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## THE ENGLISH OBOE: REDISCOVERED

**James Turnbull** *oboe*  
**Libby Burgess** *piano*

CHRCDO51

Accomplished oboist James Turnbull demonstrates the various ways in which English composers have explored the oboe since the late 19th Century, performing works by Michael Berkeley, John Casken, Gustav Holst, Edward Longstaff, Edmund Rubbra, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Thomas Attwood Walmisley.

*"There is no disputing the technical facility of James Turnbull or the warm, sensitive pianism of Libby Burgess."*

*The Observer*

*"Turnbull's playing is appropriately smooth and contemplative, exuding a very pastoral character."*

*American Record Guide*



# AIRS, BLUES & DANCES

JAMES TURNBULL  
*oboe*  
LIBBY BURGESS  
*piano*  
ENSEMBLE PERPETUO

TRACK LISTING

	MICHAEL TIPPETT (1905–1998) (Arr. Meirion Bowen)		CHARLOTTE BRAY (1982–)
1	<b>Prelude: Autumn</b> 04'46	16	<b>LATE SNOW</b>
	RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT (1936–2012)	17	I 03'20
	<b>FOUR COUNTRY DANCES</b>	18	II 02'08
2	<b>A New Dance</b> 02'56		III 03'06
3	<b>Lady Day</b> 02'02		DAVID MATTHEWS (1943–)
4	<b>The Mulberry Garden</b> 02'42	19	<b>Montana Taylor's Blues</b> 04'52
5	<b>Nobody's Jig</b> 02'14		HELEN GRIME (1981–)
	JONATHAN DOVE (1959–)		<b>THREE MINIATURES</b>
6	<b>Music for a Lovelorn Lenanshee</b> 10'59	20	I 01'25
	JUDITH WEIR (1954–)	21	II 01'29
	<b>MOUNTAIN AIRS</b>	22	III 02'56
7	I 01'49	23	<b>Arabesque</b> 04'38
8	II 01'02		RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT
9	III 00'52		<b>Arabesque</b>
	ANTHONY POWERS (1953–)		JOHN TAVENER (1944–2013)
	<b>IN SHADOW</b>	24	<b>Little Missenden Calm</b> 02'47
10	I 01'48		JOSEPH PHIBBS (1974–)
11	II 01'37	25	<b>Vocalise</b> 02'17
12	III 03'33		
13	IV 01'31		<i>Total playing time: 69'30</i>
14	V 00'37		
15	VI 02'03		

Produced and edited by Patrick Allen  
Recorded on 22-23 & 27 October, 2014 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK  
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Matt Buchanan

FOREWORD

I am thrilled to have returned to Champs Hill to record my third recital disc. Selecting the repertoire to include has been a fascinating journey for me. I have always held the firm belief that there is a varied and rich repertoire for oboe that is so often underestimated. In seeking new music to perform and record in recent years I have become evermore certain that this belief is justified.

I set out to find contemporary oboe music that is not only of the highest quality but would be approachable to audiences who may not have heard the oboe in a solo context before. The resulting collection features some of my favourite oboe repertoire of the past thirty years. It is the contrast between compositions that fascinate me most about the music we recorded. For example, the exploration of Blues music by David Matthews feels far away from the colours and evocative music of Anthony Powers or Helen Grime. The *Four Country Dances* and *Music for a Lovelorn Lenanshee* both share a focus on folk music yet contrast one another so clearly in style. The two featured chamber works balance the solemn wind quartet by John Tavener with the energy and drive of the wind trio by Judith Weir.

I would like to thank Mary and David Bowerman for their warmth and kindness in helping bring this project to fruition. It was in 2010 that I first came to Champs Hill to record and their hospitality and encouragement has helped me bring so much repertoire that I care deeply about to a wider audience. Champs Hill has become a very important part of my musical life: I am eternally grateful for the belief that all involved have shown in me and the repertoire I have recorded. I would like to thank Patrick Allen and Alexander Van Ingen for their incredible support, guidance and hard work throughout this project. Thank you to Libby Burgess for her musicianship, friendship and inspiration throughout the many rehearsals and concerts we have worked together for. My thanks also go to the musicians of Ensemble Perpetuo; Lindsey, Sara, Emma and Jo.

Making this recording has been one of the most enjoyable experiences of my professional life and I very much hope you enjoy the music featured on this disc.

*James Turnbull*

Folksong and popular melodies flowed naturally into Michael Tippett's often complex musical language. In 1958 he created a cantata to mark the centenary of Badminton School, weaving existing tunes into the fabric of a piece that tested and no doubt enhanced the skills of its young female performers. *The Crown of the Year* includes a quartet of instrumental preludes representing the four seasons. *Prelude: Autumn* includes fragments of the German children's round, 'O wie wohl ist mir am Abend', which emerges clearly in the movement's central triple-time section. Tippett's autumnal prelude was arranged for oboe and piano by Meirion Bowen, the composer's personal assistant and biographer, and first performed by Nicholas Daniel and Julius Drake in December 1991.

Among printed sources of English folk dance, John Playford's *The Dancing Master* stands proud in terms of its scope and influence. The anthology, first published in London in 1651 towards the end of the English Civil War, progressed through eighteen editions and was supplemented long after its originator's death by two additional volumes. The vogue for country dances arose at a time of instability and upheaval and endured as people flocked away from rural poverty towards the promise of work in fast-expanding towns and cities, London chief among them. Their stock rose again after Cecil Sharp published *The Country Dance Book* in 1909, introducing new audiences to many Playford tunes.

Richard Rodney Bennett, whose broad musical tastes remained open to the English pastoral tradition, discovered Playford's country dances in 2000 and was entranced by their striking melodic invention. He set six of them for violin and piano before creating *Four Country Dances* for oboe or soprano saxophone and piano. Other settings soon followed. "I keep transcribing the 'Playford Country Dances' with different combinations," he observed. "I can't leave them alone, I'm so fascinated by them." Bennett catches the wistful quality of *A New Dance*, deepening its introspective mood through a lyrical piano part charged with hypnotic repetitions and sustained, bell-like harmonies. *Lady Day*, named for the Feast of the

Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (25 March), the official start of the year in England until 1751, engenders a mood of celebration, light of heart and joyful in spirit. Bennett's setting of *The Mulberry Garden* underlines his deep knowledge of early twentieth-century English song and its rich harmonic idioms. *Nobody's Jig* flows like an English chalk stream after a heavy shower, full of energy yet never threatening, even when the oboe climbs high in its register as the dance draws to a close.

*Arabesque* was written within the span of two days in New York City in the summer of 1992. Bennett's writing for oboe solo is distinguished by its improvisatory feel, moments of puckishness and overall apprehension of beauty. The work's meandering chromaticism is contained within clearly defined tonal boundaries, articulated by the strategic appearance of several sustained notes. Although the piece makes considerable demands on the player's stamina, its virtuosity is harnessed to the creation of drama rather than the soloist's ego.

Poetry and song played a prominent role in cultivating Irish national identity around turn of the twentieth century. The popular song 'My Lagan Love' grew out of the Irish Revival, its traditional melody collected in County Donegal and harmonised by Herbert Hughes and adapted to English words by the Belfast-born poet Joseph Campbell. It was first published in 1904 as one of the *Songs of Uladh* and proved a commercial success six years later after it was recorded by John McCormack. Campbell's lyrics evoke the mythical Lenanshee, a fairy-lover present in Celtic folklore, known as muse to ordinary mortals. Jonathan Dove turned to 'My Lagan Love' to discover the source and origin of his *Music for a Lovelorn Lenanshee*. The work, commissioned by the Park Lane Group and first performed at the Purcell Room in January 1994, is infused throughout with traces of the song's melody. "It is presented fairly explicitly at the beginning and the end; in the middle, it is spun into a kind of jig, and then into another dance," notes the composer. "The second verse of the song includes the lines 'There on the cricket's singing stone/She spares the bogwood fire,' and that is where I imagine the music being played."

Ancient myth and archetype have shaped much of Judith Weir's work, often conveyed in modern musical idioms that at once sound timeless. Her *Mountain Airs*, scored for flute, oboe and clarinet in A, use the music of two traditional Scottish melodies, each freely adapted. The short work's three sections collectively amount to more than the sum of their parts. *Mountain Airs* was written for and first performed by the British ensemble Sounds Positive in 1988.

The six short movements of *In Shadow* offer a study in textural contrasts and tonal shading. Anthony Powers created the work in November 1989 in response to a commission from the Park Lane Group. His poetic use of sound and nuance of expression invite the listener to meditate on the constantly changing relationship between oboe and piano, the transient nature of their music, and the intricacy of their interplay. While *In Shadow 2* generates myriad colours from the marriage of piano pedal notes and high-lying melodic lines, its successor presents oboe and piano as two estranged actors at work on a broad stage, their monologues overlapping but rarely agreeing. *In Shadow 4* is imbued with what the composer terms 'furtive' qualities; the all-too-brief *In Shadow 5*, meanwhile, belongs to his related yet contrasting category of 'elegiac' movements. The work's final movement unfolds as a ritual act, transcending clock time with its contemplative blend of movement, stasis and silence.

Charlotte Bray studied composition with Joe Cutler at Birmingham Conservatoire and Mark-Anthony Turnage at the Royal College of Music. She has grown in stature over the past decade to emerge as one of the finest British composers of her generation, recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize in 2010 and winner of the 2014 Lili Boulanger Prize. Bray's *Late Snow* for solo oboe, first performed at the Royal College of Music in 2010, was inspired by M.R. Peacocke's eponymous poem, a striking expression of the transition from life to death and beyond. The work's first movement adheres to the melodic contours of Peacocke's verse, its music described by Bray as "a song without words, or at least with the words subdued". The

composer thereafter develops her material freely out of the sound of fragments of the poet's text, distilling the melancholy energy of her '... shrinking away like snow into the score's central movement and the restless agitation of 'And suddenly your absence ...' into its final movement.

*Montana Taylor's Blues* began life as the fourth movement of David Matthews' Oboe Concerto (1991–2). The composer subsequently made two arrangements of the movement, the first for oboe and piano. The work is named for Arthur 'Montana' Taylor, whose high-octane boogie-woogie and inventive blues playing attracted a cult following among jazz fans in the 1940s. While his authoritative mastery of the barrelhouse style, a throwback to music made in the bar rooms of America's western frontier, placed Taylor in a class apart, his career was blighted by financial setbacks and ended in obscurity. Taylor's recordings, however, went on to influence generations of musicians, Bill Wyman of the Rolling Stones and David Matthews among them. *Montana Taylor's Blues*, according to its composer, "is based on a piano blues of his which I heard on the radio and which has haunted me ever since. I was particularly struck by the poignant harmony which suggested that Taylor must have heard some classical music – Schubert? – during his itinerant life." Matthews creates a dream-like evocation of Taylor's blues, embellishing the piano's pattern of lilting chords with a fluid and at times neurotic oboe solo. The stability of the blues structure is undermined by an abrupt shift into unfamiliar territory, prefaced by silence and low piano chords and touched by echoes of an exotic concert song, before Montana Taylor's blues returns once more in the form of a piano postlude.

The oboe's expressive capabilities are probed and projected in *Three Miniatures*. Helen Grime wrote the work in 2005 in response to a request from her friend and supporter, the pianist and conductor Peter Evans, drawing on her long experience as an oboist to create three distinct territories of invention. The first miniature eases the oboe into its upper register, exploiting soft-edged harmonics in its initial solo and thereafter stepping into a high-lying dialogue with the piano. Grime's ear for

colour and contrast remains alert throughout the second miniature, where the movement's metrical shifts and unpredictable accent patterns are gradually offset by long, lyrical oboe lines. The final miniature presents a song without words, simple yet rich in expression, voiced at first by the oboe above complex piano polyphony before arising on oboe alone. The two instruments are reunited in a coda of ineffable beauty.

Shadows of forgotten ancestors appear to pass over the surface of *Little Missenden Calm*. John Tavener wrote the piece for the Little Missenden Festival in response to an invitation from his close friend Pat Harrison. It was first performed by the Endymion Ensemble in Little Missenden Parish Church in October 1984. Each voice in Tavener's chosen wind quartet combines to enact a sacred ritual, with bassoon and oboe addressing the outer limits of the cosmos with a protracted melody stated in double octaves and the independent clarinet and horn evoking the sonority and solemnity of early medieval organum.

Chamber music lies at the heart of Joseph Phibbs' output, apt for a composer with antennae finely tuned to subtle variations of timbre and texture. *Vocalise*, created in 2005, is conditioned by the effortless simplicity of the miniature work's oboe melody and enhanced by the shimmering beauty of its piano part, marked *meccanico e delicate* ('mechanical and delicate') at the outset. The wistful mood intensifies through a central dialogue between piano and oboe and resolves into a sense of optimism as the piece moves towards its conclusion.

Andrew Stewart

### JAMES TURNBULL *oboe*

Described by *The Independent* as "a worthy champion" of contemporary oboe music, James has dedicated much of his performing life to promoting and extending the oboe repertoire. James has performed frequently throughout the UK and Europe including a solo recital at the Wigmore Hall in 2010. He has broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and appeared as a soloist in numerous UK festivals including Oxford, Leicester, Cambridge, Thaxted, Ryedale, Machynlleth, Swaledale and King's Lynn. James has released solo recordings for Champs Hill Records, Quartz Music and the ABRSM as well as featuring on a disc of Thea Musgrave's works for Harmonia Mundi USA. *Gramophone* magazine described his debut recital disc, *Fierce Tears*, as a "notable debut" and it was selected as the Editor's Choice Recording by *Classical Music Magazine*.

James was seven when he began his oboe studies, learning with Irene Pragnell, Melanie Ragge, Celia Nicklin, Tess Miller and Chris Cowie. After gaining a First Class degree in music from Christ Church, Oxford University, James continued his oboe studies at the Royal Academy of Music and under Nicholas Daniel at Trossingen Musikhochschule in Germany, where he was awarded First Class for both his Artist and Soloist diplomas.

James is deeply committed to expanding the oboe repertoire. He worked closely with Michael Berkeley, John Casken, Jonathan Dove, John Woolrich, Thea Musgrave and Tansy Davies on their compositions for oboe. Composers including Patrick Hawes, Thomas Hewitt Jones and Norbert Froehlich have also written for him. James has a keen interest in researching lost repertoire and bringing to new audiences works which have



Photo: Miikka Laihi

been rarely performed. In 2011 he worked closely with Christopher Hogwood on preparation for a new edition of Thomas Attwood Walmisley's Sonatinas for oboe and piano.

Aside from his performing interests, James is dedicated to broadening the appeal of the oboe and encouraging young people to learn the instrument. To this end, he has launched the website [LearnToPlayTheOboe.com](http://LearnToPlayTheOboe.com) which now receives over a thousand new visitors every month from across the world. James also teaches at the Royal College of Music Junior Department and gives masterclasses across the UK.

James plays a Lorée Royal oboe and cor anglais supplied by Crowthers of Canterbury. For more information about James and his playing, visit [www.james-turnbull.com](http://www.james-turnbull.com).

#### **LIBBY BURGESS** *piano*

Libby Burgess is a pianist dedicated to the fields of song and chamber music, working with some of the finest singers and instrumentalists of her generation. She enjoys a diverse song recital schedule, ranging from the Wigmore Hall and St John's, Smith Square to the Aldeburgh, Buxton and Oxford Lieder festivals; from music societies around the country to broadcasts on Radio 3. A committed chamber musician, Libby relishes partnerships with a range of string and woodwind players, collaborates regularly with The Berkeley Ensemble, and has performed in The Sacconi Quartet's festival. In 2013 she established Konstellation, which presents programmes exploring the intersection of song and chamber



music; this combined interest is reflected in her discography, which ranges from *The English Oboe: Rediscovered* with James Turnbull, released in 2013 to excellent reviews, to a forthcoming disc featuring songs of madwomen with mezzo-soprano Clare McCaldin.

Born in Sussex, Libby read music at Oxford, where she was the first female organ scholar at Christ Church Cathedral, before specializing in piano accompaniment with a postgraduate scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music. Here she was awarded numerous accompanist prizes and graduated with the DipRAM for an outstandingly high final recital mark, subsequently being awarded both the Shinn and Lucille Graham fellowships.

Libby's passion for working with singers extends beyond the piano: she has conducted Britten and Mendelssohn operas for Ryedale Festival Opera, and is highly regarded as a chorusmaster, in which role she collaborated with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies in the premiere of his *Kommilitonen!*. She is regularly asked to give choral workshops and be a guest conductor for choirs throughout the country, and is in demand as a vocal coach. Libby is resident accompanist on courses ranging from Dartington International Summer School to the annual Cello Gathering, gives masterclasses at schools and universities across the UK, and since 2014 has been Head of Keyboard at Eton College.





Lindsey Ellis *flute* Sara Sarvamaa *clarinet*  
Emma Whitney *french horn* Joanna Stark *bassoon*



Ensemble Perpetuo is a dynamic and versatile collective of musicians who perform a wide variety of traditional and contemporary chamber music in new settings. Founded in 2013 by English oboist James Turnbull, Ensemble Perpetuo aims to

bring chamber music to new audiences through exciting collaborations and innovative repertoire choices.

Ensemble Perpetuo is building numerous partnerships with composers, theatres, dance companies, chefs, artists, photographers, film makers and digital studios. It seeks new pathways in which to experiment and augment the concert experience through multi-art form collaborations. Perpetuo has also embarked on a number of exciting mini-residences throughout the UK and is taking music to new venues including concerts in theatres, museums, cafes, found spaces and other unexpected locations.

Ensemble Perpetuo is made up of active soloists and orchestral musicians who can be found performing in numerous orchestras and prestigious venues throughout the UK. [www.ensembleperpetuo.com](http://www.ensembleperpetuo.com)

### LINDSEY ELLIS *flute*

Lindsey began playing the flute at the age of seven and soon realised that music was the career path that she wished to follow. Her musical studies started at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama where she studied with Richard Blake and gained a Bachelor of Music with honours of the First Class. Subsequently Lindsey moved to Bordeaux to take lessons with Samuel Coles before finally completing a Masters Degree at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, where she studied with Jacques Zoon.

She has freelanced with various orchestras around Europe including the Philharmonia, Bergen Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orchestre Nationale Bordeaux Aquitaine, Scottish Opera and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Lindsey was also invited to play as Principal Piccolo at the Seito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan, with Seiji Osawa. She has previously been on trial with the Welsh National Opera, the Seoul Philharmonic, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. In 2011, Lindsey was Co-Principal Flute of Southbank Sinfonia.

As a soloist Lindsey has performed concertos with several orchestras such as Manchester Camerata, Lakewood Symphony Orchestra, the RSAMD Symphony Orchestra as the Concerto Competition winner and also the orchestra from the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève. Lindsey is a very active chamber musician, currently a member of Ensemble Perpetuo, an innovative London-based ensemble specialising in contemporary music, the Brillig Ensemble and also the Evesham Flute and Harp duo.



Photo: S. Ballard

**SARA SARVAMAA** *clarinet*

Sara Sarvamaa, born in 1987 in Finland, began studying the clarinet at the age of eight in the East Helsinki Music School with Paivi Kiljala. Between 2004 and 2009 she studied with Harri Maki in the Sibelius Academy, first in the Junior Academy and later in the programme for performing arts, obtaining her Bachelor of Music degree in 2009. In 2008 she started studying with Chen Halevi in the Staatliche Hochschule fur Musik Trossingen (Germany), learning concurrently with artists such as Joy Farrall, Yehuda Gilad and Charles Neidich, and completing her Master of Music studies in 2012.

As a soloist, Sara has performed with the Finnish Radio Orchestra in the Young Soloists' concert and as guest soloist of the International Week's Music Festival with the KUG Orchestra in Graz, Austria. When aged 16 she was nominated the "Young Talent of the Year" by the culture committee of Helsinki giving her first recital, soon followed by a recital as an artist in residence in the Kallio-Kuninkala Music Festival. Ever since she has been actively performing both as a soloist as well as a member of various chamber music groups. Amongst the most active of her groups are Ensemble Perpetuo based in London and the wind quintet Pasaati based in Finland. In 2008 the quintet was awarded funding to commission new repertoire for the ensemble by young Finnish composers.



**EMMA WHITNEY** *french horn*

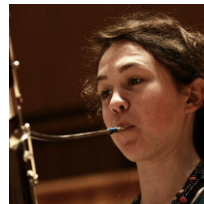
Emma studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under the tuition of Lizzie Davis, Hugh Seenan, Jeff Bryant and Richard Bissill. Whilst at the GSMD, she held the position of Principal Horn with the European Union Youth Orchestra.

Emma enjoys a freelance career playing with most of the UK's leading orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Further afield, she has played Principal Horn with the Lisbon Metropolitan Orchestra and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

A keen chamber musician, Emma is a member of the award-winning Carter Quintet and she often plays with other ensembles across the UK.



**JOANNA STARK** *bassoon*



After graduating in music from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University, Joanna completed her MA at the Royal Academy of Music in 2010 with distinction. Currently she is working as an active solo, chamber and orchestral musician. Joanna's main enthusiasm is for orchestral playing, which began during her time as a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Whilst enjoying a busy schedule freelancing with ensembles including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the

Philharmonia, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Joanna also enjoys her work teaching at the Junior Royal Academy of Music and coaching the bassoons in the National Children's Orchestra.