



Mark-Anthony Turnage

A Constant Obsession

Nicky Spence tenor

Chamber Domaine

Thomas Kemp conductor

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and in St Augustine's Church, Kilburn, London on 20 October 2011

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DDD - MCPS

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info@resonusclassics.com

www.resonusclassics.com

A Constant Obsession

Chamber works by Mark-Anthony Turnage (b. 1960)

Nicky Spence *tenor*

Chamber Domaine

Thomas Kemp *conductor*^{1-6 & 15} & *violin*⁷⁻¹⁴

Adrian Bradbury *cello*^{7-9 & 14-15}

Alex Neal *percussion*¹⁵

Andrew West *piano*⁷⁻¹⁵

Anna Wolstenholme *piccolo, flute & alto flute*^{1-6 & 15}

David Juritz *violin*¹⁻⁶

Gabriella Dall'Olio *harp*¹⁻⁶

Neyire Ashworth *clarinet & bass clarinet*^{1-6 & 15}

Nick Barr *viola*^{1-9 & 14-15}

Richard Harwood *cello*¹⁻⁶

Ruth Bolister *oboe & cor anglais*¹⁻⁶

Roger Montgomery *horn*¹⁻⁶

*'[...] Chamber Domaine is surely a group with
which any composer would be ecstatic to work'*
International Record Review

'[...] intriguing programming [...] unabashed lushness'
The New York Times

A Constant Obsession (2007)

for tenor solo and eight players

- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. Prologue | [0:59] |
| 2. Love expected | [3:36] |
| 3. Love begun | [1:47] |
| 4. The pains of love | [5:35] |
| 5. Love continued | [5:59] |
| 6. Love in death | [4:25] |

Three for Two (2010)

for piano quartet

- | | |
|---------------|--------|
| 7. Wish One | [1:49] |
| 8. Wish Two | [4:48] |
| 9. Wish Three | [3:43] |

Four Chants (2008)

for violin and piano

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| 10. Chant 1 | [2:42] |
| 11. Chant 2 | [1:25] |
| 12. Chant 3 (A Bride's Fancy) | [4:19] |
| 13. Chant 4 | [1:35] |

14. A Slow Pavane (2004)

for piano trio

[7:34]

15. Grazioso! (2009)

for six players

[9:03]

Total playing time

[59:27]

*All tracks are world premiere recordings and were
recorded in the presence of the composer*



Nicky Spence, Thomas Kemp and Chamber Domaine record *A Constant Obsession*
in St Augustine's Church, Kilburn, London

Mark-Anthony Turnage: A Constant Obsession

Mark-Anthony Turnage was born in 1960 and is at the forefront of contemporary classical music. A prolific and eclectic composer, his music is full of contrasts spanning musical styles from the Renaissance through to R & B. His music is performed worldwide in both opera house and concert hall and his ability to encompass and assimilate such a broad range of music gives him a unique voice that appeals to a wide range of listeners.

His operas, *Greek*, *The Silver Tassie* and *Anna Nicole* have caused controversy as well as gaining huge acclaim from audiences and critics alike. They have forced people to take notice of contemporary music and have challenged them to think. Turnage comments: 'I am attracted to strong subjects. *Anna Nicole* is a good story and you could not work on an opera for three to four years if the story and its characters did not fascinate you. I am not interested in older stories, I go with the things that I like, the films I like and strong subjects that resonate with our time.'

Turnage's orchestral music has brought together seemingly disparate elements of music – works such as *About Time* written for the Birmingham Contemporary Music

Group and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in 1999 brings together contemporary and historically informed performance practices, while *Hammered Out* written for the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2010, brings R & B inspired by James Brown and 1970s jazz-funk to the symphony orchestra. Whilst having residencies with orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony, BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony and English National Opera, Turnage has written for smaller forces and the instrumental chamber music and song featured in this recording were all written in the first decade of the 21st century.

Having commissions for symphony orchestras and opera has meant that there is some overlap of material between the chamber music and larger scale works. *A Constant Obsession* was written in 2007 for tenor and eight players. Turnage was also writing *Chicago Remains* for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Bernard Haitink at the same time: 'Having a busy schedule means that crossover between pieces is almost inevitable. *A Constant Obsession* was like a study for *Chicago Remains*.'

The song cycle sets words of five English writers from different periods – John Keats, Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, Robert Graves

and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The composer gives each poem a title – ‘Love expected’, ‘Love begun’, ‘The pains of love’, ‘Love continues’ and ‘Love in death’. These titles create the text for the short ‘Prologue’ – a wistful and poignant introduction to the cycle. The poems dwell on different aspects of love and the musical settings brilliantly illuminate the texts.

John Keats’s poem *Bright Star* was written as a declaration of love to Fanny Brawne in 1819 and he continued to revise the poem up until his death in 1821. Keats and Brawne were secretly engaged but their love was to be shattered by Keats’s worsening tuberculosis and lack of means, which prevented them from marrying. In September 1820, Keats was advised to leave for a warmer climate due to his deteriorating health and he moved to Rome severing all contact with Brawne: he died five months later. The music for this setting entitled ‘Love expected’ is elegiac and gently lilting, with particularly lyrical viola writing.

Thomas Hardy’s *A Thunderstorm in Town (A Reminiscence)*, set by Turnage in ‘Love begun’, dates from 1893. The poem is about unfulfilled love: the poet regretting a missed opportunity to steal a kiss whilst sheltering from a ‘pelting storm’. Turnage writes explosive, stormy music for bass clarinet, horn and

strings: the frantic tremolo passages in the strings depict the torrential rain from which the couple is sheltering. The climactic end of the poem, where the poet expresses his regret and frustration, is rhythmically free and set like a cadenza over a hushed chord in the bass clarinet and horn, which emphasizes the reminiscent nature of the poem about a fleeting moment of attraction.

‘The pains of love’ is set to a poem by Edward Thomas entitled *No one so much as you*. The poem is tender and regretful: full of pain and guilt about an unequal love. Turnage opens the song with a soaring and highly expressive phrase on the flute, which is shadowed in the strings. The song is in ternary form and the middle section is more animated. The opening music returns as the poem reveals that the poet could not truly return the love given by his partner: this unease is underpinned by a restless, syncopated ostinato in the viola, cello and harp.

Counting the Beats by Robert Graves provides the text for ‘Love continued’. Like Edward Thomas, Graves established his reputation as a poet during the First World War when fighting on the Western Front. In his *Collected Poems*, published in 1966, Graves described *Counting the Beats*: ‘My main theme was always the practical impossibility,

transcended only by a belief in miracle, of absolute love continuing between man and woman.' The horn has a prominent refrain in this song and there is a lyrical instrumental interlude, which features a duet between bass clarinet and viola, which provides a reflective contrast to the spiky, capricious music of the outer sections.

The final song, 'Love in death' is Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Come not, when I am dead*. Here the poet is a jilted lover, cautioning his errant lover from beyond the grave. The song opens with an expansive tenor solo whose music is then taken up by the woodwinds in unison, which has a haunting quality. This opening gambit provides all the melodic material for the movement.

A Constant Obsession was written for Mark Padmore and the Nash Ensemble and was commissioned by the Wigmore Hall. Turnage states that: 'Setting British texts and writing for Mark Padmore meant it was very hard to get away from Benjamin Britten and the music undoubtedly is influenced by this. I also try and write for the musicians I am writing for and try and compose music that suits their performing style: I am aware of their sound when I compose.'

Three for Two dates from 2010 and is for piano quartet. Written to celebrate the 70th

birthdays of Steven Schaefer and Christoph Eschenbach, there are subtle musical reminders that this is a birthday piece in each movement; each of the three movements providing a birthday wish. The first, 'Wish One', is lively and features asymmetrical phrases. The harmony is jazzy as is the piano writing particularly in the middle section. The second, 'Wish Two', is lyrical and features the viola. The piano writing by contrast in this movement is economical and provides a sparse commentary on the strings. 'Wish Three' is again jazz influenced and, following an extended passage for violin and piano, the strings play a theme in rhythmical unison that would not be out of place in Duke Ellington's big band. Again, the music is informed by writing larger scale works at the same time. 'The last movement of *Three for Two* was going to be a food aria in *Anna Nicole* but I decided not to use it in the opera and instead used the material in this piece.'

Turnage has been influenced by jazz since his studies at the Royal College of Music: 'Before I went to college I was studying with Olly Knussen and was obsessed with contemporary music such as Boulez and Stockhausen. When I went to the RCM, jazz was the opposite of what the college stood for and I got obsessed with it starting with jazz-fusion and then working back to

the 1920s and before that. I started to use jazz in my compositions but the deep knowledge came later from collaborating with artists such as John Scofield and Peter Erskine. Musicians and music – that's what I care about. Jazz is a part of that.'

A Slow Pavane is for piano trio and was written in 2004 for the 50th anniversary of the Beaux Arts Trio. It forms a triptych with two other movements for piano trio, from 2003, which can be performed separately or together. Turnage has often drawn on Baroque and Renaissance dances in his music and here he uses the pavane, a slow processional dance from the 16th century. This movement is in duple time but, rather than having strict dance measures, is rhythmically complex. The movement has three sections. The opening section is sombre, with the strings playing over a low bass line in the piano. The middle section is faster and the cello and violin have a passionate and volatile duet. The piano eventually joins and the music builds in intensity and drama. The third section is an inversion of the first section with the violin playing an ethereal version of the low bass line heard at the opening. The movement ends with chorale chords in the piano with the strings *pizzicato*.

'I really enjoyed writing for the Beaux Art Trio



Mark-Anthony Turnage
(Photography © Philip Gatward)

and particularly for its legendary pianist Menahem Pressler who was a member for over fifty years. Writing for the piano trio, I could not escape the great works for the genre and the low piano refrain in *A Slow Pavane*, is a little bit like that which opens the slow movement of the Ravel Piano Trio.'

Four Chants date from 2008 and were written for the violinist, Viviane Hagner commissioned by the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The violin in 'Chant 1' grows lyrically out of a broken chord in the piano. In the middle section the piano has the melodic material with a big range of tessitura between treble and bass creating a feeling of space. The violin plucks an accompaniment, which builds to a brief climactic moment. The opening returns as a truncated variation of the material heard at the start of the movement. 'Chant 2' again explores extremes of range – this time on the violin. The brittle piano accompaniment that enters after a short violin solo is jaunty and ironic and could be by Kurt Weill or Shostakovich. 'Chant 3' is a violin solo and ties together material from the two earlier movements. 'Chant 4' is marked 'Very ironic with lots of rubato'. The piano writing is comical and would not be out of place in a burlesque club, while around the violin melody is a whiff of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Grazioso! was written for the American group, Eighth Blackbird, and was inspired by their playing, which the composer heard in Chicago when he was resident composer with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The title is ironic and the music is far from *grazioso*, being mostly aggressive and having extremes of register and dynamic with an ensemble of piccolo, bass clarinet, piano, viola,

cello and percussion. *Grazioso!* is one of a number of works inspired by Led Zeppelin, which include *Out of Black Dust*, *Twisted Ballad* and *Twisted Blues*. In this case, Turnage states that there is 'a very slight allusion to the group's 1971 *Black Dog*.' The title refers to the first brand of guitar used by Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page. The music is highly energetic and there are few lyrical moments. Turnage comments: 'I don't care about fitting in. I like thinking about specific players and writing musician's music.' It is this approach combined with a masterly assimilation of a wide range of musical influences that give Mark-Anthony Turnage a unique voice in contemporary culture and provide such variety and contrasts in his music, which is very much of our time.

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Texts

A Constant Obsession

1. Prologue

Love expected
Love begun
The pains of love
Love continued
Love in death

2. Love expected

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art –
Not in lone splendour hung aloft in the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors –
No – yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever – or else swoon to death.

Bright Star

John Keats (1795-1821)

3. Love begun

She wore a new 'terra-cotta' dress,
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,
Within the hansom's dry recess,
Through the horse had stopped; yea, motionless
We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad pain,
And the glass that had screened our forms before
Flew up, and out she sprang to her door:
I should have kissed her if the rain
Had lasted a minute more.

A Thunderstorm in Town (A Reminiscence)

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

4. The pains of love

No one so much as you
Loves this my clay,
Or would lament as you
Its dying day.

You know me through and through
Though I have not told,
And though with what you know
You are not bold.

None ever was so fair
As I thought you:
Not a word can I bear
Spoken against you.

All that I ever did
For you seemed coarse
Compared with what I hid
Nor put in force.

My eyes scarce dare meet you
Lest they should prove
I but respond to you
And do not love.

We look and understand,
We cannot speak
Except in trifles and
Words the most weak.

For I at most accept
Your love, regretting
That is all: I have kept
Only a fretting

That I could not return
All that you gave
And could not ever burn
With the love you have,

Till sometimes it did seem
Better it were
Never to see you more
Than linger here

With only gratitude
Instead of love –
A pine in solitude
Cradling a dove.

No one so much as you
Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

5. Love continued

Counting the Beats
by Robert Graves (1895-1985) can be found in
Robert Graves: The Complete Poems (Penguin
Modern Classics, 2003)

6. Love in Death

Come not, when I am dead,
To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
To trample round my fallen head,
And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.
There let the wind sweep and the plover cry;
But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime
I care no longer, being all unblest:
Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time,
And I desire to rest.
Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie:
Go by, go by.

Come not, when I am dead
Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)



Nicky Spence *tenor*
(Photographer: Sabine Mardo)

'Engaging and shining [...] highly nuanced and projected performances by Nicky Spence.'
Gramophone

Nicky Spence tenor

Hailed recently in the *Daily Telegraph* as ‘a voice of real distinction’, Nicky Spence is currently an English National Opera Young Artist, having trained at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio.

The winner of the National Bruce Millar Opera Prize in 2010, Nicky's diverse repertoire ranges from Handel and Mozart to Donizetti, Britten and Jonathan Dove, having collaborated with the finest orchestras on some of the world's most major platforms. A proud Concordia Foundation Artist, Britten-Pears Young Artist, Georg Solti and Samling Scholar, his other awards include the Kathleen Ferrier Young Singers Award, the Concordia Barthel Prize, a Sybil Tutton Award, and a place in the final of the Gold Medal at the Guildhall.

2010-11 also marked Nicky's debut for some of the UK's most distinguished opera houses including Opera North, Opera Holland Park, Scottish Opera and English National Opera. His roles include Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), MacHeath (*The Beggar's Opera*), Jaquino (*Fidelio*) for Opera Holland Park; Lampwick (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*), and Quint (*The Turn of the Screw*) for Opera North at the Arcola Theatre London); and more

recently Baron Lummer (*Intermezzo*) for Scottish Opera, which the *Independent* called a ‘stand-out performance’. This was followed by the leading part of Brian in Nico Muhly's Metropolitan Opera commission *Two Boys*, which received its world premiere at ENO and gained him uniformly outstanding reviews.

Recent concert performances include a Britten Song-Cycle Series in Aldeburgh and at Kings Place, a lecture-recital at the Howard Assembly Rooms, Britten's Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings with L'Orchestre National d'Ile de France under Gordan Nikolic, a Gala performance at the Royal Festival Hall and recitals at the Leeds and Oxford Lieder Festivals.

An experienced recording artist, Nicky has recorded for Universal Classics. For other labels he has recorded a disc of songs by Britten with Malcolm Martineau (Onyx Classics) was released in 2011. His release of premiere Hoddinott recordings brought him extensive acclaim.

Future opera plans include the role of Thomas Mason in Jenny McLeod's opera *Hohepa* for New Zealand Opera and presented at the New Zealand International Arts Festival, a return to ENO for Novice (*Billy Budd*) and his Grange Park Opera debut as Chevalier in *Les Dialogues des Carmelites*.



Thomas Kemp *conductor*
(Photographer: Anders Nyman)

'[...] utterly magical [...] a tremendous sense of vitality and commitment'
Gramophone

www.thomaskemp.eu

Thomas Kemp *conductor and violin*

Thomas Kemp is rapidly developing a reputation as one of the finest and imaginative conductors of his generation. *The Guardian* recently commented: 'an extraordinary event [...] with a fluency that came over brilliantly under the baton of Thomas Kemp'.

He read music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and studied violin and chamber music at the Royal Northern College of Music and has since enjoyed an international career as a chamber musician and concertmaster. From 2003-2007, he won the Swedish Academy Scholarship to study conducting at the Royal Conservatory in Stockholm with the legendary Jorma Panula and Alan Gilbert.

Thomas is Music Director of the highly acclaimed Chamber Domaine, which is at the forefront of British ensembles focusing on 20th and 21st century music. He made his conducting debut in a series of concerts celebrating Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which *The Financial Times* described as 'exceptional musical events'. He is also Artistic Director of Music@Malling – an international festival that promotes contemporary composers alongside masterworks from classical and romantic periods; in 2011 the festival featured Mark-Anthony Turnage alongside works by Mahler and Mozart.

Recent conducting projects have included the Pori Sinfonietta; Gavle Symphony; Swedish Chamber Orchestra; Scottish Chamber Orchestra; Hebrides Ensemble; Chamber Domaine; and I Pomeriggi.

Forthcoming conducting engagements include concerts at Kings Place; Wigmore Hall; guest conducting engagements in the UK, USA, Finland and Sweden; and world premiere recordings of Schoenberg and Barber with Chamber Domaine. Thomas will make his operatic debut in 2012 for Opera Holland Park.

Thomas is an award winning recording artist and has recorded for ASV, Blackbox and Landor. He recently made his recording debut as a conductor with world premiere recordings of Henryk Górecki for Landor. He is also conducting a series of recordings for the world's first solely-digital classical record label Resonus Classics.

He has also performed at many leading festivals in the UK and overseas and has broadcast regularly around the world. He is a guest artist at Bargemusic, New York and, since his debut in 2000, has been a regular at Wigmore Hall, South Bank Centre and Carnegie Hall, New York. In 2009, Thomas worked closely with the Turner Prize winning artist Anish Kapoor for the Brighton Festival to great acclaim. He teaches as the Royal Northern College of Music and has given masterclasses worldwide.

Chamber Domaine

Chamber Domaine is at the cutting edge of music making in the 21st century. Its excellence and dynamism have received widespread acclaim both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Under its artistic director, Thomas Kemp, the ensemble has become renowned for its virtuosity and its ambitious and distinctive programming that range from the Baroque through to the Contemporary. Chamber Domaine focuses on instrumental chamber music and song in programmes that illuminate the music of today with the music of three centuries: the ensemble brings passion and commitment to a diverse repertoire that makes music come alive whilst placing it into its cultural context.

The ensemble is committed to performing and recording contemporary music and give world premieres by leading composers including Judith Bingham at the City of London Festival, Piers Hellawell at the Cheltenham International Festival and Arvo Pärt at the Edinburgh Festival. The ensemble has a commission from the brilliant young composer, Matthew Sergeant for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and a major work for soprano and chamber orchestra by Judith Bingham for her sixtieth birthday.

Chamber Domaine has a distinguished and highly acclaimed discography. The ensemble's recordings regularly receive five star reviews and have been picked as Editor's Choice in *Gramophone*. Recent discs of music by Henryk Górecki and Judith Bingham received universal acclaim. Forthcoming recordings include a disc of world premiere recordings of Mark-Anthony Turnage, as well as recordings of Mahler and Barber. The ensemble recently recorded the all Mozart sound track to *First Night* – a film starring Richard E. Grant, which will be released on Sony Classics.

In addition to its recording activities, the ensemble has broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3; ORF, Austria; SR, Sweden; and WNYC, New York.

Chamber Domaine has a busy schedule of concerts and consistently proves itself as one of the most dynamic and versatile ensembles of its kind. During 2011 they were the resident ensemble of the Music@Malling International Festival, held in Kent, working closely with Mark-Anthony Turnage. Future plans include concerts in Europe, Scandinavia and New Zealand.

www.chamberdomaine.com

