

Works for Clarinet

Janet Hilton clarinet

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Neeme Järvi

Lindsay String Quartet

Keith Swallow piano





Carl Maria von Weber

Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)

Complete Works for Clarinet

COL	IDACT	DICC	ONTE

1	Concertino in C minor, Op. 26 (J 109)*	9:04
	for clarinet and orchestra	
	Allegro – Adagio ma non troppo – Rondo. Allegro	

Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 (J 114)*

	Op. 75 (J 114)	20.27
2	I Allegro	8:07
3	II Adagio ma non troppo	5:47
4	III Rondo. Allegro	6:34
5	Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 74 (J 118)*	22:08 8:24
_	I Allegro	8:24
6	II Romanza. Andante con moto – Recitativo –	

 Tempo I
 7:19

 III Alla polacca
 6:23

 TT 51:42
 TT 51:42

3



20:29

COMPACT DISC TWO

2 II 3 III	Clarinet Quintet in B flat major, Op. 34 (J 182)† Allegro Fantasia. Adagio ma non troppo Menuetto. Capriccio presto – Trio Rondo. Allegro giocoso	28:21 10:32 6:00 5:34 6:14
6 II	Grand duo concertant in E flat major, Op. 48 (J 204)‡ for clarinet and piano Allegro con fuoco Andante con moto Rondo. Allegro	21:01 9:03 5:38 6:19
8	Variations on a Theme from 'Silvana', Op. 33 (J 128)‡ for clarinet and piano	15:22 TT 64:45

Janet Hilton clarinet
Keith Swallow piano‡
Lindsay String Quartet†
Peter Cropper violin
Ronald Birks violin
Roger Bigley viola
Bernard Gregor-Smith cello
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra*
Barrie Moore leader
Neeme Järvi*

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Weber: Complete Works for Clarinet

Since I composed the Concertino for Bärmann, the whole orchestra has been the very devil about demanding concertos from me... two clarinet concertos (of which one in F minor is nearly ready), two large arias, a cello concerto, a bassoon concerto. You see I am not doing at all badly, and very probably I'll be spending the summer here, where I'm earning so much that I've something left over after paying my keep.

So wrote Weber from Munich in April 1811. He might justifiably have added 'and not before time', for throughout a great part of his life, Weber, never the most physically robust of men, had to work unreasonably hard simply to pay his way in the world.

Matters improved significantly, however, in the early months of 1811. After an unhappy episode involving charges of embezzlement against his father, and disappointed in his hopes of finding a permanent post in Darmstadt, Weber set off on a concert tour of southern Germany, finally arriving in Munich. There he found a sympathetic musical ear in the person of Josef von

Montgelas, a minister of Maximilian I, and in the principal clarinettist of the orchestra of which he speaks so affectionately in his letter, the great virtuoso Heinrich Joseph Bärmann. Like Mozart with Stadler, and later Brahms with Mühlfeld, Weber was captivated by the expressive possibilities of the clarinet, and in particular by Bärmann's artistry on it (a contemporary account speaks of 'technique, sentiment and delicacy of tone alike'). He was immediately struck by the clarinet's dark lower register - later used in the 'Wolf's Glen' scene in Der Freischütz - and by its brilliant quality at the opposite end of the spectrum - which offered rich possibilities for a lively coloratura style of writing – in addition to its unrivalled potential for leaping and trilling between the two extremes. Composer and clarinettist had already met several months earlier in Mannheim (home of the renowned orchestra whose clarinets, soft and rich-toned in the German manner, had set a distinguished example), and, granted a concert in Munich on 5 April by the King of Bavaria, Weber set to work on a concertino for Bärmann to play on his recently acquired



ten-key instrument. Within a fortnight the work was completed, and the concert, which also included Weber's First Symphony and Der erste Ton for reciter, chorus and orchestra, was immediately sold out. Such compositional fluency can have allowed Bärmann little time to study the work's considerable technical details as much as he would have liked. The Concertino's success. however, was instantaneous. The King immediately requested two more clarinet works from Weber, this time concertos on a full scale, and these were written during the following May and July. Three further works for Bärmann to play (the Quintet, the Grand duo concertant and a set of variations on a theme from Weber's opera Silvana) were to follow within the next five years.

In essence the Concertino in C minor, Op. 26 is a *scena* for clarinet and orchestra, a set of variations which leaves an impression of continuous development rather than any conventional step-by-step embellishment of a theme. There is a sombre Introduction in C minor (much in the style of a recitative), at the end of which the horns softly intone the dominant, as if to return to the home key. Instead, however, the scene lightens into E flat major for the theme itself, vocal and Italianate, and after a brilliant orchestral reply

there follow two variations which demand both dexterity and expressiveness of the soloist. Then, unexpectedly – for is this not too lightweight a piece for what follows? –, the music comes to a rest, leaving only a soft drum roll lingering in the air. Here, in a *Lento* aria of just twenty-one bars, is the Weber of the darker side of German romantic theatre, melancholy and lyrical, with the clarinet low in the *chalumeau* register against *piano* divided violas. An *Allegro* finale in 6/8, complete with a brief 'hunting horn' interjection, rounds off the piece in lively and virtuosic fashion.

Aside from the First Piano Concerto. written a year previously, in 1810, the two concertos for clarinet and orchestra find Weber coming to grips for the first time with the traditional three-movement concerto form. Perhaps it was the commission from so lofty a source as the King of Bavaria that decided Weber against formal innovation; at least as far as their first movements are concerned. the two clarinet concertos fall fairly easily into the classical mould, and the orchestral resources of each are conventionally of that period - two each of flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns (three of the latter in the Adagio of No. 1) and trumpets, with timpani and strings. So much for the medium which,

in Weber's estimation, any composer worth the name ought to have at his command. The expression within the works, however, is original and characteristic. If Beethoven wrested his inspiration from traditional forms, Weber happily accommodated himself to them.

While the opening of Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 may be Beethovenian in spirit, its stalking, sotto voce character soon shows itself to be perfectly compatible with the virtuosity and spirited invention of the solo writing. After the first, F minor paragraph, there is a pause, and the orchestra leads off in distant D flat major, with solo writing of deftness and lyrical warmth. There is a particularly lovely episode which opens softly in C minor, and which glides to and fro between major and minor with the gentle air of melancholy reminiscent of the Weber of German romantic theatre. The approach to the coda confirms the impression: in the same spirit of tenderness and goodness that was to evoke the appearance of Agathe in Der Freischütz ten years later, horns intone the opening theme of the movement, to which the clarinet replies against soft tremolando strings. The movement dies away, ppp, in the minor key.

It is in the *Adagio ma non troppo* that the originality of Weber's orchestral

imagination is at its most striking. To begin with, bassoons play a vital, luminous role in the opening texture, tellingly blended with clarinet and strings, yet it is the slow, chorale-like duet of the soloist with three horns at the centre of the movement which afterwards lingers in the inner ear. Here, in German romantic literary tradition, is the horn as instrument of the night, evoking pastoral landscapes and forests bathed in moonlight. (For Bärmann, in later years, the passage was to assume the nature of a lament. For a memorial concert for Weber in 1831, he arranged it for clarinet and three male voices to words by Eduard von Schenk: 'He is on High, the creator of these sounds... [which] alone live on here below'.) The gracious company of these instruments remains with the soloist until the end of the movement.

The playful, syncopated theme which opens the Rondo finale quickly dispels the nocturnal atmosphere. Yet there is room for lyricism too, notably in the form of a graceful passage in D minor. Here, once again, the texture is warmed by the presence of bassoons, and there is a characteristic excursion into the flattened supertonic (E flat major). The rondo theme returns, this time with oboe contributing a delightful



counterpoint. A thoroughly virtuosic episode in B flat major precedes the final return of the theme and an exuberant coda.

The first movement of Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 74 finds Weber's melodic fluency and elegance even more happily wedded to the demands of sonata form, and while the course of events is defined with noticeably greater clarity than in the companion work, there is no suspicion of any cramping of style. If anything, indeed, the reverse is the case, for here Weber is at his most relaxed, offering solo writing of an easy grace which no doubt reflects much of Bärmann's own style of playing. After two exuberant downward plunges from the orchestra (might Weber have subconsciously retained a memory of similar bars at the equivalent point in Mozart's Piano Concerto KV 482, also in E flat?), the clarinet enters fortissimo, bestriding three octaves in a single, bravura leap – a magnificent gesture. Throughout, the figuration is more evidently virtuosic than in the opening movement of the F minor concerto, and the woodwind writing still more felicitous.

In no part of these concertos is the Weber of German opera more vividly in evidence than in the Andante con moto of this E flat work. (He was, he once claimed, never

happy unless he had a libretto to work on.) The movement, a *Romanza* in gentle 6/8, is introduced by two characteristic bars of low, divided violas and pizzicato cellos, and embodies a solo melody of beguiling vocal simplicity. Further testimony to operatic inspiration is evident: in the leisurely, wide leaps of the solo line; in a darker, more turbulent improvisatory section with tremolando strings; and in a brief Recitativo ad lib before the close of the movement. A tiny, ppp echo of the opening pizzicato figure brings this lovely Andante to a close.

With the sprung, syncopated gait of its opening theme, the Alla polacca finale is echt-Weber. The passage of ricocheting fortissimo semiquavers is briefly interrupted by a graceful episode in C major (a melody echoed by violins, then oboe), no doubt a welcome breathing-space for the soloist. It is short-lived, however, for after a mischievous 'wrong key' hint at the principal theme of the movement, and an exuberant final statement, the concerto hurtles to a close amid a welter of clarinet sextuplets, guaranteed, says the Weber scholar John Warrack, 'to dazzle any audience and burn the fingers of most clarinettists'. Whether or not Bärmann's fingers emerged unscathed must remain a matter for conjecture, but

there seems little doubt that he acquitted himself with some distinction - 'godlike' wrote Weber in his diary - and that the first audience, greeting the work 'with frantic applause' on 25 November 1811, was indeed 'dazzled'.

© Andrew Keener

Great instrumental works are invariably inspired by great instrumentalists, and this is certainly true of works written for the clarinet. In our own time Thea Musgrave's highly individual Clarinet Concerto was composed for Gervase de Peyer, the recipient of several fascinating contemporary works for the clarinet. A century ago Brahms was inspired by the playing of Richard Mühlfeld, for whom he composed some of his most eloquent chamber music, while Mozart wrote his Clarinet Concerto and fine Clarinet Quintet as the result of his meeting one of the instrument's earliest champions, Anton Stadler. In Weber's case the player was Heinrich Bärmann, the clarinettist of the famous Court Orchestra of Munich. He was born in Potsdam in 1784, when Mozart was twenty-eight, with seven years still to live, when Beethoven was a boy of fourteen, and when the birth of

Carl Maria von Weber was not to occur for another two years.

Bärmann had the first opportunity to show Weber his virtuosity at a special concert sponsored by the Grand Duke to whom the composer had wisely dedicated his opera Abu Hassan in 1811. For the concert Weber had composed a duet, Se il mio ben, for two contraltos with instrumental accompaniment, including a clarinet obbligato which had been brilliantly played by Bärmann. Their friendship was cemented when they met again in Munich later the same year, brought together by a mutual love for the clarinet, Weber's favourite instrument. Weber immediately composed a concertino which Bärmann played at a concert on 5 April, and which was so successful that the King of Bavaria commissioned two concertos for the instrument from Weber. The two clarinet concertos, the first in F minor and the second in E flat major, were written that busy year of 1811, and further enhanced the professional and private friendship between composer and instrumentalist. At the same time Weber began work on a quintet for clarinet and string quartet.

After Weber had begun sketching the Clarinet Quintet in B flat major, Op. 34

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in 1811, life began to take him about a great deal, and it was not until two years later, in 1813, when he was able to settle for a time in Prague as Director of the Opera, that he returned to the work. His intention was to include it in a special concert on 6 March, but for some unknown reason he still failed to complete it, Bärmann having to he content with the knowledge that it was at least *nearer* completion. Indeed, the quintet, which Weber had started on 14 September 1811 at Jegisdorf in Switzerland, had a sporadic life. The Fantasia was scored by 22 March 1812, and Weber worked on the Menuetto in time to give the first three movements to Bärmann for his thirty-first birthday, on 14 February 1815. This proved to give Weber the necessary impetus to finish the work, the final Rondo being completed on 25 August the same year. Needless to say, however, the real impulse to finish the quintet at that particular time came from the fact that the whole work was announced to be premiered at a concert only one day later, 26 August 1815, when Bärmann at last gave the first performance of his long promised present.

A deceptively gentle introductory fifteen bars by the strings lead to the entry of the clarinet, with the first of the two main subjects of the opening *Allegro*. It is soon

obvious that this is a work for clarinet soloist and strings, although the second subject is at first presented by the cello. Once given its head, however, the clarinet shows the virtuosity and fluency for which Bärmann was famous, and which became such an enjoyable feature in works by Weber for fine soloists. The movement is basically in classical sonata form, the recapitulation beginning with the strings in a kind of canon, but the clarinet always dominates in its ornamentation. The title Fantasia aptly describes the second movement, which is really an aria for the clarinet. However, there are two unique moments in this elegiac movement, obviously included to accommodate one of Bärmann's specialities. These are both chromatic scales, for which the music suddenly stops in anticipation. The first is played as loudly as possible, the second as quietly as the player can accomplish the trip from a low D to the high B flat nearly three octaves above. Both are highly dramatic gestures, but the contrast of individual character between them is especially striking.

Cross-rhythms and cheeky syncopation inhabit the lively *Menuetto*, with its almost Schubertian Trio, while the final Rondo is high-spirited, typical of Weber at his

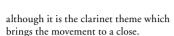
most infectious, and a *tour de force* for a solo clarinet, although the strings do try to make a serious contribution, as in the first movement by starting the development section fugally. Only a sly try, however, for the clarinet soon brings matters back to the virtuosic realm and ends the work with a dazzling display of musical acrobatics.

When Weber left Prague in June 1815, it was to return to a Munich in a state of carnival, for the news of the Battle of Waterloo had arrived in the city on 18 June 1815. The streets were illuminated, fireworks and salvos of canon were filling the air, and Weber, of course, began plans for a Victory Cantata! He stayed at first with his old friend Bärmann, with whom he also gave a number of concerts. One of the most successful of these was a public concert at which Weber played his First Piano Concerto and then took part in what was called a 'Duo for Piano and Clarinet'. This was, in fact, to become the last two movements, Andante and Rondo, of the Grand duo concertant in E flat major, Op. 48. The opening movement would not be written until November 1816. The work, therefore, was begun before the quintet was completed in August 1815, but itself had to wait more than a year for its own completion.

The opening movement, however, was written by a much happier man than the Weber of the 'Duo', for his reputation had developed so much in the meantime that the mother of his beloved Caroline had finally agreed to their engagement. A surge of creative activity inevitably followed, with a number of superb songs in addition to the tremendously inventive Allegro con fuoco opening movement of the Grand duo concertant.

What is so exceptional about the work as a whole is the division of work between the two players, the pianist and clarinettist being equally served with music of virtuosity, elegance, poetry and invention. Weber has carefully composed thematic material which is equally ideal for both instruments, yet seems, when being played, absolutely right for whichever is in prominence. In the first movement, for example, the piano tends to take charge of new ideas, but these are soon shared by the wind instrument.

Even the central *Andante con moto*, which opens with a beautiful theme perfectly tailored to the expressive tones of the clarinet, played over throbbing chords in the piano, continues with a new idea which is introduced and developed on the piano,



Finally, in a lively Rondo, the clariner's virtuosity tends to dominate, although both players rush around their music with leaps and brilliant dashes. A particularly impressive episode comes from the clarinet over piano tremolos in a D flat major passage whose pseudo-sinister character anticipates the atmosphere of *Der Freischütz*, which Weber would begin a year later.

The Variations on a Theme from 'Silvana', Op. 33 were written in a great hurry, during a tour which Weber and Bärmann undertook in 1811, the year in which Weber composed so many fine solo clarinet works for his virtuoso friend. The success of their tour enabled the pair to purchase a comfortable new carriage, in which they travelled for three days to Prague. They arrived on 4 December. Regular concerts were already being organised for them in the city which had premiered Mozart's *Don Giovanni* only twenty-four years earlier, in 1787.

Weber was anxious to have his opera *Silvana* (1810) staged in Prague, and had been cordially received by Johann Liebich, the theatre director. Weber and Bärmann were to give a concert in the home of the musical

patron Count Firmian on 14 December, and Weber took that opportunity to introduce the delights of *Silvana* to Prague music-lovers through a set of Variations on Mechtilde's aria 'Warum mußt' ich dich je erblikken', which he had already used in the same way the previous year in the fifth of his Six Progressive Sonatas for violin and piano. In fact, Variation II is practically the same in both works.

The Silvana Variations were composed, rehearsed and premiered on the day of the concert, an indication not only of the musicianship and expertise of both Weber and Bärmann, but also of the exceptional sense of ensemble which they shared. Although essentially full of showmanship, the variations incorporate passages in which Weber's expressionism looks towards the future in an uncanny way. Not that this appears to have been noticed by Goethe, who is recorded as having walked into a salon concert given by Weber and Bärmann in the home of the Grand Duchess Maria Paulovna, the sister of the Tsar of Russia, when the touring pair were in Weimar in 1813. They were playing the Silvana Variations at the time, but Goethe merely sat down and began to talk to a lady next to him, rising to leave the room when the

music finished. In his diary he mentions the 'clever musicians' and their 'fine talent'; but understandably, Weber, in his own diary, writes of Goethe: 'I did not like him!'

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At the age of sixteen **Janet Hilton** won a scholarship to study at the Royal Manchester College of Music, and her career as one of the foremost British clarinettists was launched two years later with a concerto engagement for the BBC, followed by success in a national young artists' competition and a scholarship for further study in Vienna. Her natural musicality and rhythmic vivacity were remarked on from the beginning, one critic describing 'the rare lightness and grace, shaped with the quiet freedom of a great singer' of her playing.

She soon worked regularly with international artists such as Margaret Price, Steven Isserlis, Peter Frankl, Nobuko Imai and the Lindsay String Quartet, and with major British orchestras; she has toured most European countries and appeared regularly in the United States. Her discography includes recordings of the chamber music of Mozart, Brahms and Weber, concertos by Nielsen, Copland,

Stanford and Sir Malcolm Arnold, and four concertos written for her by Elizabeth Maconchy, Alun Hoddinott, John McCabe and Edward Harper.

Janet Hilton has always combined solo and orchestral playing in her career, as Principal Clarinet of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Welsh National Opera and Manchester Camerata. Also a distinguished teacher, she is Head of Woodwind at the Royal College of Music, London, where she directs the wind ensemble. She has given master-classes at American universities and served on international competition juries in England, Ireland, Italy and Canada.

Keith Swallow won a West Riding of Yorkshire music scholarship at the age of sixteen and went to study at the Royal Manchester College of Music, which awarded him prizes, diplomas and the M.Mus. Degree of the Royal College in London, and later made him an Honorary Fellow. Well known as a performer throughout the United Kingdom, he has played with several British orchestras, taken part at major British music festivals, such as the Harrogate, Cheltenham, King's Lynn, Leeds, Buxton, Chester and Three Choirs festivals, and performed in France



and Germany. He has appeared many times on television, both the BBC and ITV, broadcasts regularly as accompanist, soloist, chamber musician and piano duettist, and has built up a substantial discography. Although he considers himself to be primarily an accompanist, he is in constant demand as a soloist and is widely known for his performance of twentieth-century English piano music.

The Lindsay String Quartet was formed in 1966 at the Royal Academy of Music, where its members were coached by Sidney Griller and won all the prizes for quartet playing. Appointed to a Leverhulme Fellowship at Keele University in 1967, one of the pioneer, fully residential quartet posts, the Quartet took its name from Lord Lindsay, Vice-Chancellor of the University. After six years at the University of Sheffield it became Quartet in Residence at the University of Manchester. Whilst at Keele the Quartet had studied further with Alexandre Moskowsky of the Hungarian Quartet, which led to numerous visits to the United States and Hungary. Tours and radio broadcasts all over Europe cemented its reputation as one of the world's foremost string quartets. It appeared regularly at the Bath Festival and also performed at the

Aldeburgh, Edinburgh and Florence festivals, and at the BBC Proms.

Rooted in the European tradition of great quartet playing, the Quartet's interpretations were noted for their intensity, spontaneity and communicative power. The Quartet performed more than 300 works and was particularly acclaimed for its interpretations of Beethoven, Haydn and Bartók, considered by many to be without equal for imagination and insight. Its complete cycles of Beethoven's quartets became landmark events, and it pioneered all-Haydn programmes at venues ranging from the English Haydn Festival's St Leonard's Church at Bridgnorth, Shropshire and the Sheffield Crucible to the Carnegie and Wigmore halls. Having experienced only one change in personnel, the Lindsay String Quartet disbanded in 2005.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is the resident orchestra of Symphony Hall, Birmingham, and one of the world's foremost symphonic ensembles, having worked with many leading international conductors since its inaugural concert in 1920, conducted by Sir Edward Elgar. It established itself as a major force during its eighteen-year association with Sir Simon Rattle, and has continued to

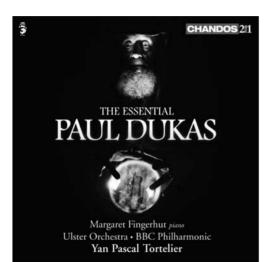
prosper under the Finnish conductor Sakari Oramo, who was appointed Principal Conductor in 1998 and Music Director in 1999. Its performances are attended by more than 300,000 people each year, and heard and seen by many millions more through its regular radio and TV appearances and large discography. In constant demand to perform all over the world, it also makes regular appearances at the BBC Proms and the Aldeburgh Festival. Julian Anderson is the Orchestra's Composer-in-Association, a post previously occupied by Mark-Anthony Turnage and Judith Weir, among others. While a busy education department co-ordinates an extensive programme of work with schools and in the local community, the Orchestra runs a chamber music series at CBSO Centre, and four 'unpaid professional' choruses which are regularly in demand to perform with leading orchestras and musical groups. Recently it founded a youth orchestra, which has recruited the best young musicians aged fourteen to twenty-one from the East and West Midlands regions.

Since 2004 **Neeme Järvi** has been Principal Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. He is also Music Director of the

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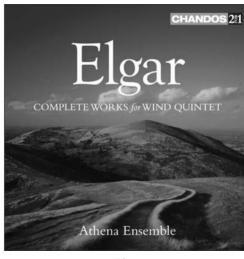
Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Principal Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra since 1982, First Principal Guest Conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Born in Tallinn, Estonia, he is one of today's busiest conductors, making frequent guest appearances with the foremost orchestras and opera companies of the world, including the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Opéra national de Paris-Bastille and the major orchestras of Scandinavia. He also directs a conductors' master-class in Pärnu, Estonia, for two weeks each July. Neeme Järvi has amassed a distinguished discography of more than 350 discs, and many accolades and awards have been bestowed on him worldwide. He holds honorary degrees from the University of Aberdeen, the Royal Swedish Academy of Music and the University of Michigan, and has been appointed Commander of the Order of the North Star by the King of Sweden.

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Neeme Järvi







2-disc set CHAN 241-36

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

Complete Works for Clarinet

COMPACT DISC ONE

Concertino in C minor, Op. 26 (J 109)*

> Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 (J 114)*

5 - 7 Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat major,

Op. 74 (J 118)*

COMPACT DISC TWO

Clarinet Quintet in B flat major, Op. 34 (J 182)[†]

5 - 7 Grand duo concertant in E flat major, Op. 48 (J 204)[‡]

15:22 TT 64:45

9.04

20:29

22:08 TT 51:42

28:21

21:01



Janet Hilton clarinet Keith Swallow piano[‡] Lindsay String Quartet[†]

Peter Cropper violin Ronald Birks violin Roger Bigley viola Bernard Gregor-Smith cello

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra* Barrie Moore leader Neeme Järvi*

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WEBER: COMPLETE WORKS FOR CLARINET

Janet Hilton

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