



Composers pictured L-R: Ruth Gipps, Iain Hamilton, Richard H. Walthew, John Ireland

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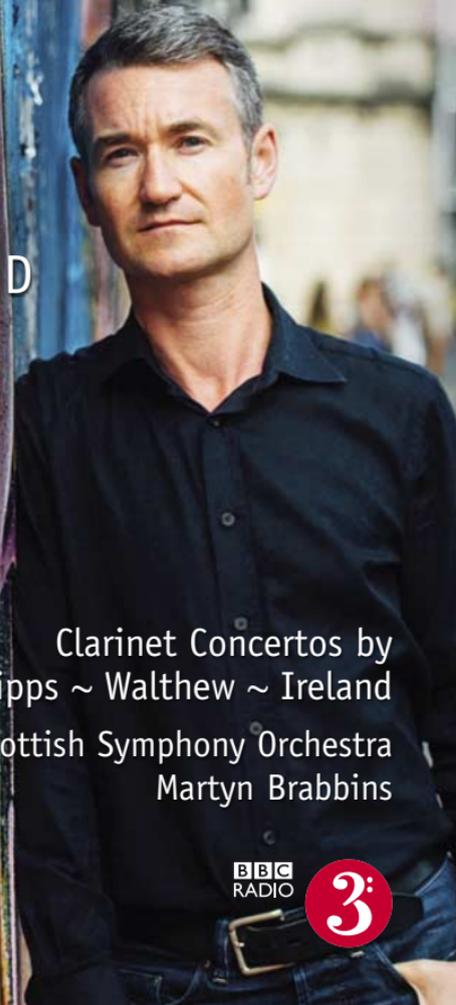
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# REAWAKENED

ROBERT PLANE



Clarinet Concertos by  
Hamilton ~ Gipps ~ Walthew ~ Ireland

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra  
Martyn Brabbins



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## FOREWORD

British clarinet music has been a great passion of mine throughout my twenty-five-year-long recording career. It offers a treasure trove of classics, many well-loved. But there are other gems of works to be found, in libraries, personal collections and attics the country over, if you're prepared to look hard enough. Having made premiere recordings of exciting discoveries by Bax, Holbrooke and Robin Milford I decided to turn my attention to lost concerto repertoire. How could a huge-scale, Royal Philharmonic Society Award-winning concerto by celebrated composer Iain Hamilton have remained unplayed for over fifty years? Alongside Stanford, surely others took inspiration from the celebrated performances of Brahms by Richard Mühfeld in London in the late 1890s? The neglect of the three concertos that are 'reawakened' on this disc can each be explained differently. Richard H. Walthew left his clarinet concerto in manuscript and unorchestrated on his death, while the orchestral parts for Iain Hamilton's concerto were mislaid after just a handful of performances. Ruth Gipps was a woman struggling to be heard in a male-dominated musical world. Whatever the explanation, each work heard here, including a sumptuous new version of John Ireland's much-loved *Fantasy Sonata* for clarinet and strings, adds a distinctive and fascinating new voice to the genre of the British clarinet concerto. I'm indebted to the families of Ruth Gipps and Richard Walthew, Hamilton's publisher Schott and the John Ireland Trust for their support of this major undertaking, as well as to Michael Bryant for sharing his unsurpassed knowledge of the repertoire. Each work's reawakening is long overdue, and richly deserved.

This CD is dedicated to the memory of Richard H. Walthew's grandson, John Walthew, a passionate advocate of his grandfather's work and of the clarinet concerto's revival in particular. It is of huge regret that he was unable to hear the final result. Without his tireless efforts it would never have come about.

[www.robertplane.com](http://www.robertplane.com)



Robert Plane

## TRACK LISTING

- |    |   |                                  |       |
|----|---|----------------------------------|-------|
|    | <b>* CONCERTO FOR CLARINET &amp; ORCHESTRA Op.7</b> | IAIN HAMILTON                    |       |
| 1  | <i>i</i>  | Moderato                         | 10'10 |
| 2  | <i>ii</i>   | Adagio sereno                    | 9'09  |
| 3  | <i>iii</i>  | Allegro                          | 9'17  |
|    | <b>* CONCERTO FOR CLARINET</b>                      | RICHARD H. WALTREW               |       |
|    | <i>orchestrated by Alfie Pugh</i>                   |                                  |       |
| 4  | <i>i</i>  | Allegro non troppo e con bravura | 7'09  |
| 5  | <i>ii</i>   | Andante                          | 4'27  |
| 6  | <i>iii</i>  | Vivace                           | 5'09  |
|    | <b>* CLARINET CONCERTO IN G MINOR Op.9</b>          | RUTH GIPPS                       |       |
| 7  | <i>i</i>  | Allegro moderato                 | 9'58  |
| 8  | <i>ii</i>   | Lento ma con moto                | 5'13  |
| 9  | <i>iii</i>  | Vivace                           | 3'32  |
| 10 | <b>* FANTASY SONATA</b>                             | JOHN IRELAND                     | 13'33 |
|    | <i>orchestrated by Graham Parlett</i>               |                                  |       |
|    | * world premiere recording                          |                                  |       |

Total playing time: **77'43**

Produced and edited by Matthew Bennett  
 Engineered and mastered by Dave Rowell  
 Recorded on 11th to 13th June 2019 in City Halls, Glasgow, UK  
 Cover photograph of Robert Plane by Jake Morley  
 Image on reverse tray: Composer Richard H. Walthew's son, Richard Sydney Walthew (clarinet), performing at BBC Broadcasting House in March 1935  
 Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
 Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Rebecca Dixon

IAIN HAMILTON (1922–2000)

**CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND ORCHESTRA, Op.7 (1950)**

Born in Glasgow, Iain Hamilton remained loyal to his Scottish roots though he moved, aged seven, with his family to London in 1929. His father was an engineer's draftsman, and the young Hamilton from 1939 to 1946 himself became an apprentice engineer with the aircraft manufacturing company Handley Page, while devoting his free time to studying music. Hamilton himself claimed that his training in those years was crucial to his development as a composer since structural considerations, including design and proportion, became of prime importance to him.

In 1947 he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied piano under Harold Craxton and composition under William Alwyn. He soon took inspiration from further afield, most notably the works of Bartók and Stravinsky, as can be heard in his Clarinet Concerto composed in 1950, albeit those influences already fused in a unique style of Hamilton's own, aided by his remarkably effective and atmospheric orchestral writing.

Hamilton's immediately preceding opus was the *Three Nocturnes* for clarinet and piano, dedicated to the great English clarinetist Frederick Thurston who taught at the Royal College of Music. Yet it seems that for his clarinet works the young composer received most help from a fellow RAM student, John Davies (1918–2013). It was Davies, with Hamilton at the piano, who premiered the *Nocturnes* in a BBC broadcast in November 1950, and Davies was at hand to advise on matters of clarinet technique while Hamilton composed his concerto. In any case, both compositions won prestigious awards in 1951: the *Three Nocturnes* won the Edwin Evans Prize, and the concerto was awarded one of the Royal

Philharmonic Society's five composer prizes of that year, securing that work's premiere in London the following year on 23 April.

Alongside Bartók's evident influence, there is also a good deal of anguished lyricism in the Concerto apparently inspired by certain works of Walton (such as the Viola Concerto, the First Symphony and even *Belshazzar's Feast*), though one can hear how Hamilton often takes an idea and then enlarges or develops it his own way. The Concerto's beautiful central slow movement in particular surely persuaded the RPS jurors that Hamilton was a composer of great promise and deserving of their award.

The work begins with a low string pedal note, above which plays a subdued brass fanfare accompanied strikingly (literally) by the rattle of *col legno* strings (the players hitting the strings of their instruments with the wooden backs of their bows), followed by the violins playing a slow-drifting melody; much of the subsequent thematic material will be developed from this, so creating the concerto's sense of organic cohesion. A barked half-cadence from the orchestra introduces the soloist, revealed as a quicksilver, Puck-ish figure. The orchestra's acidulous interjections, and its first full *forte* entrance reinforces the Bartók-like character of this opening paragraph; but increasingly, Walton's influence becomes paramount as passages of plaintive melancholy alternate with more athletic episodes involving tightly sprung, jazzy rhythms. In the wake of one of those energetic episodes, the soloist ruminates on an apparently inconsequential idea – involving a theme (from 3'59) that descends by a couple of fourths before leaping up a ninth. This idea, developed from the opening violin theme, will reappear in different emotional guises in the following two movements. The first movement culminates in a transfixing moment of lucidity as the soloist appears airborne before the movement abruptly ends.

The second movement, although marked *Adagio sereno*, begins in uneasy calm, a sustained string harmony, already at variance with the deep bass pedal, soon curdled by a solo horn (perhaps inspired by the corruption of Blake's rose in Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*). However, with the soloist's entry the music turns to dreamy lyricism. The mood intensifies with a Waltonian modulation, crystallising in an impassioned melody – derived from the descending fourths theme of the previous movement – passed between the string sections, leading to a keening response from the soloist (track 2: 4'09) and an anguished climax involving the full orchestra. The music winds down and, after a brief episode of lamenting cellos, returns to the opening mood of troubled serenity, though with a sense of having grown through this journey, the strings and then soloist playing a more reflective version of the once-impassioned theme.

The *Allegro* finale starts as a grotesque dance, once again evoking the spirit of Bartók, but soon turns to good-natured clowning with the soloist's entry. A contrasting lyrical second theme becomes increasingly Waltonian, reaching a brief climax before the grotesque dance resumes. (Some of the fleet virtuosity by soloist and orchestra and the instrumental colours here recall Lutosławski's almost exactly contemporary Concerto for Orchestra, demonstrating how two young composers were coincidentally developing similar ideas from a common source of inspiration.) The dance suddenly exhausts itself, and themes from earlier in the Concerto are recalled in ruminative fashion by the soloist and sections of the orchestra. Then the dance-like music briefly returns, bringing the concerto to a lively end.

RICHARD H. WALTHER (1872–1951)

**CONCERTO FOR CLARINET** (1902) orch. ALFIE PUGH

Richard Walthew was just three weeks younger than Ralph Vaughan Williams, a fellow student at the Royal College of Music with whom Walthew became good friends in the 1890s. As Vaughan Williams fondly recalled more than fifty years later, "I owe you such a lot from those early days – you taught me so much (and not only about music; we discussed Browning, theology & all sorts of other strange subjects). Do you remember taking me to 'Carmen' & I being then an insufferable young prig went prepared to scoff but remained to pray – & that when you asked me to your home & we played piano duets (or rather you played & I followed after as best I could) – these are all fragrant memories for which I am grateful."

Born in London, Walthew studied at the Guildhall School of Music before winning an open scholarship in 1890 to the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition under Parry. Such was Parry's esteem of his pupil that when in 1893 he discovered that Walthew had made a setting of Browning's ballad 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', Parry withheld his own version though it was near completion, not presenting it for publication until some 12 years later.

Walthew had in the meantime written his charming Clarinet Concerto, which he left virtually completed but unorchestrated in 1902 (that task now being fulfilled by Alfie Pugh). The work follows the model of early nineteenth-century German concertos as established by Weber and Mendelssohn, modified through the example of more recent or contemporary composers such as Brahms and Richard Strauss as filtered through the work of respectively Parry and Elgar.

In form, the first movement follows the example of Mendelssohn's celebrated Violin Concerto by introducing the soloist almost immediately with simple orchestral

accompaniment, though the music's carefree character suggests Mozart reinterpreted by Strauss. As one might expect in this classically structured movement, a *cadenza* duly appears near its end; and after the orchestra's closing cadence, a solo bassoon – again like Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto – initiates a segue into the next movement.

That segue serves effectively as an introspective introduction, its wandering tonality and sometimes quite chromatic harmonies presenting a dramatic contrast to the first movement's neo-classical style. Thus set up, the soloist amusingly limbers up in the manner of a *coloratura contralto*, before launching into the *Andante* movement proper with an aria strongly reminiscent of Handel's 'Ombra mai fù', albeit with an Elgarian tinge (Elgar himself not being averse to writing mock-Handel – witness his *Wand of Youth Suite* No.1). Yet its effect is beautiful, noble and surprisingly touching.

Mendelssohn is again evoked by the finale's fanfare-like opening. Here, however, the soloist is given something more easy-going to perform, akin to an amiable amble in one of London's royal parks. Midway through the movement, a solo bassoon introduces a cheerful ditty that sounds both Edwardian and a precursor of the music comedies Vivian Ellis would write in the 1920s and '30s. It is ultimately with this ringing in our ears that the concerto finishes.

RUTH GIPPS (1921–1999)

#### **CLARINET CONCERTO IN G MINOR, Op.9 (1940)**

Ruth Gipps, like Walthew, had cordial relations with Vaughan Williams – indeed, according to her biographer Jill Halstead, Gipps claimed he was “the only altogether good person she ever met”. Prodigiously gifted from an early age, Gipps

gave her first piano concerto performance at the age of four, had her first piano piece published when she was eight, and entered the Royal College of Music in January 1937 aged 16 – a fallback option, in her eyes, since her ambition to study piano privately with Solomon had been thwarted by her parents' inability to afford his fees. There Gipps found herself just one of many talented pianists, and now in her mid-teens the allure of 'prodigy' had worn off – a bitter pill which she apparently never quite swallowed. However her budding abilities as a composer and growing mastery of her second instrument, the oboe (by which she eventually became second oboe to the City of Birmingham Orchestra), suggested alternative paths for her career. The year 1940, in which she composed her Clarinet Concerto, marked a crucial turning point: not only did she become Vaughan Williams's pupil, but she also became engaged to her future husband, Robert Baker, a fellow student and clarinetist, to whom she dedicated her new concerto.

The first movement starts almost conventionally with an orchestral introduction – very much in the style of her teacher – involving a theme with a characteristic upward octave leap played over a Baroque-style walking bass line. The soloist then enters in the lowest chalumeau register, but soon becomes quite skittish in character. Eventually the soloist introduces a second theme, again in the low register, with some humorous hesitations before the music then moves into what might be described as the development section. Yet such is the music's quasi-improvisatory quality that even when the theme with walking bass returns it is far from presenting a straightforward recapitulation, although the soloist gives the customary *cadenza* before the movement's end.

The second movement begins with an oboe solo, eventually joined by the clarinet soloist – a touchingly symbolic moment given that the oboe was Gipps's instrument. The sentiment of that moment is confirmed by the soothing strings

that now enter, playing a variant on the oboe's opening theme. A new theme is introduced by clarinet and orchestra by way of contrast, but it is the oboe and clarinet duetting on their own who have the final word.

The *Vivace* finale, effectively a jig (its bucolic character no doubt inspired by the supplementary classes Gipps took in folk dancing as part of her RCM training), ends the concerto on a buoyantly upbeat note.

JOHN IRELAND (1879–1962)

**FANTASY SONATA** (1943) orch. GRAHAM PARLETT

Ireland composed his *Fantasy Sonata*, originally for clarinet and piano, in the first six months of 1943. He was then living in the rural village of Little Sampford, Essex, at the home of his long-standing friend, the Rev. Paul Walde. Ireland had known Walde since 1904 when he had become organist and choirmaster of St Luke's Church, Chelsea (a post Ireland held for 22 happy years), Walde being then its curate, though retired by the 1940s.

Ireland's fondness for the clarinet was already evident in several of his earlier works, such as the melody he gives the instrument in the *Andante sostenuto* section of his overture *Satyricon*. His new work turned out to be one of his most exuberant and straightforwardly joyous pieces, even quite passionate at times. Ireland dedicated it to Frederick Thurston (who just a few years later would be the dedicatee of Hamilton's *Three Nocturnes*). A highly successful showpiece in its original form for clarinet and piano and regarded as possibly Ireland's finest work of chamber music, the Fantasy Sonata works most effectively with the piano part arranged for string orchestra, making its pastoral character the more evident.

Robert Plane's hugely varied career has seen concerto appearances in Europe, Asia and the USA, with performances of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto in Madrid with the City of London Sinfonia, Beijing with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and in the USA with the Virginia Symphony. He made his BBC Proms debut at the Royal Albert Hall in 2011 with Simon Holt's double concerto 'Centauromachy'. Exploring a wide range of repertoire and commissioning new works, highlights of past seasons have included Piers Hellowell's 'Agricolos' with the Ulster Orchestra and RTE Symphony Orchestra, Finzi with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Christian Jost with the Dortmunder Philharmoniker and Stanford with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Rob has tirelessly pursued a particular passion for British clarinet music in concert and on disc, his Gramophone Award-winning account of Finzi's Concerto and Gramophone Award-shortlisted Bax sonatas being just two of a large collection of recordings of works by the great English Romantics. *Gramophone* has hailed performances of 'ravishing lyricism and conviction by Robert Plane, who has surely now fully occupied the shoes of the late Thea King in his championship of British clarinet music.'

He has performed and recorded with the Gould Piano Trio for over 25 years, and their recording of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* to mark the composer's centenary was commended by *BBC Music Magazine* as the 'finest modern recording' of this epic masterpiece. He also appears on the Goulds' recorded cycles of Beethoven and Brahms trios and makes regular tours to the USA with them. They commissioned Huw Watkins to compose 'Four Fables' in 2018 in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival which they direct together in Northumberland.

## I BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Rob has explored the clarinet quintet repertoire with a number of the finest string quartets, opening BBC Radio 3's 'Brahms Experience' with a live broadcast from St. George's Bristol of the Brahms Quintet with the Skampa Quartet. He has given concerts in Germany and the USA with the Mandelring Quartet and at home in the UK with the Elias, Castalian, Maggini, Carducci, Tippett, Brodsky, Dante and Sacconi quartets. Rob has enjoyed a 25-year relationship with the Royal Over-Seas League since winning the competition's Gold Medal in 1992, highlights of which have included a recital tour of New Zealand and a gala performance of Bruch's *Double Concerto* with the Symphony Orchestra of Sri Lanka in Colombo as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

Always keen to take on a challenge, Rob gave his first performance of Boulez's 'Dialogue de l'ombre double' at the Belfast Sonorities Festival in 2018, a work he subsequently revived in Manchester's Stoller Hall in 2019. The discovery of a lost trio by Tibor Serly led to an eclectic disc of Hungarian repertoire for Champs Hill Records, 'Contrasts', praised by the *Guardian* as 'a little gem' on its release.

Rob is principal clarinet of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and has held the same position with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Royal Northern Sinfonia. He was appointed Head of Woodwind Performance at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama from September 2020.

Formed in 1935 and based at Glasgow's City Halls since 2006, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's huge range of repertoire has developed under its four most recent Chief Conductors: Osmo Vänskä, Ilan Volkov, Donald Runnicles and, since 2016, Thomas Dausgaard. The orchestra began its life as a small studio ensemble, playing a wide range of music from light classics to symphonic works for the BBC's radio networks. It was when the Edinburgh International Festival was established in 1947 that the orchestra's occasional ventures outside the studio gained a higher profile. Having grown to symphonic size, and highly trained by its founding conductor, Ian Whyte, the orchestra was invited by the Festival to perform with artists of the stature of Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin and Artur Schnabel. It was also given the opportunity to work with composers like Britten, Shostakovich and Bloch, and to this day new music forms a major part of its repertoire. These days it performs to audiences in venues across Scotland, and has a busy schedule of concerts and broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC television and online. Abroad, the orchestra has appeared in many of the great musical centres of Europe, and has toured the USA, South America, China, India and Japan.

The BBC SSO is a recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award and four Gramophone Awards.

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MARTYN BRABBINS, conductor

Martyn Brabbins is Music Director of the English National Opera, and has conducted at La Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper and in Lyon, Frankfurt and Antwerp. He is a regular guest of top international orchestras such as the Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw, Tokyo Metropolitan and Deutsche Sinfonieorchester Berlin. He studied with Ilya Musin in St Petersburg, won the Leeds Conducting Competition in 1988, and became Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 1994–2005. He was Principal Guest of Antwerp Symphony 2009–2015 and Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic 2012–2016. He has conducted hundreds of world premieres and has recorded over 120 CDs.



Photograph by Ben Ealovega

Robert Plane (clarinet) and Martyn Brabbins (conductor) in recording sessions for this album with members of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra at City Halls, Glasgow, June 2019

