (v). The key signature is E major (three sharps). The time signature is 6/8, with a repeat sign at the beginning of measure 49. The piano part starts with a forte (f) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-forte (m.s.) dynamic, and then a pianissimo (pp) dynamic. The violin part starts with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic, followed by a forte (f) dynamic. The score shows a transition from 6/8 to common time and back to 6/8.

return to $\frac{6}{8}$ (III, bar 49) and common time again (IV, bar 66) before a *sempre legato* (V, bar 83) and a statement in *fortissimo* (VI, bar 102). Unusually for a finale to an ostensibly B minor Sonata, the movement is solidly in E major. The violinist here, Sara Trickley, observed that Fürstenthal's B minor sonata is 'wonderfully romantic and tuneful with something of a Brahmsian feel but with his own harmonic twist'.⁶

⁶ E-mail dated 27 March 2019.

The **Piano Trio**, Op. 65, begins *Moderato, ma con spirito* [18], with a sinuous, chromatic cello line reflected in mirror image when the violin answers. The home key, variously F minor or D flat major, remains ambiguous. Bar 29 presents a contrast, again with fluid harmonics. Something of a development occurs (though the melodic material is handled in rhapsodic fashion rather than closely argued) before reaching F minor at *meno mosso* (bar 61), and a *più mosso* introduces a recapitulation in *fortissimo* (F minor at bar 75) before the movement concludes in A flat major. The following *Cantabile* is in solid ternary form [19]. The G minor opening ($\frac{3}{4}$) is superseded by a $\frac{9}{8}$ *più mosso* in D flat major before the opening returns (bar 42). The reappearance, however, is in F minor, and the movement closes surprisingly in G flat major. The concluding *Andante – Allegro ma non troppo* begins with violin and cello alone in dotted rhythms, loosely in G minor [20], with the piano answering in *mezzo piano* quavers. This back and forth is ended by two bars of D major dominant *rallantando* before the *Allegro* section sets off more firmly in G minor (bar 15). A *meno mosso* (bar 31) furnishes different melodic material before continuous key-changes finish in another abrupt ending, this time *fortissimo* in B flat major. The unusual progression of keys was addressed by John Lenehan:

I believe a second trio in G minor (mentioned in the work list) was left incomplete and eventually merged with Op. 65. This would explain the unusual key sequence. It may also throw some light on RF's way of working as this is not the only instance of sonatas that start in one key and end somewhere entirely different!⁷

Erik Levi posed the question of whether Robert Fürstenthal's compositions were not 'original contributions to the genre rather than effective exercises in pastiche'.⁸ Fürstenthal possessed a talent that might be compared to that of a fine sketch artist, whereas his great models, like Schubert, Hugo Wolf, Brahms and his better followers, such as Jenner, Herzogenberg and Thieriot, were painting in oils. In musical terms, in addition to their lyrical gifts they had a sense for the developmental that went deeper

⁷ E-mail dated 27 March 2019.

⁸ 'An Engagement with the Past: Robert Fürstenthal's Songs', *Robert Fürstenthal. Songs and Ballads of Life and Passing*, Toccata Classics TOCC 0354, p. 9.

than Fürstenthal's deft but small-scale efforts; the older masters conceived their themes with development already in mind. Still, Fürstenthal does his listeners the service of recalling what Michael Haas called Vienna's 'feverish mixture of Slavic delirium, Latin passion and Teutonic understated beauty',⁹ and he did it generously, in different instrumental configurations. His talent sufficed to present a gift from one era to another, and for all such unexpected gifts one should be grateful.

Composer and music will have travelled full circle if contemporary Viennese journalists are given the last word. Renate Wagner of the *Online Merker* wondered 'whether Fürstenthal will ever properly be "discovered" (because most of the works were produced in his last few decades in the U.S., so they are not forgotten, but simply unknown).'¹⁰ Edwin Baumgartner of the *Wiener Zeitung* was more emphatic: 'Fürstenthal may have been a hobby composer – but what a Master!'.¹¹

William Melton is the author of The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and Engelbert Humperdinck: A Life with Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, in preparation), and is a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics like Friedrich Klose, Henri Kling and Felix Draeseke. A career orchestral horn-player, he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.

The Rossetti Ensemble was created in 2018 from long-standing collaborations between pianist John Lenehan, violinist Sara Trickey, violist Sarah-Jane Bradley and cellist Tim Lowe. Named after Dante Gabriel, the British poet and Pre-Raphaelite artist, the group is passionate about the repertoire of the era and the many composers who derived inspiration from Rossetti's work, such as Debussy and Vaughan Williams. In addition to its performances as a piano quartet, the group is flexible, working with other high-profile instrumentalists and singers to produce imaginative and varied programmes. Under an earlier name, 'Sound Collective', its

⁹ 'Exile, Identity and Music', *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ 'Robert Fürstenthal: Lieder und Balladen vom Leben und Vergehen', *Online Merker*, 13 February 2017 (onlinemerker.com/robert-fuerstenthal-lieder-und-balladen-vom-leben-und-vergehen/).

¹¹ 'Nur ein Hobby Komponist?', *Wiener Zeitung*, 18 January 2017 (wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/kultur/klassik/ein-schall-fuer-zwei/868678-Nur-ein-Hobbykomponist.html).

previous concerts included appearances at King's Place in London and the Lichfield and Ripon International Festivals, and it released a recording, *Concertato*, of chamber works by Lydia Kakabadse, on the Divine Art label in February 2017.

Sara Trickey brings her 'beautifully refined tone' (*Musical Opinion*) and her 'fiery and passionate' style (*The Strad*) to both her solo and chamber career. Formerly a founder member of the prize-winning Brontë Quartet, she is currently a member of the Odysseus Piano Trio and the Joachim String Trio. She has been involved in many chamber-music recordings, receiving encomia in the press for her duo recordings of works by Mathias and Schubert. She also has a keen interest in contemporary music.



Sarah-Jane Bradley, an 'ardent and affecting soloist' (*The Daily Telegraph*), is well known for her championing of new works for the viola. She has worked as soloist with the Philharmonia, Hallé and BBC Symphony Orchestra amongst others, and her acclaimed recordings include albums for Chandos, Dutton Epoch, Hyperion and Naxos. A founder member of the Leopold String Trio, and subsequently Sorrel Quartet, Fidelio Piano Quartet and London Soloists Ensemble, she is a sought-after chamber musician.



Tim Lowe is firmly established as one of the new generation of outstanding British cellists. He has played as a soloist and chamber musician throughout Europe and the UK. His most recent recital at the Wigmore with pianist Andrew Brownell was described as ‘compelling in every respect, probing, virtuosic and yielding by turns – a true example of outstanding musicianship’ (*Musical Opinion*). He is a professor of cello at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Artistic Director of York Chamber Music Festival.



John Lenehan has been described as ‘One of our most celebrated musicians’ (*Classic FM Magazine*) and ‘Simply one of the best chamber pianists going’ (*The Scotsman*). He has recorded over 70 albums, and is renowned internationally both as a soloist and as a chamber musician. He regularly partners artists such as Tasmin Little and Emma Johnson, and is also acclaimed for his work as a composer and arranger.



Malcolm Messiter ‘plays the oboe like a wizard’ (*Montreal Gazette*) and according to *Records and Recording* can best be described as ‘the Heifetz of the oboe’. He has performed all over the world as soloist and was a frequent collaborator with the Amadeus Quartet. More recent performances have included many recitals with the pianist John Lenehan and concerts with the London Soloists Ensemble.



Christopher O'Neal, oboe, studied with Terence MacDonagh at the Royal College of Music and with Heinz Holliger in Freiburg. He is a founder member of the award-winning and ground-breaking ensembles Capricorn and the Elysian Wind Quintet, and has been the oboist of the internationally renowned Fibonacci Sequence since the inception of the group in 1994. He was the oboist of the Mercury Ensemble of Ballet Rambert before becoming principal oboe of Kent Opera under Roger Norrington and Iván Fischer, as well as principal with the English Sinfonia under Sir Charles Groves. He is now principal oboe and soloist with the Orchestra of St Johns, and co-principal with the London Mozart Players. He has been a professor of oboe at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in Greenwich since 2004.



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