

Peter Hope

composer & arranger

Reviews

WIND BLOWN CD WB1

It is an unfortunate truism about Peter Hope that many listeners will associate him with a single work: the ubiquitous Suite: The Ring of Kerry. This is a splendid piece that demands regular performance on radio and in concert hall. Nevertheless, it blinds the listener to Hope's musical achievement. There are indeed, several wonderful examples of light music in his catalogue, but also many arrangements and theme music for the BBC Concert Orchestra. This was his speciality for many years. Recently, Peter Hope has decided to concentrate on more 'serious' music. This has resulted in a slew of fine works including concertos for bassoon and for recorder, a Serenade for string trio, and two large scale cantatas: *Along the Shore* and *The Song of Solomon*.

The present CD comprises four significant sonatas for wind instruments, all composed in the past few years. Also included are two smaller, but equally interesting pieces.

A great place to start exploring this outstanding CD is the heartachingly beautiful Tallis Remembered for clarinet, recorder and piano. This timeless little piece was composed for the 2013 William Alwyn Festival where it featured a violin instead of the clarinet. The work was inspired by Wendy Cope's wistful poem 'Tallis's Canon' and is effectively a set of through-composed variations on Tallis's well-known tune. It is good that the text of the poem has been provided in the liner notes.

A Walk with my dog Molly, is a little bit of a novelty piece. Written for the unusual combination of recorder and speaker, it is a tour de force for the wind instrument. The original work would appear to have been conceived as a solo recorder 'In Memoriam' for the Hope family's 'Staffordshire Terrier', Molly. The spoken part (Pam Zinnemann-Hope), complete with 'noises off', is a humorous homage to a well-loved animal. The work will survive as a complex solo for recorder.

For something more serious, the listener should turn to the Sonata for bassoon and piano. For anyone imagining a chamber version of *The Rings of Kerry*, they should think again. Although this work is approachable and largely tonal in its working out, it is a million miles away from so-called 'light music.' The sonata is presented in three movements, beginning with a little introduction from the bassoon. This is soon joined by an acerbic 'spiky' piano accompaniment to a livelier melody. There is a tranquil moment of considerable beauty before the sparkling tune reemerges. The opening thought is repeated before the sonata glides into the middle 'lento.' There is a contemplative mood to this movement, which is characterised by a melody in the bassoon's high register. The central section is agitated and almost disturbing in its intensity. The work closes with a vibrant rondo with a memorable refrain and couple of fetching episodes.

The sonata was written for the present soloists in 2015, and was first heard in Nordhorn, Germany in that year. The playing of the bassoon part by Frank Forst is simply stunning, not forgetting the fine piano playing by Yukiko Sano.

The Sonata for clarinet and piano was commissioned by the Ida Carroll Trust to commemorate the opening of the Ida Carroll Walkway at the Royal Northern College of Music on 21 April 2015. It was performed there by the present soloists, Thomas Verity (clarinet) and Simon Passmore (piano), who give a splendid account on this CD. The work opens with a surprisingly (for the event) lugubrious 'moderato.' Nevertheless, this is countermanded by a rumbustious 'vivace' which is rhythmically

interesting and technically demanding. The liner notes explain that the final movement, 'Freely, Allegro' is subtitled 'The Clarinettist on the Roof.' It has, we are told without explanation, a 'Klezmer' feel. The allusion is to the 1960s musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, in this case substituted by the clarinettist. The word 'Klezmer' is a Yiddish catch-all word for a style of music deriving from the Ashkenazi Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and Russia. The music, as a genre and in Hope's piece, covers a wide range of moods 'from soulful to energetic.'

It comes hardly as a surprise to discover that the Recorder Sonata was written for John Turner. Peter Hope acknowledges that Turner has 'encouraged the composition of many new works for recorder written in a wide variety of musical styles and thereby encouraged many composers.'

The middle movement was written before the outer ones. This was premiered at St Marys' Church, Stockport during a memorial service on 23 April 2016 for the historian Nicholas Henshall, who had died in September 2015. It is a threnody that exploits a straightforward musical form and perfectly poised melody. The opening largely introspective 'fantasia' develops into a lyrical mood with some very romantic sounding piano accompaniment. There is a more animated episode before the thoughtful mood is restored. The last movement is a technically challenging 'moto perpetuo.' The soloist must play both treble and tenor recorders during a brief interlude, whilst the coda played on the descant recorder. It is a movement infused by jazz, a hornpipe and sheer vibrancy of rhythm and melody.

The opening work on this CD is the oldest, and in my opinion the best. The Sonata for oboe and piano was composed in 2009, once again for the Ida Carroll Trust. It was written in memory of Lady Barbirolli to celebrate her life and work. Evelyn Rothwell was born in 1911 and became one of the most celebrated oboists of her generation. In 1939 she married Sir John.

The Sonata opens with a long, almost melancholic movement signed 'moderato.' It is one of deepest pieces that I have heard from Hope's pen. The mood changes with a dynamic scherzo presenting a satisfyingly contrasting trio. But even here, the mood is sad and reflective. Soon, the piece changes from that of remembrance to celebration in the final jazzy 'eight in the bar' number that Hope declares nods to his 'semi-pro band playing' during the 1940s. It is a very subtle bit of pastiche. Lady Barbirolli would have been delighted with this impressive tribute to her art both as a composition and as performed here by Richard and Janet Simpson. It is a sonata that ought to be in every oboist's repertoire.

As noted in the body of the review, the playing is superb. The liner notes by the composer are essential reading. Biographies of the recitalist and Peter Hope are included. The sound experience is perfect. The sleeve art, by Robert Callahan is a splendid impression of the high Pennines overlooking a lamplit town - in my interpretation.

This new CD devoted to the music of Peter Hope is a 'must' for all enthusiasts of wind instruments and modern British music at its very best. All four sonatas are valuable additions to the repertoire. They balance approachability with considerable technical demands on the players. But most important of all, each one is a vital work that moves, impresses, inspires and is totally memorable.

John France: MusicWeb International

Review from Fanfare in the USA: WB2

Given Peter Hope's long career as an arranger, orchestrator, and composer of light and commercial music, it should come as no surprise that the sonatas on this recording are colorful, entertaining, and an eminently pleasant way to spend an hour. Moreover, Hope has stayed true to the conception of the sonata as a chamber work, a collaboration between equals that is as rewarding for the performers as it is for the audience.

The disc opens with a sonata for oboe and piano, played by Richard Simpson and Janet Simpson, respectively. The evocative music is reminiscent of a film score, though one might wish for a bit more ebb and flow in the lyrical sections, especially from the oboe. The recording balances the two players well, but in doing so some of the oboe's richness may have been lost. A jazz-inflected finale shows off tight ensemble playing, the piano's walking bass lines dovetailing seamlessly with oboe obbligatos and riffs. The Clarinet Sonata that follows is cast in the same mold, with a lyrical opening movement and a vernacular-styled finale, this time swapping a

jazz idiom for that of a Klezmer band. As with the oboe, it seems that the clarinet's sound has been restricted in the recording or mixing in the service of a balanced recording, but this does Thomas Verity a disservice, cutting off the highs and lows of his dramatic phrasing, especially in the third movement's Klezmer-inspired inflections and ebullient passagework.

The Recorder Sonata is perhaps the most interesting work on the program, in part because of the various textural contrasts and the relative novelty of hearing a recorder in modern repertoire. Hope's orchestrations are especially noteworthy here. He is sensitive to the dynamic constraints of the recorder, using creative —almost Impressionistic—voicings in the piano that never obscure Turner's delicate, subtle playing. Turner's virtuosity is also on display in the third movement, which features descant, treble, and tenor recorders and a number of difficult technical passages. Frank Forst and Yukiko Sano turn in a restrained performance of the Bassoon Sonata, and Forst's lyrical lines are mournful without being sappy. Some of the articulations in the finale are a touch pecky, but this does not detract significantly from the excellent technical execution.

The final two works on the program are not sonatas as such. Tallis Remembered is a short set of variations for (in this version) recorder, clarinet, and piano (Passmore), inspired by Wendy Cope's poem "Tallis's Canon," which is reproduced in the liner notes. Verity's silken clarinet presents Tallis's well-known canon in a manner that recalls Copland's Appalachian Spring. Clarinet and recorder intertwine with variations and obligato lines. The only distraction in an otherwise smooth performance comes at 1:40, when Verity's arpeggios outline the harmonic progression a little too percussively. The disc closes with a whimsical piece for solo treble recorder and speaker (Pam Zinnemann-Hope), A Walk with my Dog, Molly. The recorder's "walking tune" acts as a ritornello amid rhapsodic episodes, which are punctuated by vocal interjections that one might accompany a walk with one's dog, including an exhortation to "stop chasing the cat."

Although all the performances on this disc are more than competent, it is Peter Hope's music that is the main attraction, tuneful, inventive, and accessible; the works on this recording are welcome contributions to the wind repertoire. Certainly on the lighter side, they were wholly successful at brightening my day, a reminder of why we need this kind of music. I suspect Mr. Hope would not take offense at my assessment.

James V. Maiello (Fanfare)

WIND BLOWN WB3

Peter Hope (born 1930) is an English composer and arranger of songs who also writes occasional accompaniment for radio and other commercial endeavors. His music is tuneful, harmonically lush or pungent as appropriate but always comfortingly tonal, unpretentious, and likable—all these qualities enhanced by his characteristic use of vernacular dance rhythms. I didn't find any string quartets or symphonies by Hope on recordings, and I don't know whether he's ventured into such more ambitious genres. But he appears on a half-dozen or so CDs, including a collection of his serenades, dance sequences, and divertimentos for smallish ensembles on Dutton 7192 that Paul Cook liked (M/J 2008), finding them akin to Malcolm Arnold's efforts for similar forces. Hope also shows up on various anthologies of orchestral "English light music" This new release of Hope's recent music on Divine Art includes four sonatas for wind instruments: one each for oboe, clarinet, recorder, and bassoon, each with piano and cast in three well-contrasted movements, with lengths from 11 to 15 minutes. Two short items fill out the program: Tallis Remembered for clarinet, recorder, and piano and A Walk with my Dog, Molly for speaker and recorder. Allegros are light-footed and breezy, with many (sometimes whimsical) borrowings from popular styles; moderatos and andantes are lilting and pastoral, some shaded with wistful melancholy, some interweaving more active dance interludes into the slower tempos.

A good portion of this music is quite fetching—for example, the 5-minute first movement of the clarinet sonata; much of it is clever; and all of it is shapely, idiomatic, and ingratiating. The piano writing and exchanges between accompaniment and solo instrument are models of clarity and effectiveness; listen, for instance, to the sparkling interplay in the oboe sonata's vivace or the tender central section of clarinet sonata's scherzo that hauntingly recalls (could this be intentional?) the gorgeous clarinet sonatina of Douglas Lilburn. And

there's plenty of variety, as Hope obviously enjoys displaying his versatility; why else would he finish off the clarinet sonata with a klezmer-style portrait of 'The Clarinetist on the Roof' that first dances, then muses quietly in the darkness? Performances are sensitive and polished and sonics clear, clean, and realistic. Wind players and listeners drawn to their repertoire will find much of interest in these unpretentious and enjoyable sonatas.

Bradley Lehman (American Record Guide)

WIND BLOWN WB4

The British composer Peter Hope, now 86, has distinguished himself mainly as an arranger and composer of light music - he also wrote the title music for the BBC News, which was used for 11 years.

Since 2000, he has also composed more serious music, even if the pieces of this CD are not a heavy diet. Hope, however, knows exactly how to deal with each of the instruments used and to emphasize his specific sound qualities. Thus, each of the sonata is characteristically rich in pleasing melodies, and anyone who does not expect an explosive convulsion from contemporary music will be as fascinated by the imaginative design of the works as by the excellent color and virtuosity.

The performances and recording are of very good quality.

Remy Franck (Pizzicato)

WIND BLOWN WB5

Wind Blown: Sonatas for Wind Instruments by Peter Hope comes from the Divine Art label (DDA 25137) and is available for purchase as a digital download through iTunes or as a CD at www.divineartrecords.com. Peter Hope (b. 1930) is a new and welcome discovery, but his biography suggests his music is more familiar than his name, especially for those residing in the United Kingdom. BBC TV News used his music for over a decade as its theme music. Hope frequently arranged for the BBC Concert Orchestra and artists such as Jose Carreras, Kiri te Kanawa and Jessye Norman. His compositional voice is accessible and self-described as "unashamedly tonal." This recording, his first complete disc of compositions, contains sonatas for oboe, clarinet, bassoon and recorder. In addition, there are two chamber works for unusual combinations: one for recorder, clarinet and piano and one for speaker and recorder.

The clarinetist is Thomas Verity, principal second and E-flat clarinet in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Throughout Hope's Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, Verity performs with a focused and vocal sound that is complex and rich in overtones. This is especially noticeable in the upper clarion and altissimo registers, with excellent intonation throughout the range of the instrument. He phrases every passage with conviction, which is a delight to hear. Pianist Simon Passmore, director of music at St. Ann's Church in Manchester, joins Verity for this recording.

Hope structures his sonata in three contrasting movements. Verity spins beautiful, lyrical phrases over Passmore's supportive accompaniment in the first movement titled "Moderato." The second movement, "Vivace," contrasts as it is largely "conversational." Listeners should notice Verity has admirably polished technique - his rendition, executed with apparent ease, generates excitement. The closing movement, "Freely, Allegro," includes elements of klezmer style, evident from Hope's choice of modes, dance-like music and energetic portamentos! Despite all the exuberance in this movement, it concludes in a poignant, reflective manner.

Tallis Remembered, written for the unusual instrumentation of recorder, clarinet and piano, originated as a work for violin, recorder and piano. John Turner joins Verity and Passmore for this chamber work, which is a theme and variations written in response to Wendy Cope's poem Tallis's Canon. This charming, small scale work provides clarinetists the rare opportunity to collaborate with a recorder in 21st century repertoire.

Christopher Nichols (The Clarinet)

Songs and Chamber Music CD

Two reviews of "Peter Hope: Songs and Chamber Music:"

Dutton CDLX 7192

From International Record Review: November 2007.

Peter Hope is now 77. He has been a prolific composer and arranger since his youth, whose reputation as a master of the lighter side has long been secure, and in that narrow corner of the musical spectrum his sheer versatility and lengthy career have made him something of a household name. However, the near simultaneous arrival of the millennium and of his seventieth birthday seems to have triggered a change in his outlook. Without in anyway turning his back on previous triumphs, Hope began producing a body of work in a more serious vein. Immediately on writing those words I realise that I am possibly traducing him in at least two ways: first, concert music has never been off his agenda; and second that little word 'serious' really does prejudice proper discussion of his music. On the evidence of the five delightful pieces recorded on this most welcome release, from a source (Dutton) which must increasingly be regarded as essential in the search for lost gems of British music, the composer plumbs his own particular vein of inspiration: the brow is seldom furrowed for long, the music is often fresh, energetic, spontaneous accessible. It is beautifully varied and immensely well crafted and never feels commercial: it is not light music, and for me avoids any sense of easy pastiche or pastoralism.

All five works date from after 2000, the most recent, a serenade for String Trio in five short movements, from his seventy – fifth birthday year. It starts with a bustling march, and there follow four further pieces, all with character- titles such as scherzetto or waltz: but (and this is what I admire most) each is much more than that. The tango is distinctly dark-hued, the waltz is bittersweet, the rondo lopes along in five-four time.

Then, recorder, cello and harpsichord may be more suggestive of the Baroque than of today, but the 'Bramall Hall Dances' for this combination offers more than first appearances would suggest: the frenetic ostinato movement at it's centre is truly exhilarating. Baroque ensembles seeking a modern counterweight for their repertoire could do worse than look at these neat pieces. The same combination plus countertenor voice is used for five short settings of the seventeenth-century poet Robert 'Gather ye rosebuds) Herrick: these are maybe slightly less convincingly differentiated, and James Bowman's timbre is more threadbare than it once was—irritatingly the texts are not in the booklet (though there are five pages of performer biographies)

The 15- minute 'Divertimento' for guitar and string trio may look like an occasional piece for a combination seldom encountered, but it's three movements are greatly rewarding, with nice touches such as the substantial cello solo in the Andante. It is much more than an occasional work.

There are terse notes by the composer himself on all the works here, and overall the disk offers the chance of a gratifying encounter with someone who is clearly a very thoughtful musician indeed.

Piers Burton – Page

Piers Burton-Page joined the BBC in 1971, beginning a career of over 30 years working mostly for BBC Radio 3. These days he continues as a freelance producer, as well as with occasional presentation work and a growing career as a speaker on music. His particular interests are opera and British music of the past 100 years, and in 1994 he published *Philharmonic Concerto*, the authorized biography of Sir Malcolm Arnold. He is currently working on a book provisionally called *Unfinished Symphonies*.

American Record Guide May/June 2008

..... Everything here resonates the song, the lyric – the delightfully phrased melody. Hope's "Serenade" is for string trio in five movements that are really dances. Nothing here sounds particularly British or derived from British folk melodies such as Arnolds wonderful dances on Chandos 85671; they just canter along.

Perhaps the true surprise here is "Bramall Hall Dances" for recorder, harpsichord and cello(2001). These are unabashed dances driven by a capering recorder with a dainty (but not baroque) harpsichord in the background. The cello here is for depth, but is sometimes more recessed than I think was intended. That fact does not detract from the pleasure of this piece (which in 1 threatens to launch into a pop cadence that reveals just how much Hope knows the music of the 20th century – all of it.)

Four Sketches is for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano (2002): the lyricism is carried by the oboe and bassoon (one

playing off the other). This work is a bit more melancholy and truly romantic (in every good sense of that word).

The most unusual work here is "A Herrick Garland" for countertenor, recorder, harpsichord and cello(2003) based on poems by Robert Herrick. The piece was written for (and is here sung by) James Bowman but despite the poetry, the harpsichord, the recorder and the countertenor, nothing here sounds even remotely like Renaissance or Elizabethan music. I cannot judge the skill or artistry of Bowman's singing.

The musical culture that used countertenors is foreign to me – my tastes being much more in this century and the last. But I will say that I enjoyed the piece. I did miss having the poems in the booklet to follow. Mr. Bowman's enunciation isn't that clear. This work and the Bramall Hall Dances are very contemporary, despite the use of recorders and harpsichords.

The final work here is the Divertimento for guitar and string trio(2001):like every other work here , it is infused with dance rhythms and rising and falling falling lyrical moods and shows off Hope's ability to choose melody over virtuosity, song over statement. As usual with Dutton Laboratories, this is a gorgeous recording (except for the slightly recessed cello in "Bramall Hall Dances). I am glad to get to know the music.

Cook

Recorder Concerto CD

British Recorder Concertos: works by Peter Hope, David Beck, Hans Gal, David Ellis, Ian Parrott and David Dubery

John Turner – recorder; Richard Howarth – leader and solo violin; Eira Lynn Jones harp; Janet Fulton – percussion; conducted by Philip McKenzie
Dutton Epoch CDLX 7154 (T.T.79:51)

The genre of the recorder concerto has, since it's re-establishment in the twentieth century, resulted in a wealth of highly creative music of almost endless variety and form. This very welcome disc of concerted works for recorder, that all inhabit a mainly mainstream musical idiom, demonstrates this most emphatically.

Peter Hope's Concerto for the recorder, strings, harp and percussion ("Birthday Concerto") was composed in 2003 for John Turner's 60th birthday and makes use of bass to soprano instruments. Early in his musical career Hope worked with master of light music, Ernest Tomlinson and this is perhaps evident in the underlying lyricism of this brilliantly scored and immediately attractive work. It also contains some innovative effects: rapidly repeated notes on the recorder in combination with similar figuration on xylophone add sparkle in the first movement (and indeed the last). The middle movement (Intermezzo) opens with a languid melody for bass recorder over a gentle accompaniment for harp and strings. A contrasting and impassioned melody for the strings forms a central interlude above which the soprano weaves a web of birdsong, before a recapitulation of the bass recorder melody brings this beautiful movement to a close. The finale (Tarantella) brims with repeated note energy (somewhat similar in feel to the Ostinato I Hope's Bramall Hall dances, but in triple rather than duple time). The momentum is further propelled by conga drums (shades of Sir Malcolm Arnold) and clattering xylophone the closing bars are sheer bravura.
The Recorder Magazine Autumn 2005

Audio Review – Neapolitan Songs Neapolitan Songs

By Steve Ettinger

Jose Carreras :- www.JCarreras.com

The most beautiful song recital – ever!!

Phillips 400 015-2

Now fans, some of you probably don't have this magnificent album, it's been out or print for a while, but

I urge you to still try to get it. I waited for some years before a friend told me about an UK web site that had just a couple of copies left. But was it worth the wait!

I love the Neapolitan Songs, and I heard many of them before, largely thanks to old Gigli and Lanza recordings, and later to the 3-T concerts. But what I've heard on this CD far surpassed everything I've heard before, even Pavarotti's wonderful *Passione* album. For this recital, Jose Carreras selected the most melodious, romantic and exciting Neapolitan songs, and with Peter Hope's brilliant arrangements and Eduardo Muller's sensitive engaging conducting they became refreshingly different from other versions so often heard and overused. Jose's voice definitely deserves the highest praise. It's absolutely glorious, at its full bloom, note after note of pure joy.

