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Matthew TAYLOR



Symphony No. 2 Viola Concerto

Sarah-Jane Bradley, viola
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Garry Walker, conductor

FIRST RECORDINGS



TOCCATA
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MATTHEW TAYLOR: A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by Giles Easterbook

Matthew Taylor's music combines traditional forms with a contemporary language which speaks to a wide range of listeners, taking its part in the symphonic narrative that blossomed with the 'first Viennese school' of composers like Haydn and Beethoven, continued to evolve in the twentieth century with composers from the fringes of Europe, not least Sibelius, Nielsen, Holmboe and Simpson, and flows onwards through the work of creative figures like Taylor himself.

He was born in London in 1964 and studied composition at Cambridge University with Robin Holloway and later at the Royal Academy of Music with Edward Gregson. Friendship with Robert Simpson proved inspirational, a debt Taylor continues to repay by conducting Simpson's music in concert and on CD – his account, with the City of London Sinfonia, of Simpson's Eleventh Symphony (which is dedicated to Taylor) was selected as a 'Record of the Year' by BBC Radio 3 in 2004.¹ Taylor's widely performed Symphony No. 1 (1985) led to commissions for orchestral, chamber and solo works, and his scores have been championed by such orchestras as the BBC Symphony and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestras and the City of London Sinfonia, ensembles including the Dante, Allegri and Delme Quartets, and a panoply of major musicians, among them the clarinettist Emma Johnson, flautist Emily Beynon, cellist Raphael Wallfisch, horn-player Richard Watkins, the pianist John McCabe, and conductors who rank Martyn Brabbins, Tom Hammond, George Hurst and Garry Walker among their number. His catalogue includes three symphonies, concertos for piano, clarinet, horn, double bass, viola and violin, seven string quartets,² two symphonic poems, a piano trio as well as numerous instrumental works and songs.

He pursued his studies as a conductor with Vilém Tauský at the Guildhall School of Music and Leonard Bernstein at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, since when he has directed performances with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, European Community Chamber Orchestra, St Petersburg Capella Orchestra and a number of other orchestras in Russia. He was appointed the first-ever Composer-in-Association to the ensemble sound.collective, has been Director of the Malvern Festival and Composer-in-Residence at the Blackheath Halls where he has also given a regular series of lectures.

¹ Recorded in December 2003, it was released, with Simpson's *Variations on a Theme of Nielsen*, on Hyperion CDA67500 in August 2004.

² Taylor's Third String Quartet, Op. 18 (1995), can be found on Toccata Classics TOCC 0015, along with the Piano Trio, Op. 17 (1994), and *Conflict and Consolation* for brass and percussion, Op. 19 (1996); the String Quartets No. 5, Op. 35 (2007), No. 6, Op. 36 (2008), and No. 7, Op. 37 (2009), are released on Toccata Classics TOCC 0144.

Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Raskatov's *A Dog's Heart* for English National Opera, Cimarosa's *The Secret Marriage* for Scottish Opera, Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* at the Royal Northern College of Music and Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* at the Linbury Studio Theatre at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Outside the UK he has conducted *Curlew River* for Lyon Opera and a new production by Calixto Bieito of Hosakawa's *Hanjo* at the Ruhr Triennale.

Future plans include appearances with the Adelaide Symphony, a return visit to the Auckland Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Musikkollegium Winterthur, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Scottish Orchestra. In 2014 Garry Walker will conduct a new production for Garsington Opera.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra has played a central role at the heart of British musical life since its inception in 1930. It provides the backbone of the BBC Proms with around a dozen concerts each year, including the First and Last Nights, and is Associate Orchestra of the Barbican. The BBC SO has a strong commitment to twentieth-century and contemporary music, with recent performances including commissions and premieres from Kalevi Aho, Alexander Goehr, Jonathan Harvey, Jiří Kadeřábek, György Kurtág and Einojuhani Rautavaara.

Central to the life of the Orchestra are studio recordings for BBC Radio 3 at its Maida Vale home, some of which are free for the public to attend. In addition, the BBC SO records for several commercial labels. Performing throughout the world, the current touring plans include concerts in the Czech Republic, Germany, Oman and Romania. The vast majority of concerts are broadcast on BBC Radio 3, streamed live online and available for seven days via the BBC iPlayer, and a number are televised, giving the BBC Symphony Orchestra the highest broadcast profile of any UK orchestra.

The Orchestra is committed to innovative education work. Among ongoing projects are the BBC SO Family Music Intro scheme, introducing families to live classical music, BBC SO Student Zone and the highly successful BBC SO Family Orchestra, alongside work in local schools. Total Immersion composer events also provide rich material for education work, and extensive plans are under way in partnership with the Barbican and with the Hammersmith and Fulham music services, the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

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a recording for Naxos of previously unrecorded chamber works by Vaughan Williams.

Following studies at the Royal Academy of Music, and the Mozarteum Salzburg, Sarah-Jane won many awards and won first prize at Capellades and St Joan de Vilatorrada, Spain in 1995. A prizewinner at the 1994 Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, she is now on the executive committee of the Competition and stood on the jury in 2013.

She plays an 1896 viola by G. A. Chanot of Manchester, and her website can be found at www.sarahjanebradley.com.

Winner of the 1999 Leeds Conductor's Competition, Scottish-born **Garry Walker** studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. In October 1999, at very short notice, he replaced an indisposed Daniele Gatti in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's opening concert of their Barbican season. Thus began an ongoing relationship leading to his appointment as Permanent Guest Conductor, a post he has now relinquished. Garry Walker was Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2003 to 2007, Principal Conductor of Paragon Ensemble and now enjoys a close association with Red Note Ensemble, the leading Scottish contemporary-music ensemble.



In the UK Garry Walker has worked with all the BBC orchestras, the Hallé, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, English Northern Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Chamber orchestras have included the Northern Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra and Academy of St Martin's in the Fields. With the SCO he has appeared at the St Magnus Festival, with the ECO in Lisbon and the City of London Festival and with the ASMF at the Mostly Mozart Festival in the Barbican. He regularly appears at the Edinburgh Festival and in 2004 conducted a notable performance of Mahler's Second Symphony, *Resurrection*, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Outside the UK he has appeared with the Nieuw Ensemble, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Collegium Musicum, Denmark, Musikkollegium Winterthur and the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. Further afield he has had re-invitations to both the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Auckland Philharmonia and made his US debut with the Utah Symphony Orchestra.

An experienced opera conductor, Garry Walker conducted both Britten's *Curlew River* and the world premiere of Stuart Macrae's opera *The Assassin Tree* at the Edinburgh Festival. He also conducted the Macrae at the Linbury Studio of the Royal Opera House, David McVicar's much acclaimed production of Benjamin

He has recently enjoyed performances in Germany, Denmark, Italy, the Czech Republic and Latvia. Since the triumphant premiere of his Second Symphony in 2009, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Garry Walker, he has completed concertos for viola and violin, the symphonic poem *Storr* and a set of *Variations on a Theme of Reger* for strings, premiered by George Vass and the Presteigne Festival Orchestra in Presteigne in August 2012.

Matthew Taylor's music is published by Peters Edition. For further information visit the website at www.matthewtaylor-composer.com

A composer himself, Giles Easterbrook studied egyptology and Coptic at Oxford University and took private composition lessons with Kenneth Leighton, Niels Viggo Bentzon and Tristan Keuris. Over the past four decades his work in music has covered an extraordinary number of activities, among them publisher, concert-promoter, director, arranger and editor, not least of music by Arnold, Bliss, Holst, Daniel Jones and Lambert.

SYMPHONY AND CONCERTO: TWO CONTRASTING CHALLENGES

by Matthew Taylor

The Second Symphony, my largest-scale work to date, took many years to find its final form; the Viola Concerto, by contrast, was composed quickly, in a matter of months. Both Garry Walker and Sarah-Jane Bradley grasped the essence of these works instantly and their recordings are exemplary in every way.

Viola Concerto, *Humoreskes*, Op. 41

For many years I had been drawn to the idea of composing a concerto for viola, so I was delighted when this work was commissioned by Keith Stanley to mark the birth of my younger daughter Imogen on 7 March 2010. It was written between August and November 2010 and first performed by Sinfonia Tamesa at St John's, Waterloo, London, on 2 July 2011 with Sarah-Jane Bradley as soloist and myself conducting.

Originally entitled *Humoreskes*, the piece was composed as a response to an intense admiration for two works of the same name: Sibelius' underrated Six *Humoresker*, Opp. 87 and 89, for violin and orchestra (1917) and Schumann's neglected but intensely personal large-scale solo-piano piece, *Humoreske*, Op. 20 (1839). But after hearing the first performance of my work, two friends, Martin Anderson and Bayan Northcott, both felt that it was sufficiently substantial in scope to be renamed Concerto; and on reflection I felt they were both right, so instead the term *Humoreskes* was retained as a subtitle.

As this is a predominantly ‘singing’ concerto for the viola, the orchestration is modest: 1 flute (doubling piccolo), 1 oboe, 1 cor anglais, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, timpani and strings. Many of the textures are very spare and transparent. Each of the movements has a specific character, but they very much ‘belong’ to one another rather in the spirit of both the Sibelius and the Schumann models. The first movement, *Andante comodo* [1], which is usually led by the viola and is the most chamber-like of all, assumes the manner of a song without words. The opening is very intimate, the argument evolving from two- or three-part writing. The middle section is more animated, rising to a brief climax before the opening idea returns amidst hushed violin trills and pizzicato phrases from the solo viola. The second movement, marked *Presto* [2], is a cryptic little scherzo, full of wry humour, sardonic touches and comic capers whereas the third, *Larghetto* [3], perhaps the core of the Concerto, acts as the central slow movement, assuming the manner of a very slow siciliano. The soloist is muted for the cadenza-like fourth movement, *Molto Adagio* [4], which explodes into an orchestral climax of almost Mahlerian anguish (the only such outburst in the Concerto) before subsiding into a brief recollection of the first theme. It links directly into the finale, *Allegro riotoso* [5]. This movement is the only part of the work where the full orchestral forces are unleashed. It is a musical portrait of Imogen – upbeat, confident, sanguine, hugely fun-loving, but also with a sense of steely determination. So it seemed obvious that Imo should be the dedicatee.

Symphony No. 2, Op. 10 (1991, revised 1997 and 2008)

This symphony was commissioned by the distinguished gynaecologist Professor Ian Craft who approached me with the unusual idea of writing a large-scale orchestral work which could reflect some aspect of human birth. The idea was as fascinating as it was daunting. After I had expressed some concerns about the proposal, Ian kindly invited me into his surgery and spoke at length about his work, which was largely dominated by IVF research, then still regarded by many as controversial. But it was when witnessing an actual birth that the whole idea suddenly translated into music – the indescribable elation felt by all in the delivery suite at the arrival of new human life instantly sparked a clearly defined musical idea. That moment was to be the climax of the symphony, so paradoxically the end came first. After this insight the shape of the symphony evolved quickly: a four-movement work, each movement of which is concerned in a general sense with an aspect of embryonic growth.

There is, of course, a symphonic precedent for this approach: Simpson’s Sixth (1977) traces the progress of an organism by constructing a symphony divided in two parts: pre- and post-natal. And Tippett’s Fourth Symphony, written in the same year and cast in a single movement (of seven sections), abounds also in birth imagery from the outset. But despite my massive admiration for both of these works, I remained convinced that a four-movement design was best suited to the expressive purposes of this symphony, which in a general sense traces the development of an embryo, culminating in birth itself.

The first movement, *Moderato e maestoso* [6], unfolds from a small series of close intervals heard on low horns representing perhaps the first signs of embryonic activity. The foetus’ extraordinarily rapid development

is astounding as recognisably human features are detected even at these earliest stages. So the initial theme develops at double tempo to form the middle part of the movement before being superimposed onto the slower pace at the climax – as if two different sets of motion are operating simultaneously. Next comes a kind of scherzo, *Vivacissimo* [7], concerned with energetic activity, a realisation of increasing physical strength. As the music continues, the textures become fuller, and there is an acceleration which eventually unleashes a new idea (*Presto*) dominated by repeated cascading scales on the strings. Next follows a gentle slow movement, *Lento sereno* [8], where the orchestral forces are reduced and the textures are more akin to a concerto for orchestra. One hears much evidence now of the positive influence of music on pre-natal babies, and so this section attempts to soothe the baby with gently rocking tunes, sometimes in the nature of a sarabande, delicate textures and soft harmonies. This movement leads directly into the finale, *Allegro fluente* [9], which embraces aspects of the types of growth encountered in all three movements. The tempo is fast and tension mounts as the very first themes of the symphony are restated, now in a fugal context before the moment of birth itself.

The original version of the Symphony was completed in 1991. Six years later I revised the Scherzo and tightened the Finale. But as a direct result of the birth of our eldest daughter Emily in March 2008, it seemed necessary to make some final alterations to the score.

Since her debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1997, Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola) has established a distinguished international reputation as a soloist and chamber musician. She is a pioneer of new works and has premiered and recorded a number of new concertos for solo viola, including those by David Matthews, Matthew Taylor and Paul Patterson. She has worked as a soloist with the Philharmonia, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia and Northern Sinfonia. Her acclaimed solo recordings include five CDs of British viola concertos for Dutton Epoch and two recital discs for Naxos. Most recently she recorded Walter Braunfels’ *Scottish Fantasy* with the BBC CO and Johannes Wildner, for release on Dutton Epoch. As a former founder-member of the Leopold String Trio, and subsequently a member of the Sorrel Quartet, she has recorded extensively for Hyperion and Chandos.

Sarah-Jane is in high demand as a recitalist and chamber musician; her work as a chamber musician has taken her around the world to festivals such as Marlboro and Kuhmo. Her numerous current collaborations include the London Soloists’ Ensemble with pianist John Lenehan, violinist Lorraine McAslan, cellist Karina Georgian, and clarinetist Anthony Pike. Engagements include a concert series at St John’s, Smith Square, and



photo: Claire Huish