

THE BARBER OF NEVILLE



Howard Blake
Wind Concertos

Academy of St Martin in the Fields
Sir Neville Marriner

FLUTE CONCERTO op. 493a (1996)
Concerto for flute and string orchestra

1. Allegro cantando 3. 48
2. Scherzo con Spirito 3. 41
3. Andante espressivo 2. 64
4. Marcia Grazioso 6. 10

Soloist: Jaime Martin
Premiere recording

The first movement begins with a long-drawn-out melody which the flute 'sings' and then elaborates expressively. The scherzo is a rapid, syncopated movement with a 'floating' middle section, the Andante is a slow theme and variation culminating in a short cadenza which leads to the fourth movement, a mischievous 'whistling' march. However, the bustle and gaiety of this lively movement is interrupted by a second cadenza from which re-emerges a shimmering version of the theme from the first movement that accelerates into a short, energetic Coda.

CLARINET CONCERTO op. 329a (1984/2010)
Concerto for clarinet and chamber orchestra
1 Flute, 1 Oboe, 1 Cor Anglais, 2 Horns in F, 2 Bassoons, Solo Clarinet and string orchestra

5. Invocation: Recitativo - Moderato, molto deciso 7. 51
6. Ceremony: Recitativo - Lento Serioso 7. 12
7. Round Dance: Vivace 6. 28

Soloist: Andrew Marriner
Premiere recording in this new edition

The concerto was originally commissioned from the composer by clarinettist Dame Thea King and the first performance given by her in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in May 1985 with the English Chamber Orchestra. A recording was made for Hyperion Records supervised by Ted Perry. However, the publishing rights at that time were administered

by Faber Music who insisted that the composer rewrite some of the passage-work in the first movement. A second performance was scheduled in Valencia a short while afterwards and a revised clarinet part was prepared for performance. Unfortunately this part was not given to Dame Thea by Faber Music until the very last moment, allowing her no time to study it. She was upset and put the work aside, never to perform it again. In 2010 the composer was persuaded to re-examine the additions he had once made and this edition, with the Opus number 329a, re-instates them. A nine-bar recitative leads to the first movement, 'Invocation', which develops a mysterious, syncopated theme in G minor. A horn note dies away to a second recitative which leads to the slow movement, 'Ceremony', a hushed cantilena using the clarinet's capacity for sustained lyricism. The third movement uses its capacity for rapid passagework in the form of a restless but exuberant 'Round Dance'.

BASSOON CONCERTO op. 607 (1971/2009)
Concerto for bassoon and string orchestra

8. Moderato 6. 10
9. Larghetto 2. 50
10. Presto 3. 35

Soloist: Gustavo Nunez
Premiere recording

The bassoon has an innate ability to jump large intervals within its register and the first movement makes use of this in a varied and often emotional dialogue with the orchestra. The slow movement seems somewhat slender, following a simple line against antiphonal pizzicati figures, but the pattern curiously works its way to a moving climax before dwindling to nothing under a long-held solo note. The presto is rumbustious, virtuosic and slightly jazzy but a coda emerges with poignant shades of both first and second movements before dancing gaily to its close.

SERENADE FOR WIND OCTET op. 419 (1990)
2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 horns, 2 bassoons

11. Grazioso con moto 6. 30
12. Serioso come una marcia lente 4. 30
13. Molto vivace, capriccioso 3. 40

Ensemble from players of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.
Premiere recording

The wind octet is a sound for the open air and for performance on warm summer evenings in elegant squares of European cities. The first movement is gracious, but with plenty of energy, a profusion of melody and rhythm and a sense of life bubbling over. Beginning with a poignant oboe solo, the second movement is sad and serious, rather like a slow march. The third movement is capricious, light and breathless, proceeding with speed and high spirits. The work is not a serenade to any one person, but to all who love life, both happy and sad.

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