

ROYAL LIVERPOOL
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

RUBICON

DANIHOWARD
ORCHESTRAL WORKS

CONDUCTED BY
PABLO URBINA & MICHAEL SEAL
TROMBONE PETER MOORE

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

It would normally be the case that music compiled for an album is written in close succession, its pieces conceived from the very beginning to be heard in sequence. This album, however, is a little different. It is more of a series of 'moments in time', moving through a range of my favourite orchestral pieces written between 2016 and 2021. It has been a fascinating process to re-visit these earlier works, to consider how they all fit together to create a coherent album, and to understand how each one played a unique role in my own personal and compositional journey through my twenties.

While studying at the Royal College of Music, I vividly remember avoiding all forms of orchestral writing out of sheer fear! The enormity of writing for such large forces overwhelmed me at the time, so during this period I focused my attention instead on chamber music. This, however, changed abruptly after graduating, when in quick succession I was given three separate opportunities to write for orchestra. One of these resulted in *Arches*, my first commission for symphony orchestra and the final piece on the album:

Arches was commissioned by Orchestra Vitae for a concert commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and premiered at St John's, Smith Square, London. The venue itself informed the title, its interior surrounded by bold and vast 'Arches'. I was particularly interested in how Shakespeare navigated the theatrical 'arc' in his plays in an often playful and dynamic way, which very much shaped the character of this piece.

After overcoming my initial fear, I absolutely fell in love with writing for orchestra and, in particular, large orchestral forces. No other combination of instruments can give you the scope and possibilities for exploring new textures and sound worlds, and this I find so exciting and limitless.

Shortly after the premiere of *Arches*, I received a commission from Classic FM and the Royal Philharmonic Society to compose *Argentum* (which opens the album) for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. The whole existence of this album is in no small part due to that first encounter with the RLPO in 2017.

Argentum [Latin for silver] is a short, vibrant and fun, yet reflective, piece, written in celebration of Classic FM's silver anniversary. Any celebration offers us the chance to look back on a journey and reflect on the many hurdles and milestones that have brought us to this moment. My aim with this piece was to encompass the range of emotions that one might experience on an extended journey.

This was my first time in Liverpool and also my first time working with a full-time professional orchestra, and I was more nervous than I care to remember. Everything about those few days felt surreal and dream-like. I had the best experience with the musicians, conductor, staff and, of course, their wonderful audience who seemed to really engage with me and the new piece.

This performance led to two further commissions from the orchestra, the first of which was *Coalescence*:

Coalescence explores the concept of humans versus nature, and how, over the centuries, our species has attempted to 'outsmart' nature in many ways. It was originally inspired after walking past an enormous tree in central London (with a trunk of at least a metre in width), which over the decades had grown in and around the solid metal railing built into the concrete pavement.

An image I couldn't get out of my head for some time.

At the inception, the piece had a much more serious undertone than anything I had written before, largely due to the subject matter. However, a slight shift in gear occurred about midway through the writing process, when my dear friend and mentor and unbelievably talented jazz bass player, Flynn Adams, sadly passed away. This hit me quite hard and I couldn't stop thinking about something he once said at a workshop we gave together: 'This is not a maths test, this is music, and music is supposed to be fun!' Something about that really made me think twice about what I was trying to achieve with my music, and I have since made sure that there is always an element of 'fun' in it.

After this piece, the RLPO asked me what I might be interested in writing next. Shortly prior to this conversation, I had met with trombonist Peter Moore and we discussed working together on a new piece. Peter and I loved the idea of a concerto and were really keen to share our suggestion. To our surprise, the RLPO said yes! Working on this Trombone Concerto with such an incredible musician and soloist was a privilege, and the whole experience felt like a huge step in my own development as a composer.

'In the first movement, the humming rhythms of day-to-day life (embodied in the solo trombone's instruction to "play as if you are totally oblivious to your surroundings") are displaced by a gradual "Realisation" - a way to contribute, perhaps, or a sense of one's own worth. This seed of an idea is turned over and over in the second movement, "Rumination". Here, over a repeating harmonic cycle, the initially unaccompanied trombone is joined in stages by sections of the orchestra, its confidence growing with every new exchange. Then comes the ecstatic finale, an "Illumination" in which the soloist's resolve is borne out in a burst of fireworks.'

(Timmy Fisher)

Finally, my most recent work to feature on the album is *Ellipsis*. This was a wonderful opportunity to work for the first time with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and again with Vasily Petrenko, who had conducted the premiere of *Coalescence* and began his music directorship with the RPO in 2021.

'Ellipsis was conceived as the musical equivalent of time-lapse photography, charting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's steadfast journey through a constantly evolving London musical scene over the last seventy-five years. The music alludes to key moments in the orchestra's history: the sense of heady anticipation at its launch, times when concert halls nearly fell silent, and its ongoing role reaffirmed at the end. In between the listener is invited to fill in the gaps, as the title suggests. As with the time-lapse technique, the music occupies different temporal worlds – one that unfolds with majestic slowness and another that flits by with busy images that leave a passing impression.'

(Jonathan James)

We recorded the album over two days. The two conductors, Pablo Urbina and Michael Seal, brought so much of their own musicianship and expertise to the recording sessions and all of the players were absolutely incredible. I'd like to say a huge thank you to all of these musicians for engaging with the music with such enthusiasm and musicality.

As a relatively young composer, I feel so privileged to have been given all these opportunities to write for orchestra and that is why I would like to dedicate this album to Sandra Parr and Andrew Cornall from the RLPO, for taking a chance on me so early in my career. Their support has been a catalyst for so many of the wonderful opportunities that have since come my way.

Thank you for listening, and I do hope you enjoy it.

DANI HOWARD

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Conductors

Michael Seal*
Pablo Urbina+

Violins I

Sarah Brandwood-Spencer+
Adi Brett*
Marino Capulli+
Concettina Del Vecchio
Dylan Edge+
Thelma Handy*
Susanna Jordan
Mihkel Kerem+
Alexander Marks
Stephan Mayer
Ruth McNamara*
Emily Mowbray+
Martin Richardson
Rebecca Steventon
Claire Stranger-Ford
Eva Thorarinsdottir+
Elizaveta Tyun*
Qian Wu

Violins II

Iona Allan*
Sally Anne Anderson+
Helen Boardman+
Sophie Coles*
Laura Concar+
Charlotte Dowding
Frances Evans
James Justin Evans
Lukas Hank+
Ann Lawes
Kate Marsden+
Sylvia More+
James Pattinson*
Katharine Richardson
David Rimbault+
Olga Smolen*
Dewi Tudor Jones*

Violas

Nicholas Bootiman*
Gwendolyn Cawdron+
Jayne Coyle
Ian Fair
Sarah Hill+
Rachel Jones
Catherine Marwood+
Alexander Mitchell*
Harriet Mitchell*
Ben Newton+
David Ruby
John Robert Shepley+
Fiona Stunden

Cellos

Jonathan Aasgaard+
Ian Bracken
Hilary Browning+
Nicholas Byrne+
Simon Denton*
Alexander Holladay
Gethyn Jones+
Mark Lindley
Gilly McMullin*
Ruth Owens+
Anna Stuart*

Double Basses

Marcel Becker
Nigel Dufty
Ashley Frampton
Jamie Kenny+
Richard Lewis
Anthony Williams

Flutes

Cormac Henry*
Lily Vernon-Purves+
Helen Wilson

Piccolo

Sameeta Gahir

Oboes

Anna Cooper*
Catrin Ruth Davies
Rainer Gibbons+
Matthew Jones+
Jonathan Small*

Cor anglais

Matthew Jones+

Clarinets

Jillian Allan+
Pierluigi Capezzuto*
Vitor Fernandes*
Katherine Lacy+

Bass Clarinet

Ausiàs Garrigós Morant

Bassoons

Rebekah Abramski
Nina Ashton+
Julian Roberts*

Contrabassoon

Gareth Twigg

Horns

Simon Griffiths
Timothy Jackson
Christopher Morley
Stephen Nicholls
Timothy Nicholson

Trumpets

Jim Bulger+
Richard Cowen
Ryan Linham+
Paul Marsden
William Morley*

Trombones

Simon Cowen
Simon Powell

Bass Trombone

Simon Chappell

Tuba

Robin Haggart

Timpani

Neil Hitt

Percussion

Josephine Frieze
Ben Gray+
Graham Johns
Scott Lumsdaine

Harps

Gabriella Dall'Olio+
Elizabeth McNulty

Celeste

Ian Buckle+

*Musicians only playing on
Argentum and the Trombone Concerto

+Musicians only playing on *Ellipsis*,
Coalescence and *Arches*



Artist biographies can be found at www.rubiconclassics.com

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