



IN DANCE AND SONG Tom Poster *piano*



## TRACK LISTING

- 1 **DANCE OF THE BLESSED SPIRITS (from ORFEO ED EURIDICE)** | Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), trans. Giovanni Sgambati (1841–1914) 03'48
- From SLÅTTER – NORWEGIAN PEASANT DANCES, OP. 72** | Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)
- 2 Bridal March from Telemark 03'06
- 3 The Goblins' Bridal Procession at Vossevangen 02'41
- 4 Prillar from the Parish of Os 01'10
- THREE FOLKSONGS FROM THE CSÍK DISTRICT, BB 45B** | Béla Bartók (1881–1945)
- 5 Rubato 01'29
- 6 L'istesso tempo 01'12
- 7 Poco vivo 00'46
- 8 **IMPROMPTU IN G FLAT MAJOR, D. 899 NO. 3** | Franz Schubert (1797–1828) 06'47
- 9 **POLONAISE-FANTAISIE IN A FLAT MAJOR, OP. 61** | Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) 13'33

- From JÁTÉKOK – GAMES** | György Kurtág (b.1926)
- 10 Hommage à Farkas Ferenc (2): Scraps of a colinda melody – faintly recollected 02'15
- 11 Hommage à Farkas Ferenc (3): Evocation of Petrushka 00'45
- 12 Hommage à Nancy Sinatra 00'34
- 13 **PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DÉFUNTE** | Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) 05'57
- 14 **ONDINE (from GASPARD DE LA NUIT)** | Maurice Ravel 07'06
- TWO SONGS** | Robert Schumann (1810–1856), trans. Franz Liszt (1811–1886)
- 15 Widmung 03'40
- 16 Frühlingsnacht 02'44
- 17 **LA SEMAINE GRASSE (from PETRUSHKA)** | Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) 08'47
- 18 **SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME (from OH, KAY!)** | George Gershwin (1898–1937), trans. Tom Poster (b.1981) 03'26

Total playing time: 70'24

Produced & Engineered by David Lefeber  
Edited & Mastered by David Lefeber  
Recorded on 11–13th March 2013 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Photographs of Tom by Tobi Poster  
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

Song and dance have formed the root of music from ancient times to the present day, and it was their universal qualities that led me to choose them as the dual theme around which to build this recital disc. Most of the repertoire here has an obvious link to a particular song- or dance-related form, whether opera, ballet, *Lied*, courtly dance or folk song, though in one or two cases the theme is approached more obliquely. Perennial favourites sit alongside lesser-known works which I feel deserve a more frequent airing, and while at first glance some of the pieces are not the most obvious of bedfellows, their juxtaposition reveals unexpected resonances.

Although this collection eschews a strict chronological order, it does open with its earliest work, albeit not in its original form. **Gluck's** *Orfeo ed Euridice* – premiered in 1762 – was the first and most celebrated of his ‘reform’ operas, in which fidelity to drama and ‘noble simplicity’ took precedence over vocal display. Gluck’s choice of subject matter – a Greek myth about the power of music itself – was significant, and the short ballet that became known as the *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* acts as an intermezzo midway through Act II, at which point Orpheus – having tamed the Furies that guard the gate to Hades – arrives in Elysium desperately searching for his lost wife Euridice. The transcription by Italian-English composer Giovanni Sgambati, a noted pupil of Franz Liszt, remains largely faithful to the original, though the yearning quality of Gluck’s melody allows Sgambati to draw out an innate romanticism through creative use of expressive markings – classical purity seen through the eyes of the late nineteenth century.

A sense of timelessness pervades **Grieg's** *Slåtter* (Norwegian Peasant Dances), published in 1903. Although greatly inspired by Norwegian folk music throughout his life, Grieg initially had mixed feelings about the request that he should make a piano transcription of a number of folk tunes, whose origin was in dances played on the Hardanger fiddle and passed down by ear through the generations. The challenge of trying to transform these elusive, ‘untamed’ melodies into conventionally notated ‘art music’ led him to put the project on hold for several years, though the eventual

result – the *Slåtter*, Op. 72 – represents arguably his most extraordinary, radical treatment of folk music, subtle and illuminating, and perhaps his solo piano masterpiece.

Wedding marches are central to the Hardanger fiddle repertoire, and the *Bridal March from Telemark* is a captivating example passed down by the fiddler Knut Dahle, who had first suggested the project to Grieg; *The Goblins' Bridal Procession* is a figure dance performed – according to legend – by a tiny fiddler with a red cap who led a wedding procession of gnomes in Vossevangen; while the *Prillar from the Parish of Os* refers to a folk instrument made from a goat’s horn with a juniper reed.

The *Slåtter* were to have a great influence on a number of composers, including the young **Béla Bartók**, who was directly inspired by them to start amassing and transcribing Hungarian folk music. His *Three Folksongs from the Csík District* date from 1907, only four years after the appearance of Grieg’s *Slåtter*, and are based on tunes which Bartók had heard played on a shepherd’s pipe. The transcriptions here are simply done, with no hint of the modernist acerbity which was to characterise later folk adaptations. The first two pieces are slow and meditative, with florid melody lines; the third is more dance-like, with strummed accompanying chords suggesting a zither. Earlier publications of the pieces include the titles *The Peacock*, *At the Jánoshida Fairground* and *White Lily* respectively.

Stepping back 80 years, **Schubert's** first set of impromptus, D. 899, was written between the two halves of *Winterreise* in 1827, the year before his untimely death. Born out of the shadow of this darkest of song cycles, the Impromptu in G flat, the third of the set, is one of the most exquisite songs-without-words ever written, radiating serenity and poignant eloquence.

Another late work by a composer who died too young, the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* was written over a period of eighteen months during 1845 and 1846, a troubled time in **Chopin's** life when serious tensions had developed in his relationship with George

Sand and his health was deteriorating rapidly. The work's hybrid title reflects its complex and entirely original form – the spirit of improvisation that infuses the work and inspires such flights of imagination led Chopin initially to designate the work simply as a *Fantaisie*, but beneath its apparent freedom lies a taut structure, the whole work being underpinned – even haunted – by the rhythm of the *Polonaise*, the national dance of Chopin's beloved Poland. Appearing initially in fragmentary form, the full *Polonaise* melody emerges only gradually, at first introspective, finally heroic in stature. Chopin had left Poland as a twenty-year-old, settling in Paris. He never returned to his war-torn homeland, but his heart always remained in Poland, and it is perhaps unsurprising that, as an ill and homesick man, he should have imbued this late masterpiece with a heartfelt – though never sentimental – nostalgia, an unmistakable longing for a time lost forever.

A sense of memory – and of the limitations of memory – spills over into **György Kurtág's** extraordinary miniatures from *Játékok*. Kurtág's early ambition to study with Béla Bartók was prevented by the death of the elder composer in 1945, but Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, which Kurtág studied assiduously as a student, clearly served as a model for *Játékok* (Games), an ongoing series of miniatures initially conceived as a pedagogical tool for children. The pieces were begun in answer to Kurtág's desire to know "if it is possible to create music with practically nothing"; in these pieces the quality of silence and a sense of improvisatory freedom are every bit as important as the notes (often rendered graphically) on the page.

Two of the miniatures heard here are homages to Ferenc Farkas, Kurtág's composition teacher at the Music Academy in Budapest: in *Scraps of a colinda melody – faintly recollected*, notes distilled from the melody of a traditional Romanian Christmas carol delicately emerge in a dreamlike monologue, as if a child were picking out the notes on a piano, with long empty spaces suggesting the gaps of memory; *Evocation of Petrushka* echoes Stravinsky's ballet music which appears later in this recording, with brilliant suggestions of the eponymous puppet presenting himself in powerful leaps.

The tiny microlude in homage to Nancy Sinatra strongly recalls, without ever quite quoting, the accompaniment to her hit song *These Boots Are Made for Walkin'*.

This ticking accompaniment finds its more lyrical counterpart in **Ravel's** *Pavane pour une infante défunte* of 1899, which brought the composer his first taste of popular success, immediately becoming a favourite in salons across Paris. The piece's striking title was perhaps as important to its initial appeal as its undoubted beauty and lyrical serenity, but Ravel claimed to have chosen the title simply for the sound of the words, and clarified – as a warning to indulgent pianists – that it "is not a funeral lament for a dead child, but rather an evocation of a pavane that a little princess might, in former times, have danced at the Spanish court." Indeed, it is the realms of fantasy and nostalgia, rather than those of elegy, that the music seems primarily to conjure up.

Later in life Ravel came to find the continuing success of his youthful *Pavane* embarrassing, and given the stylistic development that took place in the decade between its composition and that of *Gaspard de la nuit*, his reservations are understandable. *Gaspard* is the work of a unique musical voice and a master of keyboard writing – in the words of Alfred Cortot, it represents "one of the most extraordinary examples of instrumental ingenuity which the industry of composers has ever produced."

*Gaspard de la nuit* was the title of a curious collection of prose-poems by Aloysius Bertrand, published posthumously in 1842, to which Ravel – endlessly fascinated by magic and the macabre – had been drawn while still a student at the Paris Conservatoire. *Ondine*, the first of the three movements of Ravel's work, depicts the nocturnal siren song of the water sprite ("*Ecoute! C'est moi, c'est Ondine*"), who tempts mortal men to her palace beneath the lakes. The transparent, transitory surfaces of Bertrand's text are evoked by Ravel's shimmering piano textures, cascades of water falling and flowing around Ondine's sensuous vocalise.

Ravel was a master orchestrator, and many of his piano works were later given orchestral incarnations, including the *Pavane*, whose much-loved version for small orchestra appeared in 1910, the year after *Gaspard de la nuit* was first performed. *Gaspard*, however, always remained too brilliantly pianistic to lend itself to such an adaptation.

It was to the piano works of Franz Liszt that Ravel – aware of his own pianistic limitations – had turned for inspiration when composing his deliberately virtuosic *Gaspard*. Liszt was a pianistic superstar and a virtuoso of the highest order, but his own arrangements of works by other composers were made not only to show off his technique, but also to bring the music of those he admired to a wider audience. Although often criticised for his flamboyant treatment of other composers' music, in these two transcriptions of songs by **Robert Schumann**, Liszt remains relatively faithful to the original source, perhaps in part because the songs in question already have fairly extrovert leanings.

Both are love songs from among Schumann's great outpouring of Lieder in 1840, the year of his marriage to his beloved Clara Wieck, following years of opposition from her father. *Widmung* (Dedication), the opening song of the cycle *Myrthen* and a setting of a poem by Friedrich Rückert, is as pure an assertion of romantic love as can be imagined; the postlude quotes – in homage to Clara – Schubert's *Ave Maria*. *Frühlingsnacht* (Spring Night), the final song from Schumann's *Eichendorff Liederkreis*, is a passionate celebration of love won over. Here, Liszt doubles the length of the original song, giving himself the space to indulge in some exhilarating pianistic fireworks.

As it was for Chopin and Ravel, Paris became a musical home for **Stravinsky**, and – though initially begun as a concert work – it was for Sergei Diaghilev's Paris-based Ballets Russes that his orchestral score for *Petrushka* was completed in 1911. Diaghilev had commissioned music from a number of eminent composers (though an

attempt at collaboration with Ravel ended somewhat disastrously with Diaghilev challenging the composer to a duel), but it was his collaborations with Stravinsky that were to produce the most brilliant and controversial results.

*Petrushka*, with its story of a puppet who comes to life, quickly proved hugely popular both on stage and on the concert platform, and in 1921, Stravinsky was persuaded by his friend Artur Rubinstein to 'recompose' for piano three segments from the ballet. The original orchestration was huge, and Stravinsky explicitly stated that these were not transcriptions attempting to reproduce the sound of the orchestra, but rather that his aim was to create a score that would be essentially pianistic, both technically challenging and musically satisfying. The miracle is that the piano version seems to lose little of the colour of the original, and perhaps even gains in excitement by virtue of the extreme challenges it presents.

The third piece, *La semaine grasse* (The Shrovetide Fair), is a sequence of folk-inspired dances from the ballet's fourth and final tableau, in which a colourful assortment of characters – wet-nurses, a peasant with a performing bear, gypsies, a rake vendor, coachmen and masqueraders – passes through the bustling fairground, oblivious to the fatal denouement taking place offstage between *Petrushka* and his rival the Moor.

**Gershwin** knew both Ravel and Stravinsky personally (and, incidentally, was the tennis partner of Arnold Schoenberg) and the fact that much of his music was written in a more popular sphere than that of his contemporaries in no way diminishes his standing as one of the great composers of the twentieth century. *Someone to Watch Over Me*, written in 1926 to a yearningly romantic lyric by his brother Ira, is one of George Gershwin's most enduring ballads, though he had originally intended it to be an up-tempo jazz number. This disc, then, ends as it began, with a simply rendered transcription (in this case my own) of one of the most perfect melodies ever written.

A few people deserve thanks for specific reasons related to this recording. Spencer Myer gave such an exquisite performance of the Gluck/Sgambati transcription at a competition we both participated in a number of years back that I immediately went in search of the score. The wonderful John McCabe first pointed me in the direction of Grieg's *Slätter*. Jeff Goguen and his family made me feel so welcome at their home in Calgary in 2009 that I was inspired to pen my Gershwin transcription by way of thanks. And it was Jennifer Stumm's song and dance-themed viola recital programme a few years back which gave me the idea to put together a piano programme along similar lines.

In a more general sense, I want to offer heartfelt thanks to the following people: Joan Havill, my teacher and mentor throughout my student years; Laura Tear, my agent; Mary and David Bowerman, for their enormous kindness in giving me the opportunity to make this recording; David Lefeber and all those involved in producing it; and lastly to my family and Anna, for more than I can express.

This recording is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Doreen Poster (1923-2013).

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ian Lester". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Born in 1981, Tom Poster studied with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he held a Postgraduate Fellowship, and at King's College, Cambridge, where he gained a Double First in Music. He won First Prize at the Scottish International Piano Competition 2007, the Ensemble Prize at the Honens International Piano Competition 2009, and the keyboard sections of the Royal Overseas League and BBC Young Musician of the Year Competitions in 2000.

Since his London concerto debut at the age of 13, Tom has appeared in a wide-ranging concerto repertoire of over 30 major works, including Beethoven with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall, Brahms and Ligeti with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Robin Ticciati, Chopin with the European Union Chamber Orchestra, Grieg with the Hallé at Bridgewater Hall and the China National Symphony in Beijing, John Ireland with the State Capella Philharmonic in St Petersburg, Rachmaninov with the BBC Philharmonic/Yan Pascal Tortelier and BBC Scottish Symphony/James Loughran, Schumann with the Atlantic Classical Orchestra in Florida, Beethoven *Triple Concerto* with Southbank Sinfonia/Vladimir Ashkenazy, and Scott Bradley's *Cat Concerto* with Aurora Orchestra/Nicholas Collon.

Tom features regularly on BBC Radio 3 as soloist and chamber musician, and has appeared in both capacities at the BBC Proms. He has given solo recitals at the Barbican Hall and at the Brighton, City of London, Edinburgh, Presteigne and Spoleto festivals, as well as in Canada, France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. As pianist of the Aronowitz Ensemble (former BBC New Generation Artists), he has

appeared at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Aldeburgh, Bath and Cheltenham festivals, and on several occasions at Wigmore Hall. Tom enjoys duo partnerships with Alison Balsom, Guy Johnston and Jennifer Pike, has collaborated with Ian Bostridge at the Aldeburgh Festival and Steven Isserlis at Wigmore Hall, and has performed chamber works with the Badke, Brodsky, Carducci, Doric, Elias, Endellion, Martinu, Medici, Navarra, Sacconi and Skampa quartets.

Tom's arrangements of Gershwin and Cole Porter songs have been extensively performed and recorded. Commissions undertaken as a composer include a chamber opera for puppets, *The Depraved Appetite of Tarrare the Freak*, for Wattle & Daub Figure Theatre; and a piece about unusual sea-creatures, *Turn to the Watery World!*, for Alison Balsom.

ALSO AVAILABLE...



CHRC0055

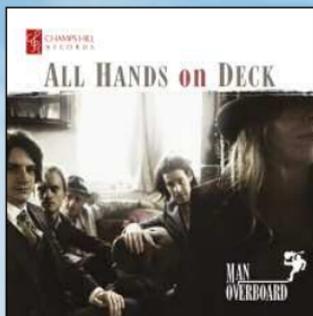
**FAIRY TALES**  
KSENIJA SIDOROVA - *accordion*

Accordion sensation Ksenija Sidorova in a showcase demonstrating the full range and emotional power of her instrument. "As an accordionist you sort of have to carve your own path, so I consider it my mission in this way to introduce the instrument to a wider audience."

Featuring Vaclav Trojan's *Fairy Tales* concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and Piazzolla's *Oblivion* with violinist Thomas Gould, alongside works by Grieg, Londonov, Vassiliev, Moskowski and Mendelssohn.

"an amazingly accomplished artist"  
Classical Source

"light, shade, delicacy - and breathtaking virtuosity" *The Observer*



CHRC0062

**ALL HANDS ON DECK**  
MAN OVERBOARD

Described by *The Guardian* as "staggeringly virtuosic", Thomas Gould is also a dab hand at jazz; here, his playing meets its match in the lyrical clarinet of Ewan Bleach. Together with Louisa Jones, Jean-Marie Fagon and Dave O'Brien, they form the hot swing band Man Overboard. This debut album includes numbers by Fats Waller, Al Jolson and Hoagy Carmichael - all played in Man Overboard's infectious, melodic style: On the sunny side of the street, All of Me and How High the Moon are joined by many other favourite tunes.

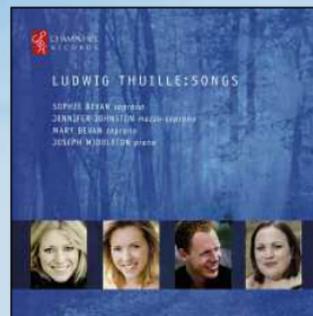
"Gould and Bleach are facile performers ... the rhythm section are absolutely steeped in the idiom ... the result is captivating"  
BeBop Spoken Here



CHRC0064

**MEDTNER/RACHMANINOV/PROKOFIEV**  
SOFYA GULYAK - *piano*

Leeds International Piano Competition winner Sofya Gulyak is the only woman to have achieved this distinction - and is a unique artist in every respect. Champs Hill Records are delighted to release her debut solo recording of Medtner, Rachmaninov and Prokofiev.



CHRC0063

**LUDWIG THUILLE SONGS**

An exploration of rarely-heard songs by Ludwig Thuille (including his three winsome trios), with some of the finest young voices in the UK - Sophie Bevan, Jennifer Johnston and Mary Bevan - accompanied by the first-rate Joseph Middleton.

"The crème de la crème of young British-based musical talent"  
*The Daily Telegraph*