With CDs approaching forty in number and a busy concert schedule stretching back more than a quarter of a century, the British piano duo Goldstone and Clemmow is firmly established as a leading force. Described by Gramophone as ‘a dazzling husband and wife team’, by International Record Review as ‘a British institution in the best sense of the word’, and by The Herald, Glasgow, as ‘the UK’s pre-eminent two-piano team’, internationally known artists Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow formed their duo in 1984 and married in 1989.

Their extremely diverse activities in two-piano and piano-duet recitals and double concertos, taking in major festivals, have sent them all over the British Isles as well as to Europe, the Middle East and several times to the U.S.A., where they have received standing ovations and such press accolades as ‘revelations such as this are rare in the concert hall these days’ (Charleston Post and Courier). In their refreshingly presented concerts they mix famous masterpieces and fascinating rarities, which they frequently unearth themselves, into absorbing and hugely entertaining programmes; their numerous B.B.C. broadcasts have often included first hearings of unjustly neglected works, and their equally enterprising and acclaimed commercial recordings include many world premières.

Caroline Clemmow
&
Anthony Goldstone

Having presented the complete duets of Mozart for the bicentenary, they decided to accept the much greater challenge of performing the vast quantity of music written by Schubert specifically for four hands at one piano. This they have repeated several times in mammoth seven-concert cycles, probably a world first in their completeness (including works not found in the collected edition) and original recital format. The Musical Times wrote of this venture: ‘The Goldstone/Clemmow performances invited one superlative after another.’ The complete cycle (as a rare bonus including as encores Schumann’s eight Schubert-inspired Polonaises) was recorded on seven CDs, ‘haunted with the spirit of Schubert’ – Luister, The Netherlands.
MAGICAL PLACES
Evocative Symphonic Poems for Piano Duet

1 Night on Bald Mountain   *  10.55

Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960)
2 Midsommar Vigil (Swedish Rhapsody No. 1)  12.16

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)
3 Rome-Palermo 6.33
4 Tunis-Nefta 2.19
5 Valencia 5.32

Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914), arr. Vasily Kalafati
6 The Enchanted Lake   *  6.13

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), arr. Erwin Stein
7 Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes   *  16.06

John Ireland (1879-1962)
11 The Forgotten Rite 9.16

Total CD duration 69.13

* = world première recording

GOLDSTONE & CLEMMOW

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Of the six orchestral works on this recording three are in the composers’ own piano duet versions; two others were transcribed by people in whom the composers had great faith (Rimsky-Korsakov here being considered the composer of Night on Bald Mountain, as Mussorgsky had died), and it must be presumed that Lyadov approved the choice of Kalafati who “was held in great esteem by his colleagues and pupils” (Baker’s “Biographical Dictionary of Musicians”). Three of the six pieces of music involve the supernatural, while the remaining three present “magical” soundscapes in their different ways. The first two items depict very different midsummer festivities…

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) was one of five composers who came to be known as “The Mighty Handful”, a term coined by the prominent arts critic Vladimir Stasov; the others were Balakirev, Borodin, Cui and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908). These men wished to enlarge on the legacy of Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857) by composing music that would have as its core a distinct Russian character, using home-grown folk elements, in contrast to the art-music of Southern and Western Europe that exerted a strong influence in Russia in the mid nineteenth century. Within the five perhaps Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov were the most different, the former’s character, and therefore his music, being raw and without the rough edges removed, the works of the latter being carefully polished and suitable for a “polite” listenership.

Mussorgsky’s stint in the Imperial Guard Cadet School in St. Petersburg in his teens spawned a lifelong addiction to alcohol that, combined with epilepsy, hastened his death at the age of forty-two. Despite his day job in the civil service, he produced several masterpieces that have resonated to the present day, including the opera Boris
Godunov (1872) and the solo piano suite Pictures from an Exhibition (1874) [recorded – performed from the manuscript – by Anthony Goldstone on Divine Art dda 25093].

Rimsky-Korsakov, perhaps best known for his orientalist symphonic suite Scheherazade, was a naval officer who became a leading light in Russian musical life and Professor of Composition and Orchestration (at which he excelled) in the St. Petersburg Conservatory, teaching there for thirty-five years. He and Mussorgsky became close, even sharing living quarters for a time; he believed in “the stamp of genius” of the younger composer while finding some of his works crude, even inexplicable, in their outlandish harmonies and structures, and therefore in need of his sanitisation to render them acceptable. After Mussorgsky’s death he edited – indeed re-wrote – some of them, including revising and re-orchestrating Boris Godunov and “recasting” (it is difficult to find the exact term) the orchestral piece now known as Night on Bald Mountain [1], a task that baffled him for two years.

In the preface to the publication of this version, in 1886, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote:

“The fantasy or musical “tableau” Night on Bald Mountain was originally written by M.P. Mussorgsky for piano and orchestra (the original score was lost) in the ’60s and soon afterwards arranged for orchestra alone by the composer himself. Subsequently, with numerous amendments and the addition of a choir, the piece was intended for inclusion in the opera-ballet Mlada. During its lifetime Mussorgsky added some new elements and it became part of the opera The Fair at Sorochinsk. Each version was left unpolished. When I began to work on this composition to make it into a performable concert piece, I selected material left by the deceased composer that I thought was the best and most appropriate to building a convincing structure.”

In the context of this recording it is of great interest to read that Mussorgsky’s original idea included a piano – described by Rimsky-Korsakov in his memoirs “My Musical Life” as “a fantasy, St. John’s Eve, conceived under the influence of [Liszt’s] Totentanz.” Mussorgsky was himself a fine pianist. (It should be mentioned here that Rimsky-Korsakov’s memory has been called into question that he considered himself one of “the children of Light” and felt a profound affinity with the “supernatural” books of Arthur Machen.

The Forgotten Rite begins, mistico, with drum rolls and an almost static theme that, at about one minute into the piece, seems to foreshadow the theme from Star Wars, but of course very quietly and in slow motion. Thirty seconds later a motif is heard that becomes almost an idée fixe and may be thought of as the composer hearing in his mind’s ear the distant echo of an incantation. The middle section expands on this motif and grows steadily in passion until it dissolves suddenly into the mists of time, leading to a brief nostalgic reminiscence and more references to the incantation; finally there is an atmospheric resolution that may well have inspired the close of Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Serenade to Music.

Feeling that the intensity and otherworldliness of the work depend upon the slowness of the tempo, we have obeyed Ireland’s metronome marks, making no concession to the difficulty of sustaining the tone of the piano. Where the pace might be expected to move onwards, the composer asks for even more broadening. After the middle section’s dissolution I have restored the harp’s complete running textural embellishment, which is derived from the incantation but which Ireland considerably simplified in the piano duet version – understandably so, as it ranges through several octaves, is logistically almost impossible, and requires a very understanding – and indeed intimate – duo partnership!

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composers of the Second Viennese School in his position as editor for Universal Edition. A Jew, he escaped to England in 1938; he had met Britten in Vienna in 1934 and they became close friends after Stein became editor for Britten’s publisher, Boosey and Hawkes, in England. A richly cultured man, he was a staunch supporter of Britten, encouraging him and expediting the publication of his works. In an essay on Peter Grimes he wrote, “the ability to portray with a few touches any character or mood has always been one of Britten’s happiest gifts.” Stein made a piano transcription of the orchestral score of the entire opera, branching out into four hands for the three most complex of the Sea Interludes. The four are recorded here in the order in which they appear in Britten’s concert version but we allow them to close in the same way as in the opera, with the exception of Storm, on to which we have tacked Britten’s short, peremptory coda ending.

While at the Royal College of Music in the early nineteen-thirties, Britten studied composition with John Ireland (1879-1962), who was born in Bowdon, Cheshire, not far from where I lived for several years in my youth, but by this time Ireland was domiciled in Sussex, where he spent the last decade of his life. He had himself studied at the College, subsequently becoming a successful teacher there. By all accounts he was a shy man, diffident in his own compositional talent but, despite – or because of – his distaste for superficial display, he wrote much beautifully crafted and subtle music, notably songs, chamber music and piano pieces, a body of work offering copious rewards to the listener and acquiring a devoted following among those in the know.

He developed a lasting affection for the Channel Islands – that archipelago between England and France from which during World War II he managed to escape in advance of the German occupation (a parallel with Erwin Stein here), and in addition to several piano works inspired by the islands his first acknowledged orchestral work, The Forgotten Rite (1912-13) [11], was his direct response to a stay in Jersey. Subtitled “Prelude”, it is an evocation of a time thousands of years ago when, he imagined, now long-forgotten rituals were performed there for pre-Christian deities. Ireland had a heightened sensitivity to place and a psychic feeling for the occult; in by several composers that never came to fruition, and The Fair at Sorochinsk is an unfinished opera by Mussorgsky. The work clearly had a tortuous genesis.

The celebration of St. John’s Eve, the night preceding the saint’s day of St. John the Baptist close to the summer solstice, is rooted in paganism. Mussorgsky’s narrative of the purely orchestral incarnation (1866-7) of the work reads as follows (the mountain to which he refers is Lysa Hora, “Bald Mountain”, in Kiev):

“... the witches used to gather on this mountain, gossip, play tricks and await their leader – Satan. On his arrival they formed a circle around the throne on which he sat, taking the form of a goat, and sang his praise... The form and character of my composition are both Russian and original, and I want to feel sure that it is thoroughly in keeping with historic truth and Russian folk tradition.”

The peaceful coda in Rimsky-Korsakov’s reworking is derived from Mussorgsky’s final (1880) version, the choral-orchestral intermezzo in The Fair at Sorochinsk concerning the dream of the peasant Gritsko, whose nightmare vision of witches and devils is eventually dispersed by sounds emanating from a church.

Mussorgsky wrote an explanation to Stasov regarding this version:

1. Subterranean roar of non-human voices, uttering non-human words.
2. The subterranean kingdom of darkness comes into its own – mocking the sleeping peasant.
3. Foreshadowing of the appearance of Chernobog and Satan. [The Russian folk devil Chernobog plays a part in the opera’s plot.]
4. The peasant left by the spirits of darkness. Appearance of Chernobog.
5. Worship of Chernobog and black mass.
7. At the wildest moment of the Sabbath the sound of a Christian church bell. Chernobog suddenly disappears.
8. Suffering of the demons.
9. Voices of the clergy in church.
10. Disappearance of the demons and the peasant’s awakening.
Rimsky-Korsakov’s reworking is loosely ternary in form with a coda and contains screams and incantations in abundance. In this performance we replicate his depiction of the church bells.

The transcriber Nikolai Artsybushev (1858-1939) studied privately with Rimsky-Korsakov, who described him as “a jurist by profession and a good musician” (another example of the tradition of Russian “amateur” composers). He received the honour in 1907 of being named by his former teacher as his successor on the Board of Trustees for Russian Composers; not long afterwards he was elected president of the St. Petersburg Royal Music Society but he emigrated to Paris following the Revolution. It is most likely that Rimsky-Korsakov himself asked him to transcribe his revision of Night on Bald Mountain for piano four hands. In common with Russian composers greater than himself, Artsybushev was published by the influential firm Belaieff, whose business he subsequently looked after in Paris.

Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960), one of the foremost Swedish composers of the twentieth century, was also a talented painter, writer, conductor and educator. Among his large output are five symphonies, many choral works and sixty songs but the one piece that has gained most international success and affection is his first Swedish Rhapsody for orchestra, Op. 19, which he entitled Midsummer Vigil [2]. It dates from 1903 and was published also in Alfvén’s own version for piano duet. Exactly half a century later the Canadian-born American bandleader Percy Faith released a 10-inch 78rpm record that had as its B-side a cheery arrangement of the Rhapsody’s main theme and Pointing Dance, which became a hit; that is how many people, including myself, first came across the music and they have never forgotten those infectious melodies.

Alfvén’s work, like Mussorgsky’s, concerns the celebration of St. John’s Eve, but this time by normal youngsters letting their hair down. The composer helpfully provided the background and a description of the proceedings, some of which is reproduced here by kind permission of the Alfvén Society (www.alfvensallskapet.se):

England, he never felt separated from the region in spirit even when, of necessity, he moved away. His partner the tenor Peter Pears wrote in their copy of “The Borough”, a collection of poems by the Aldeburgh poet and naturalist George Crabbe (1754-1832), “I bought this book at a San Diego bookseller in 1941 and from this we started work on the plans for making an opera out of [the section about] ‘Peter Grimes’. They were living in America at the time, but reading this work had convinced Britten that he belonged in England – Suffolk in particular, and they returned in 1942. Having made their home in Aldeburgh the two men initiated the Aldeburgh Festival in 1948, which continues to thrive.

The subject and the location (a fictional Sussex fishing village analogous to Aldeburgh) struck deep resonances in Britten. The librettist Montagu Slater blurred Crabbe’s brutal tale: Grimes, the owner of a fishing boat, is stigmatised by the villagers when one, then the second boy apprentice in his care meet their deaths, and he in turn is driven to his death. In the opera, is he indeed a murderer? What is his relationship with the boys? Is he merely “different” and therefore a persona non grata to the villagers, themselves less-than-pure? The hypocrisy, self-delusion and ambivalence inherent in human nature and the fall of innocence were preoccupations of Britten.

When not yet twelve years old Britten heard a festival performance of the orchestral suite The Sea by Frank Bridge (1879-1941), who would become his first serious composition teacher, and was “knocked sideways”. Thirty years later he himself was to create masterly sea music in the shape of the Four Sea Interludes [7-10] in Peter Grimes. The sea is a constant but ever-changing personality in the opera, mirroring the psychological narrative. Dawn [7] is mysterious, grey and menacing; Sunday Morning [8] reverberates with church bells and birdsong; Moonlight [9] is troubled in its seeming serenity; and Storm [10] boils over with turbulence. The opera was premièred in 1945 and was the start of a new golden age for British opera.

Erwin Stein (1879-1961) was born in Vienna, became a pupil of Arnold Schoenberg, for whose twelve-tone system he became a fervent proponent, and promoted the
“I got my first inspiration for the ‘Midsummer Vigil’ Rhapsody during the years 1892-1895, when I used to spend the summers in the outer Stockholm archipelago and frequently associated with the people of the islands. Out there the light summer nights are strangely attractive: green islands, grey skerries – the surrounding sea seems almost musical, laughing, rippling and foaming like the chords of a harp when the wind caresses the verdure of the islands, roaring when the storm lashes furious waves against the rocks. On many of these islands there is much gaiety at midsummer time. From the newly mown timothy-grass and clover, heavy with honey, comes a strong and heady scent, to which the youths are particularly susceptible. Their bodies grow restless and they want to dance. They wander off to the barn, which might indeed have been built for summer night dancing. For those exhausted from their ardent leaping the hayloft provides a pleasant haven. There one might glimpse the dim light of the moon through the cracks in the wall and in quiet peace enjoy the beauty of nature and of one’s girl. I have been present at innumerable such dances, mostly as spectator but sometimes as musician, for I had the repertoire of the barn dance at my fingertips. At that time I played the violin and was already greatly interested in our folk music. Gradually I came to feel an urge to express in music something of the delight of Midsummer’s Eve, the abundance of poetic moods and impressions that I had received through the years. I wanted to sing the praise of the Swedish character and the beauty of Swedish nature at midsummer. I set to work as though in a dream.

A group of excited youths is marching along the road on their way to the barn. A number of people have already gathered there, for there is going to be dancing and the beer and aquavit are already flowing. A hoarse bass tries to start the ‘Pointing Dance’ but does not hit the right notes [1'37’]. People laugh. The squeaky voice of an old woman makes the same attempt, but she also fails, which evokes hilarity among the others. Then the fiddlers take over and the dancing begins, but tempers begin to flare and the first notes of the Pointing Dance are the signal. The quarrel increases in volume and soon the shrill, whining voices of the old women mix with the roaring of the crazed people. The excitement rises to boiling point and the first blow falls; this releases the anger. With laughter and

legendary procrastination (his progress had amounted merely to buying some manuscript paper), the commission went to Stravinsky and the rest is, as they say, history. Rimsky-Korsakov in his memoirs lists several members of Lyadov’s distinguished musical family, ending with Anatoly and appending the observation “I believe all of them were a little inclined to loose living.” Lyadov later managed to have added to the text “except the last”! Rimsky-Korsakov had been forced to expel him from his composition class in the St. Petersburg Conservatory for non-attendance, describing him as “incredibly lazy”. His marriage to a rich lady no doubt contributed to his lack of motivation.

Despite his indolent nature Lyadov was a very gifted composer, acknowledged by Rimsky-Korsakov as an unmistakable Russian talent, but one who by inclination was best suited to miniatures. He did nurture one large-scale project, an opera to be called Zoryushka, concerning a princess who succumbs to the spell of water nymphs and is captured by them. This occupied him intermittently for thirty years without much progress; the most significant excerpt to survive is the exquisite tableau The Enchanted Lake [6], which appeared in 1909. There are no real melodies here, simply atmosphere: the impression of a rippling, magical watery scene by moonlight. “My ideal is to find the unearthly in art,” he said. “Give me a fairy tale, a dragon, a water sprite … and I am happy.”

Vasily Kalafati (1869-1942), who transcribed the piece for piano duet, was a Russian composer and teacher of Greek origin. A pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, he was recommended by him to tutor the twenty-year-old Stravinsky in harmony; he was most definitely of the old school in outlook – Stravinsky later remembered his distaste for “interesting new chords” and Baker’s ironically describes his (admittedly fairly early) works as “all set in impeccably euphonious harmonies”. He was a respected figure whose symphony and other works were published by Belaieff. We stay with expanses of water for the third and last item on this recording to have an operatic connection; it comes from one of the twentieth century’s leading composers, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). Born on the Suffolk coast of Eastern
noise the troublemakers are thrown out, and the dancing continues. But a young man wants to steal away from the throng with his girl to the peace and dense bushes of the forest. He whispers in her ear and she nods agreement. The dance music gradually fades as they escape from the barn, and soon they hear only the quiet murmuring of the forest. Then they hear a gust of wind approaching and the melody is played by the enormous organ of the forest with all the stops out. But now it is growing light. The sun rises, its rays make the drops of dew on the flowers sparkle, the buzzing of bees fills the air, all of nature is waking up. The two young people return to reality; they want to go back to the barn and have one last dance. Soon they hear again the merry rasping of the fiddles, and as they reach the barn the last dance, the whirling Jössehärad Polska, is just beginning [10'13”]. The boy dances as he has never danced before. The other youths are not far behind – shoes crack against the floor, skirts are flying, girls scream as they are launched into the air. A tornado rages over the dance floor.”

For sheer fun this piece is hard to beat.

The Parisian Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) inherited his musical talent from his mother, a gifted pianist whose teacher, Antoine Marmontel, had pipped his own former teacher, the legendary virtuoso Alkan, to the post of Professor of Keyboard at the Paris Conservatoire. Jacques distinguished himself by winning the Conservatoire’s prestigious Prix de Rome for composition on his first attempt, an award that Debussy achieved only on his third candidacy and one that eluded Ravel (who admired Ibert’s fine musicianship) five times. He became a prolific composer, with six operas to his credit, many works for the concert hall and about fifteen film scores – his affinity with the cinema had begun when, after leaving school, he had supported himself partly by playing the piano for silent films. Despite having been appointed Director of the Académie de France at the Villa Medici in Rome in 1937 (where he had lived as prizewinner), he fell into disfavour with the Vichy government and his music was banned in 1940; this was reversed by Général de Gaulle in 1944.

Although always superbly crafted, relatively few works by Ibert have remained in the standard repertoire, among them the Flute Concerto, the Trois pièces brèves for wind quintet, the comical Divertissement, drawn from his incidental music for the play “An Italian Straw Hat”, and Escales [3-5], a brilliant showpiece completed in 1922 and recorded here in the composer’s version for four hands. Rendered in English as “Ports of Call”, Escales consists of colourful impressions of places visited when, on his way to Rome as prizewinner, he toured the Mediterranean with his new bride.

Rome-Palermo [3] begins and ends, one feels, in the Sicilian capital, which evokes an “oriental” response from Ibert – in fact it was ruled for over two hundred years by the Arabs, who called it Bal’harm. The languid melody and its shimmering accompaniment seem to suggest intense heat; presently the music gathers pace and the scene shifts to Rome and a lively Italian dance – perhaps part of a festival, as it seems to anticipate the merrymaking in the Epiphany finale of Ottorino Respighi’s Feste Romane, composed a few years later. The dance eventually calms down (here Ibert asks for the wood of the piano to be tapped in place of the tambourine in the orchestral version), and the opening melody returns punctuated by echoes of the dance. At last all seems to be lulled into somnolence by the burning sun.

Netta (Naftah), an oasis town 300 miles southwest of Tunis, is considered the home of the mystical Sufi sect of Islam. With this stopover Ibert takes the opportunity for an exotic interlude [4], the oboe in the orchestral version imitating the Arabic shawm, the mizmar, playing for a dance of irregular rhythm. Valencia, on the Eastern coast of Spain, provides the setting for the final movement [5], a pulsating, stamping, quasi-flamenco affair, which again makes use of unusual rhythmic patterns. After a more thoughtful central episode the music picks up energy and mounts to a headlong, exhilarating climax.

Listening to the beginning of the orchestral miniature Baba Yaga, a three-and-a-half-minute depiction of the frightening Russian folk witch, by the composer of the next work Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914), one might be forgiven for thinking it was drawn from Igor Stravinsky’s seminal ballet The Firebird, written five years later. In fact Lyadov was approached by Diaghilev to write the ballet but, because of his