



Recorded Tring Parish Church, 27 November 2011 (*Everything under the Sun, Hopeful Monsters*)
and St John the Baptist, Aldbury, 12 March 2012 (*Dr Johnson and Mr Savage, Hubbert Peak*)
and 19 March 2012 (*Air, Allarme, An Arch Never Sleeps, Palimpsest, Three Short Obsessions*)

Engineer: Jonathan Haskell, Astounding Sounds

Producer: Peter Sheppard Skærved

Musical supervision: Michael Alec Rose

Cover photograph of Michael Alec Rose courtesy of L. Lin Ong

Design and lay-out: Peter Handley, Imergent Images Ltd., Kidderminster

The artists would like to acknowledge the support given to this recording by the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (Mark Wait, Dean), the Royal Academy of Music, London (Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Principal) and an anonymous donor.

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

TOCC 0172

© Toccata Classics, London, 2013

© Toccata Classics, London, 2013

The Toccata Discovery Club offers its members substantial discounts on all Toccata Classics recordings, whether CDs or downloads, and also on all the pioneering books on music published by its sister company, Toccata Press. A modest annual membership fee brings you two free CDs or a Toccata Press book when you join (so you are saving from the start) and opens up the entire Toccata Classics catalogue to you, both new recordings and existing releases, at substantial discounts. Frequent special offers bring further discounts. Visit the Toccata Classics website at www.toccataclassics.com for more details.

Toccata Classics CDs can be ordered from our distributors around the world, a list of whom can be found at www.toccataclassics.com. If we have no representation in your country, contact: Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK
Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

Michael Alec ROSE



Chamber and Solo Works for Strings and Horn

including
Hopeful Monsters
for string orchestra
Everything under the Sun
for two violins
An Arch Never Sleeps
for violin and double-bass
Hubbert Peak for string quartet

Peter Sheppard Skærved,
Mihailo Trandafilovski, violins
Neil Heyde, cello
Rachel Meerloo, double-bass
Carly Lake, horn
Kreutzer Quartet
Longbow

FIRST RECORDINGS

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by Michael Alec Rose

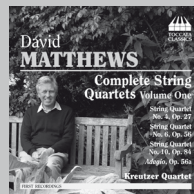
I was born in Philadelphia in 1959. Growing up in a family devoted to science and medicine, I took a good long time to recognise the siren call of music. One early mentor, Leonard Murphy, was the first person to draw it nearer, leading me and my junior-high jazz band fellows in 1974 on a nine-city concert tour of Romania, at the peak of Ceaușescu's tyranny. My crucial memory of this trip was signing autographs after each concert for ravenous Romanian teenagers, who were wild with wonder at hearing American jazz played by boys and girls their own age.

I dutifully fulfilled all the premedical requirements as an undergrad at University of Pennsylvania, while gobbling up everything the Music Department had on offer, including two separate and overlapping curricula. It was pure luck (a mother on the faculty of the School of Education and therefore a free tuition ride) that brought me into ongoing, one-on-one contact with Penn's outstanding music faculty at the time, including three of the finest composers of their generation – George Rochberg, George Crumb and Richard Wernick – and the most important music-theorist of that time, Leonard Meyer. These mentors and others made it impossible for me to pursue the path of a physician. Instead, I undertook graduate studies in composition while still an undergraduate, finishing my Master's degree so hastily that the composition faculty at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester were forced to admit me on probation, on the strength of my famous mentors' recommendations alone, in the absence of any portfolio of original compositions.

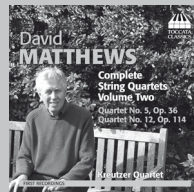
At Eastman I made up for this late start, composing much and capping my doctoral degree with a commission from the Naumburg Foundation to write my Second String Quartet for an ensemble of protégés of the Cleveland Quartet at Eastman, the Meliora Quartet, who performed the work widely.

More from The Kreutzer Quartet on Toccata Classics

The Kreutzer Quartet is currently embarked on two major string-quartet cycles on Toccata Classics: the complete string quartets of David Matthews (b. 1943) and Anton Reicha (1770–1836).



TOCC 0058



TOCC 0059



TOCC 0022

'This is [...] some of the most concentrated, penetrating writing for this medium in the past 30 years or more. It is musical thinking of the highest order and quartet writing in the great tradition of Beethoven, Bartok, Britten, and Tippett, all of whom Matthews mentions as influences. [...] The Kreutzer Quartet plays this music with staggering conviction and skill.'

Robert Reilly, CatholiCity

'the Kreutzer Quartet gives its collective all in accounts of manifest commitment and burning conviction. [...] The remainder of this series could not be more keenly awaited.'

Richard Whitehouse, *International Record Review*

Just released: two quartets composed by Reicha in close collaboration with his childhood friend Beethoven – 'masterworks in their own rights, offering crisp models of what the medium can do, taking wing from Haydn's clarity, and clearing a new road' (Peter Sheppard Skærved)



Rachel Meerloo has worked with many of Britain's most prestigious orchestras including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, BBC Philharmonic and English Chamber Orchestras, English National Ballet and Opera North. In February 2011 Rachel was made a permanent member of the Hallé Orchestra where she is also an active member of the education outreach programme. She is much in demand as a chamber musician, collaborating with ensembles such as the Merion Ensemble, Eblana String Trio and the Kreutzer and Rossi Quartets. Rachel plays on a Milanese double-bass from c. 1720, purchased with the help of the Countess of Munster Trust, with a bow by Brian Tunncliffe.

Carly Lake studied horn at Trinity College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, where she won both the Ann Driver Trust and Richard Merewether Awards. She has studied with some of the most important horn-players in the UK today including Richard Watkins, Michael Thompson and Martin Owen and has performed with the London Sinfonietta and Philharmonia Orchestra. She has worked extensively as a workshop leader, with youth and community projects on behalf of many organisations, including the Royal Opera House, Spitalfields Festival and the National Youth Orchestra. She is generously supported by the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation as a 2012 Wingate Scholar.

Longbow is a virtuoso string ensemble made up some of the most adventurous virtuoso players in the UK. It focuses on the interface between string-orchestra and string-ensemble writing, and repertoire from the early nineteenth century to the present day. Its diverse projects range from a commemoration of the Cable Street Riot at Wilton's Music Hall to complete Bach concerti at the music-and-literature festival 'Wege Durch das Land' in North Rhine-Westphalia. Longbow's previous recordings have been released on Naxos (playing music by Nigel Clarke) and on Metier (in music by Elliott Schwartz). The artistic directors of Longbow are Nigel Clarke and Peter Sheppard Skærved.

After one year teaching at Hartwick College in upstate New York, I began my lifetime of service to the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University (from 1986 onwards). The artistic joys (a catalogue of over 80 symphonic, chamber and vocal works, performed all over the world), administrative challenges (including a nine-year stint as Chair of the Composition/Theory Department), petty setbacks and pedagogical satisfactions of these 27 years have been so manifold – so fraught with complexities and ironies – that no account can begin to measure the profound ways in which the daily round of teaching and intellectual inquiry must exert (ought to exert, cannot help but exert) an emotional force on the practice of composing music. The quest for a harmony between these two callings (composing and teaching) has served as a happy vexation, a fruitful point of reference and a productive bone of contention for my decade of collaborations with Peter Sheppard Skærved (beginning in 2004). The exchange programme that he and I co-founded – bringing together faculty and students from the Blair School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music – can be understood as the prime mechanism and pragmatic source for all the music on this disc, each and every piece here composed with Peter and his multifarious, boundary-breaking vision in mind. Indeed, the playlist of this recording provides the best chronicle of the friendship (so far) between us. Over the course of these past ten years – tracked so well and so richly on this CD – Peter has played Apollo to my Marsyas, Holmes to my Watson, Mozart to my Salieri, van Swieten to my would-be Mozart, inspiration, goad, taskmaster, aider and abettor, co-conspirator along so many subversive avenues, fellow-tramper across London and the countryside of both England and Tennessee, and – above all – indispensable artistic conscience, opening up new horizons for my musical energy, granting me unprecedented focus and a truer expression of the interconnections I put my faith in, among everything under the sun.

MICHAEL ALEC ROSE AND PETER SHEPPARD SKÆRVED: A CREATIVE FRIENDSHIP

by Lee Hallman

To establish our bearings in an unfamiliar landscape, we reach for a map. With a album of music, we scan the list of titles – phrases, which, like place names, we gratefully grasp as ready signposts. There is a pleasure, also, to be found in the names themselves. Michael Alec Rose's titles are always a joy to read, poetic and dense with allusion, whether evoking an ancient architectural maxim (*An Arch Never Sleeps*) or the most ephemeral of elements, so often called upon by composers (*Air*). But the analogy works only up to a point: in music, that most temporal of art forms, a title can be only a suggestion, a possible route of departure as we navigate into the wilderness of pure sound.

The pieces on this album were inspired by, and sometimes named for, specific encounters with people, poems, artworks, historical events, buildings and landscapes: accumulations of fact and feeling, they crackle with intimacy and specificity of detail. And yet they follow no programme, as the compositions soar far beyond their sources. Meaning, never foreclosed, explodes outward with imaginative filaments.

I was nineteen years old, an undergraduate Art History major at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, when I first encountered Michael, then my teacher, now my friend and continuous e-mail correspondent of going on fourteen years. I was no music expert, then or now: I can stumble along with a score, and stammer out a few songs on the piano, badly. But one of the things Michael taught me, among the many things he has taught me, is that a person does not have to be an expert on music to comprehend its structures and interpret its audible signs (the title of Rose's wonderful book¹), to listen to it and write about it and to love it. I graduated and ventured out into world, supplied with a pocketful of useful musical terms (timbre, ostinato, sonata form...), but more

¹ *Audible Signs: Essays from a Musical Ground*, Continuum, London and New York, 2010.

used by evolutionary biologists in the 1940s to refer to mutations which hover on the edge of two fates: extinction, or, in the case of an incidentally congruent environmental shift, to the establishment of a new form of life. Rose's music balances always upon this knife-edge, between harmony and discord, generation and destruction, beauty and terror. He writes: 'I am productively discontent walking the narrow bridge between these two positions, the only place I feel at home.'¹⁰ To listen to this music is to stand together with him on this uneasy ground, to look around and see that the place is good, and to recalibrate our bearings and find ourselves, enriched and increased.

Lee Hallman is an art historian, curator and writer based in New York. Currently pursuing a PhD from the Graduate Center, City University of New York, she has held positions at Tate Britain, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, and is a regular contributor to The Burlington Magazine.

The **Kreutzer Quartet** – **Peter Sheppard Skærved** and **Mihailo Trandafilovski** (violins), **Morgan Goff** (viola) and **Neil Heyde** (cello) – has forged an enviable reputation as one of Europe's most dynamic and innovative string quartets. They are the dedicatees of numerous works, and over many years have forged creative partnerships with composers including Sir Michael Tippett, David Matthews, Michael Finnissy, Judith Weir and Hafliði Hallgrímsson. They have a particularly strong relationship to a cross-section of leading American composers, having collaborated intensively with the great George Rochberg in the last few years of his life, as well as working closely with such figures as Elliott Schwartz, and the prolific symphonist Gloria Coates. They are Artists in Association at York University and at Wilton's Music Hall in London. Their work in collaboration with art galleries has garnered much attention and large audiences, particularly through their annual residency at the Tate Gallery, St Ives. For Toccata Classics they have recorded two CDs (TOCC 0058 and 0059) in their cycle of the complete string quartets of David Matthews; of Volume One, containing the Quartets Nos. 4, 6 and 10 and the *Adagio* for string quartet, the American critic Robert Reilly wrote that 'The Kreutzer Quartet plays this music with staggering conviction and skill'. They have also released a first volume of the complete string quartets of Anton Reicha, with the first two quartets of his Op. 48 (TOCC 0022).

¹⁰ *Audible Signs*, op. cit., p. 85.

began, past Old Billingsgate Market, growing ‘Wilder and wilder’ as it passes through the docks and over the Thames ‘to Bankside’. A jubilant answer to Mozart’s extensive horn repertoire, it perversely pushes the reasonable bounds of instrumental decorum with its brash volumes, rollicking polyrhythms and fifteen top C notes.

How can music be an ally in times of darkness? How might it address or reflect upon those bleakest chapters in our history, such as the Battle of Cable Street, that day in 1936 when the predominantly Jewish citizens of the East End of London – aided by anarchist and communist provocateurs, properly complicating the history – gathered *en masse* to resist the spread of Fascism? Commissioned by Wilton’s Music Hall to write a piece for the 75th anniversary of the event, Rose delivered *Hopeful Monsters* [16].

The opening tune, the composer notes, grows out of a dim memory, ‘distracted at first, as if humming a forgotten catch of melody’. Other voices join, one after another, ‘gathering voice and memory’ in unison before the tune is taken up as a round of staggered but interwoven voices. ...how *not* to hear this counterpoint, this polyphonic singing, as the audible sign of the collective spirit rising into light – in this case, against the dark forces of Sir Oswald Mosley’s Fascist Blackshirts?

And there are other signs – signs of otherness. In the second, faster section, chromatic turns invoke the riches of the entire Jewish musical tradition – a corpus, as Rose knows intimately, which has survived, like its people, through holding fast to tradition while submitting to the necessity of adaptation.

What follows is a minefield of dialectical energy, counterpoint and unison, conflict and synthesis. Struggling through violent twists and jolts, its fugitive song is grasped only to be lost again, at one point swallowed in a void of complete silence before reviving, fragile and thin, transformed but recognisable. In the last section, all remaining energies are marshalled in a final standoff between fast and slow, loud and soft... then the coda: a whirling rise into a tuneful but still anxious unknown, concluding in a furious sequence of fisticuffs.

There is no mythic conclusion to this tragedy, no clear victor. *Hopeful Monsters* – a title borrowed from Nicholas Mosley, the novelist eldest son of Sir Oswald – was a term

importantly, awakened to the inkling that all of the things I loved – songs, paintings, and writing about them – were joined, not simply through my undergraduate enthusiasms, but in an invisible web of artistic interconnections. Music, poetry, painting and letter-writing – these are simply different utterances of feeling, associated co-ordinates in the geography of the imagination (the title of Rose’s favourite book of essays, by Guy Davenport²).

To enter the landscape of Rose’s music is to feel distances suddenly converge. Through the notes we find ourselves eavesdropping on musical conversations. Whether with Bach, Beethoven or The Beatles, the thread running through their spirited discourse is the certain belief that music does not respect history. Without irony, Michael Alec Rose and Peter Sheppard Skærved, who both abide by this intuition more surely than just about anyone I know, ply this mischief through their ferocious regard for historical context.

Instigated with characteristic foresight by their mutual friend George Rochberg, their 2004 meeting triggered a collaboration of exceptional intensity – intellectual, institutional and, of course, musical. To listen to a conversation between them is to feel the surrounding temperature rise; it is thrilling, exhausting, exasperating. I have scuffed up numerous pairs of shoes scrambling to keep up with their furious exchanges as they pound the streets of London, mile after mile, especially over the well-trodden route from Wapping to Marylebone Road. I have sat, and occasionally ventured to speak up, in workshops and lectures at the Royal Academy of Music and the Blair School of Music, where Rose teaches, and have had the good fortune to witness the violinist and his Academy colleagues perform Rose’s music in the Enlightenment Gallery of the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the seaside rotunda of Tate St Ives – these merely a handful of the international galleries and stages in and upon which Sheppard Skærved has performed Rose’s pieces.

The whirlwind took flight with *Three Short Obsessions* [9]–[11]. Commissioned and

² *The Geography of the Imagination: Forty Essays*, North Point Press, San Francisco, 1981.

premiered by Sheppard Skærved during his residency at the Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City in 2004, these miniatures for solo violin imminently lend themselves to his musical globe-trotting: tucked carefully in his rucksack, as it were, these musical jewels, glittering with sinuous lines, sharp-cut edges and virtuoso passages, have been unpacked and shared with audiences around the world. One can feel the 'obsessions' of the title (drawn in the first place from the composer's musings on Proust's *Swann's Way*) take hold in the way the music unexpectedly alights on an interval, a progression of notes, or a sound effect such as a double-stop or *glissando*, momentarily seizing the feverish potential of these fragments while keeping their energy precariously in check. In performance, the principle is as fully realised as it can be: with his characteristic transgressive glee, Sheppard Skærved extends the obsessive motifs of Rose's score beyond the notes given on the page.

According to Sheppard Skærved, *Air* [1] – which is dedicated to him – arrived one day from out of the blue: 'like its title, it seemed to just be there.'³ From its gently buoyant, respiratory opening, sonic pressure rises and gathers, stirring up new melodies and propulsive rhythms. Its character shape-shifts as quickly as the mythic Boreas, strong, cold and dry ('insinuating, a little chilly', the composer suggests in his performance direction). Rose calls the piece a cross between 'a jig and a horror', a binding of the twining hairs of James Joyce's 'Sirens' and Paul Celan's 'Death Fugue.'

The harmonic and expressive vectors of *Hubbert Peak: Three Gas Stations for String Quartet* – dedicated to the Kreutzer Quartet – direct us back to Rose's own American soil. Its three movements take their names from the three paintings that inspired them – Stuart Davis' *Garage Lights* (1931–32), Ed Ruscha's *Standard* (from the artist's 1960s series of Standard garage stations), and Edward Hopper's *Gas* (1940). 'Garage Lights' [2] buzzes with the vibrant twilight energy and saturated tone-colour of Davis' local harbour scene. 'Standard' [3] originated as a stand-alone piece, commissioned by Tate St Ives for *If Everybody had an Ocean*, an exhibition organised in homage to pop maverick Brian Wilson.

³ Peter Sheppard Skærved website, <http://www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com/2012/03/allarme-an-arch-never-sleeps>, 19 March 2012.

In an amusingly inverted reply, the piece, as conceived by the composer, explores five levels of geological and historical time, from the Cretaceous period to our own contemporary era, in its three-minute span. The violin carves through silence with bold, slicing strokes in the highest register of the instrument, exquisitely interpreting the always-poetic performance indications: 'With Adamantine evenness', 'An axe-edge's breadth slower', 'Il tempo fuggel!' Through this time-travel we recall that music, too, is an artefact that survives in and through time with astonishing durability, while at once remaining malleable to the ideas and impositions we bring to it, from the most exacting technical analysis to imaginings as wildly fanciful as that of a hand-axe being wielded by native Britons in a battle against Claudian war elephants.

Dr Johnson and Mr Savage: Pantomime for Violinist and Cellist [14] alludes to the mysterious and unlikely friendship between the then youthful and destitute biographer Samuel Johnson and the murderous poet Richard Savage, recounted so well by the outstanding British historian Richard Holmes (the title is stolen from his book on the subject⁹). Weaving together truth and apocrypha, the tale of these two outcasts on their midnight wanderings through the cobbled alleys of eighteenth-century London, nourished by their no doubt lexicographically wide-ranging conversation and companionship, launches a purely musical pantomime – the art of storytelling without words – in which the dual voices of violin and cello testify to the complex business of friendship, its captivating bonds and wayward divergences. A bell tolls midway through the perambulation, struck here by the author of the pantomime; thematic threads tangle, begin to unravel, and then ravel themselves up all over again.

All'Arme [15] was written for Carly Lake (to whom it is dedicated) to play from the top of The Monument, Sir Christopher Wren's Doric column of Portland stone in the City of London that stands as a memorial to the Great Fire of London of 1666. 'Monumentally loud, alarmingly high', the performance notes urge, as we imagine the brassy echoes of the solo horn spreading through the urban maze, down Pudding Lane where the fire

⁹ *Dr Johnson and Mr Savage*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1993.

of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity'.⁸

Originally built as an ale house in 1743 and transformed in the nineteenth century to a magnificent chandelier- and mirror-bedecked theatre, Wilton's was converted to a Methodist Mission hall in 1888 and survived the London Blitz in the 1940s, standing, neglected and crumbling, for decades before re-opening in 1997. As artfully laid as brick and stone, harmony, too, is vulnerable to unmaking. At one point, the composer's notations call for sound to be 'Emptied out, in ruins.' The curtains of the piece close over a storm of thunderous reverberations.

An arch never sleeps because its structural nature is such that every element of its form is working, perpetually absorbing and spreading pressure – the paradoxical reason for its perfectly serene form. A splendid analogue to the equilibrium demanded from the players of a chamber ensemble, the title is also a pun on the Italian *arco* – the violin bow – invoking another perfectly balanced arch, at least in Rose's challenging score, for which rest is not an option.

Palimpsest [13] – commissioned by Sheppard Skærved for his residency in the Enlightenment Gallery of the British Museum, and dedicated to Frances Mayhew, Director of Wilton's Music Hall – was inspired by a pointed flint hand-axe in the Museum that was found and dug out of the soil, alongside a mammoth skeleton, in Gray's Inn Road in London in 1679. A keen fossil-hunter himself, Rose also delighted in the curatorial history of the piece: originally imagined by its seventeenth-century discoverers to derive from Noah's flood, the axe was deemed by later antiquarians to be a weapon from the Roman invasion of Britain in 43AD. In our own age, archaeologists have determined it to be a Palaeolithic hunting tool fashioned at least 350,000 years ago. According to current calculations, then, the Enlightenment-era authorities were off the mark – and in the dark – by something in the range of 348,000 years. A misconception of, well, mammoth proportions thus becomes a humorous allegory of our own ever-evolving human understanding.

⁸ Ruskin, 'The Lamp of Memory', in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849.

Listen in the movement for the pulsing engine of an iconic Beach Boys tune or two, their deadpan, Ruscha-esque flatness given an emphatic jolt of added syncopation and harmonic intricacy. 'Gas' [4] permeates into being with the glacial slowness of an *Appalachian Spring*. But again the composer injects a sharp dissonance into this earthbound lyricism, conjuring an atmosphere as enigmatic as Hopper's dark pastoral. Hubbert's Peak theory holds that earth's natural resources are finite, that production will follow a bell-curve to a point of 'peak oil,' followed by decline. The piece takes hold of the musical implications of this model, exploring, among other things, the potential distribution of sound and textures across a string quartet, from maximum saturation to depletion.

'Every act of musical imagination', Rose has written, 'is an extension of the landscape, fraught with fragility, utterly dependent on the weather, disposed towards flights of song which are just as quickly cut short by a passing cloud.'⁴ Collaborating with Sheppard Skærved has afforded the composer much opportunity to work in England, a country whose ancient landscapes and gloriously changeable weather have long sustained and obsessed him. Beyond his own physical experiences in these landscapes, his sense of a place is immeasurably shaped and enriched through his encounters with the novelists, poets and painters who have dwelled in and captured the spirit of the place, the *genius loci*, so memorably: Constable, John Clare, Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer, Ivon Hitchens in England; and their American counterparts George Inness, Walt Whitman, Charles Burchfield, John Marin, Mary Oliver, Wallace Stevens. And in the pastures alongside these literary and painterly *daimons* are the countless composers who have been seduced by the irresistible, irreducible call of nature: Vivaldi, Beethoven, Vaughan Williams, Stravinsky, Bartók and Copland, to name but a few. To see the strange and marvellous in the quotidian things of which our world is made – this is Rose's cultural inheritance.

Everything under the Sun: Four Seasons for Two Violins flows and overflows with the plenitude of nature in all its serenity and violence, its texture, colour and song. The compendious title of the duo is perhaps partly facetious – I imagine it delivered with a

⁴ Programme note, Vanderbilt performance of the *Pastoral Concerto* for violin and chamber orchestra (2008).

sidelong glance and a grin – yet at the same time it is a wholly authentic statement of the composer's outlook. Consider his uncommon definition of the pastoral mode – a manifesto, I would suggest, of his entire *modus operandi*:

The pastoral is a psychological condition – a way of being that is both spiritual and pragmatic – in which a person, whether in the city or in the country, tends to notice the most mundane details (tree, flower, animal, dead or alive, rock, water, weather, along with every species of manufacture, from the signs of construction to the building to the ruin) and assign extraordinary significance to them all. In a pastoral mode, as I conceive of it, literally no stone remains unturned.⁵

The halcyon song of a single violin announces 'Spring' [5], brimming with the ripeness of vernal possibility. The companion violin then awakens, echoing and developing the song as the two voices swell in a heady, chromatic dance of interlocking and separating. The call of the white-throated sparrow, with its distinct whistle of two sustained notes in different pitches followed by a repetition of three short pulses, is reproduced in all its miraculous strangeness. Once apprehended, we hear the pattern return through all four movements.

'Summer' [6] is slow and languorous, its harmony stretched like the golden embers of the sun on an August evening. Musical texture is stripped bare, undressed in order to breathe through heavy and humid air. A sweet lullaby transitions to a ruminative passage of falling and rising recalling the *Andante cantabile* of Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 18, No. 5 – his own song of praise to Mozart, and behind the spirit of Mozart, Haydn. Almost as soon as we recognise them, their ghostly whispers are swept away in a passing shower of *pizzicato*.

'Autumn' [7] turns from respite to effortful activity. Song bursts forth, impelled with the driving rhythm of a peasant dance. The fiddlers' harmony occasionally veers gleefully off course with the boisterous comedy of a Breughel painting of stout peasants with

⁵ E-mail from Michael Rose to Lee Hallman, 15 October 2005. In keeping with Rose's morality of ongoing self-contradiction, his most recent work for strings – a 2012 duo for violin and viola – is entitled *Unturned Stones*.

slipped tunics and ale-flushed cheeks. All revels and revolves around work and play, the cycles of seasonal and musical rest and unrest.

'Winter' [8] arrives, festive and lit from within. The opening melody sparks with a fragment of a certain north-gazing pop song (the Beatles' 'Norwegian Wood'); between statements of the tune overlaid with looping Baroque echoes, we hear the familiar call of the sparrows. The piece concludes with the repeated draw of the bow across two strings – a return of the persistent double-stopping which, like the sparrow call, haunts all four movements. The particular, major-sixth interval of this double-stop produces what is known as the 'Tartini effect', in which a bass note reverberates in the overtones well beneath the range of the instrument itself. This opening of harmonic ground beyond rational limits becomes the audible sign for that which exceeds our humanly perception – to a universe, in the words of Seamus Heaney, 'alive with what's invisible'.⁶

The work was commissioned by Wilton's Music Hall in London, the oldest surviving music hall in the world.

An Arch Never Sleeps [12] was also written, in 2009, to a commission from Wilton's Music Hall. The dominant architectural motif of this Victorian theatre, as Sheppard Skærved writes, is the 'series of looping dummy arches, often picked out with fairy lights, around the side and back walls of the Hall'.⁷

The piece begins with a quotation of Gershwin's 'I've got plenty o' nuttin'. Renewing this melodic fragment with a good deal of something, the violin sends it soaring into the vaults while the double-bass summons a deeper version from the ground below. The two instruments join up, as if to explore and carve out the contours of the walls, floors and archways; the music sounding and resounding as it traces the shape of the room, its dimensions of feeling. Further intonations emerge as if from further away, echoing, as John Ruskin writes, with 'that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching,

⁶ Seamus Heaney. *Seeing Things: Poems*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1991.

⁷ Peter Sheppard Skærved website, <http://www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com/2012/03/allarme-an-arch-never-sleeps>, 19 March 2012.