

Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006)

Sonatina op. 41 (1962)

- 1 Cantilena 2.29
- 2 Chaconne 2.42
- 3 Rondo 1.57

Henning Christiansen (1932-2008)

It is Spring op. 56 (1970)

- 4 Allegretto 5.21
- 5 Andante 1.33

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984)

Sonatina for recorder and
harpichord (1983)

- 6 Allegro 2.27
- 7 Tempo di menuetto 2.46
- 8 Adagio 2.01
- 9 Allegro vivace 2.01

Vagn Holmboe (1909-1996)

Sonata op. 145 (1980)

- 10 Allegro spianato 2.46
- 11 Andante 3.39
- 12 Allegro scherzando 4.26

OUR Recordings

www.ourrecordings.com

Daniel Kidane (b.1986)

13 Tourbillon (2014) 10.53

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Alpine Suite (1955)

- 14 Arrival at Zermatt 0.49
- 15 Swiss Clock (Romance) . . 1.13
- 16 Nursery Slopes 1.20
- 17 Alpine Scene 0.59
- 18 Moto Perpetuo:
Down the Piste 1.07
- 19 Farewell to Zermatt 1.21

Axel Borup-Jørgensen (1924-2012)

20 Fantasia op. 75 (1988) . . 11.52

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984)

21 An Encore
for Michala (1983) 1.58

Total 66.27

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Mahan Esfahani
Harpichord

1970
1980
1988

UK DK

1962
1983
2014
1983

Michala Petri
Recorder



About this album...
by Joshua Cheek

Nothing in life falls precisely into neat boxes, despite our best efforts to make things “fit”. Consider the two featured instruments on this recording. First, the recorder, which despite its relatively simple design, enjoyed near-universal popularity from the Middle Ages to the Baroque, played by prince and pauper alike. Then, there is the harpsichord, a marvel of engineering for its time; an extraordinary canvas upon which generations of composers wrote tone poems and toccatas, crafting contrapuntal mazes and virtuoso displays that still challenge the most skillful interpreter. But times and tastes change, and eventually, these quintessential representatives of the musical arts (along with most of their repertoire) were packed away, together with the powdered wigs and knee breeches for a long slumber during the 19th century.

By the dawn of the 20th century, the revival of interest in early music heralded a new golden age for this dynamic duo; as early as 1901 Dr. Joseph Cox Bridge, following upon his extensive research, composed the first 20th century work for the recorder. Interest in the harpsichord soon followed and thanks to the tireless efforts of Wanda Landowska and her *Pleyel Grand Modèle de Concert* - a veritable dreadnought of manuals, pedals and stops - Europe’s greatest composers were soon supplying a steady stream of masterworks for this “new-old” musical wonder.

The idea for this album and its unusual programme was both personal and refreshingly spontaneous: “We decided to have Danish and English as our frame, since Michala is a Dane and Mahan lives in UK!” explains producer Lars Hannibal. The duo famously gave their first public performance at the 13th international Pharos Chamber Music Festival on the island of Cyprus. The Festival took place during the height of the Greek economic crisis, and with the sudden cutting of bank funds, not everyone could manage to fulfil their pledges of support. Michala and Mahan were among the many musicians who waived their performance fees so the Festival could go on. The English music critic Norman Lebrecht was present that night and excitedly posted to his blog, “Slipped Disc”:

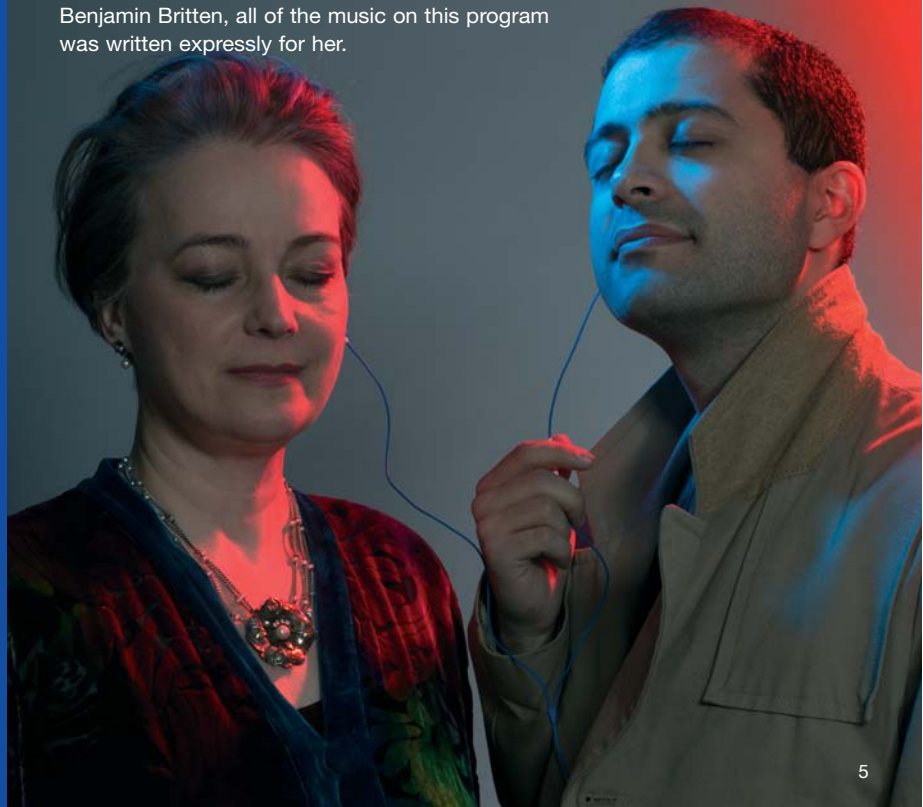
“A match made in heaven”

“The symbiosis was remarkable. When they spoke to the audience between pieces, they finished each other’s sentences. When they played, each anticipated the other’s breath. There was not a stale note all night. The best matches are made in heaven. This one was born of adversity. By the night’s end, plans were taking shape. A legend made in Cyprus will be heard around the world. Banks may crash. The music plays on.”

The fruitful collaboration of these two artists, distinguished for their consummate mastery of the entire range of repertoire for their chosen instruments, provided the additional inspiration to focus on 20th century and contemporary works from their respective homes.

When dealing with an artist such as Michala Petri, one is constantly amazed by her passionate commitment to her craft; she is a true visionary. Her virtuosity has enchanted listeners around the world since she was in her teens, whilst her devotion to building the recorder’s concerto repertoire has been the

inspiration for dozens of composers. Indeed, with the exception of Sonatina by Malcolm Arnold, and the little suite by Benjamin Britten, all of the music on this program was written expressly for her.



Malcolm Arnold 1921-2006

UK

1962



SONATINA
For Recorder and Piano

Duration: 7 1/2 minutes

MALCOLM ARNOLD
Op. 41.

I
(CANTILENA)

Placevoice ♩ = 96

RECORDER
(Flute or Oboe)

PIANO

B

"I met Arnold for the first time after he had come to a concert with his friend Anthony Day. The concert was with my mother, Hanne, and brother, David, and not far from their home in Norfolk. I was very impressed to know that they were in the audience, since I of course knew Malcolm Arnold's name. I immediately followed my habit of asking a composer to write something for me, and to my surprise, he agreed!

As it turned out, Sir Malcolm had largely given up composing by that time. He wrote a concerto for me, and later a solo piece (Fantasy for Recorder, Op. 127 (1987)), and some years later, a piece for recorder and string quartet (Fantasy for Recorder and String Quartet, Op. 140 (1990)), premiered at Weil Recital Hall during Carnegie Hall's 100th Anniversary."

The sonata was written long before Michala met the composer, but he suggested that she might play it with harpsichord accompaniment on her concerts with her mother.

Henning Christiansen 1932-2008

DK

1970



it is spring -
allegretto
mf

Det er forår -
mf

Es ist Frühling -
op. 56

Soprano
Cemb.

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano, Cembalo (Cemb.), and another voice part. The score is divided into three sections: "it is spring", "Det er forår", and "Es ist Frühling". The tempo is marked "allegretto" and the dynamics range from "mf" to "p". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Henning Christiansen was a composer, artist and a central figure of the Danish branch of the Fluxus movement. He worked with artists such as Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell as well as with his wife Ursula Reuter Christiansen. Following studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music, Copenhagen, he attended the Darmstadt Summer School in 1962, where he became involved with the Fluxus movement and later, the radical Danish art movement Ex School.

Despite distinguished avant garde credentials and membership in one of the central art movements of the second-half of the 20th century, Christiansen's prolific output remains difficult to hear given the scant documentation available, few recordings and the fact that his works are very rarely performed to this day. Henning Christiansen's work can be beautiful, unsettling, discreet, random, charming and humorous.

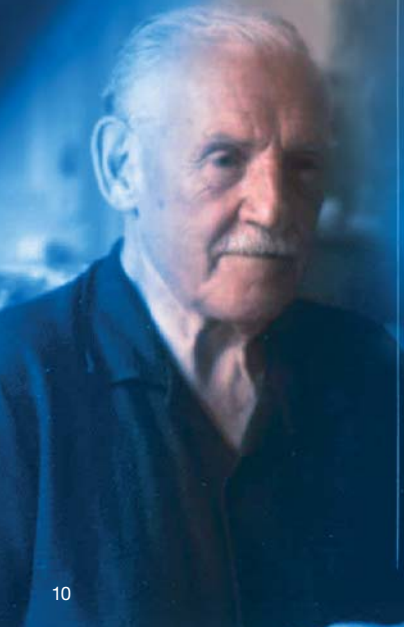
Christiansen was also a close friend of the Petri family. Michala recalls: *"Henning Christiansen was a wonderful and very unique man, only doing what he thought was right, and wanting to be a complete and independent human being. He was quietly humorous and deeply serious at the same time. He was a friend of my parents, Hanne Petri and violinist Kanny Sambleben, who premiered some of his works for piano and violin, and when I was six, he composed the first piece I ever received from a composer, three little pieces called, "To Play for a Child - for recorder and piano". "It is Spring" is a typical title; making you see the obvious, as if it is special and new, and always making you feel the present moment."*

At the end of the piece Henning writes:
*"Longing for spring. The weather is grey and gloomy.
But a girl is standing, playing the sopranino now."*

Gordon Jacob 1895-1984

UK

1983



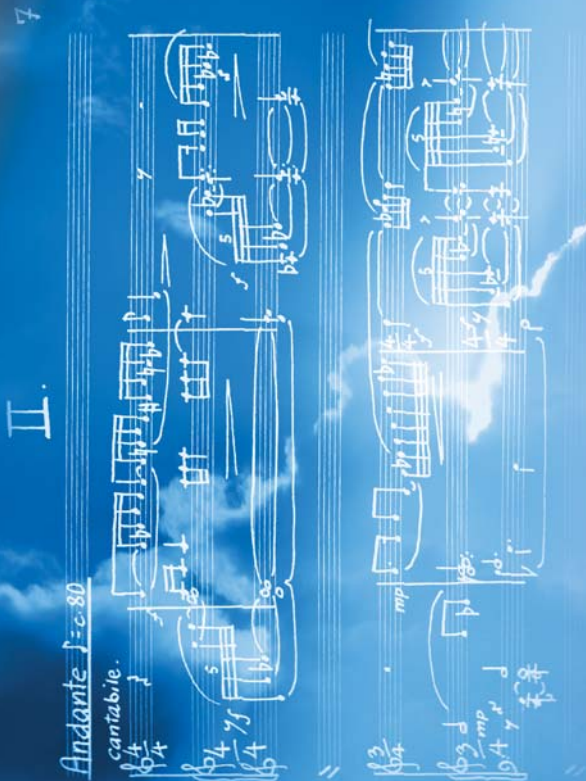
Gordon Jacob had a special affinity for wind instruments. Born in the same generation of British composers as Vaughan-Williams, Ireland, Howells and Bax, Gordon Jacob soon departed from the ripe romanticism of his teacher, Charles Villiers Stanford and embraced a simpler, more direct musical language, inspired in part by Baroque and Classical models but with an accessible, modernist perspective. Jacob's first work for recorder was the Suite for Recorder and Strings, written on commission from Carl Dolmetsch. The work was an immediate success with audiences and performers alike and Jacob was soon established as one of the première composers for the instrument. It was in preparation for a performance of this suite that Michala Petri first met Jacob:

"I went to visit him in Saffron Walden, a beautiful little town where he lived with his wife, Margaret. He was very old at that time, and was an incredibly friendly man, with a very positive, quiet and reassuring nature. I went mainly to get his opinion of how I played his Suite, which I was to record with Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. After playing him the Suite I asked him whether he could possibly write something for me to play with harpsichord. Some time later, the original hand written manuscript for the Sonata, written in shaky but careful handwriting, came in the mail. I still have the original score at home. Also, he sent the little Encore (also known as "Duetтино"), as he thought it was special that I could sing and play at the same time."

Vagn Holmboe 1909-1996

DK

1980



Vagn Holmboe, Gordon Jacob's Danish near-contemporary, was an enormously prolific composer, with almost 400 works to his credit. Holmboe began his compositional career in earnest following his entrance examination to the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, when the national composer Carl Nielsen looked through some of his compositions and encouraged him to continue. During his long and productive career, Holmboe composed 13 symphonies, 21 string quartets and a large number of concertos including a series of chamber concertos for virtually every orchestral instrument, including a lovely and atmospheric one for recorder, written especially for Michala when she was just 17. Despite being highly regarded in his native Denmark, Holmboe suffered the same fate as many fine mid-century composers, as his traditionally constructed, tonal music was eclipsed by the novelty of the avant garde. Happily, his music is currently experiencing a revival.

Michala says of the origins of the Sonata: *"Holmboe composed this for my mother Hanne and me after having written the concerto and a trio for us to play with my brother David on cello. Since it was the third work he wrote for the recorder he knew the instrument and the effects possible, and the nature of the different recorders. Later he also wrote the wonderful "Canto é Danza" on a Spanish song for Lars Hannibal and me, and some solo works.*

I liked Vagn and his Romanian wife Meta very much, and am still close friends with their son Thor. I was invited to their home quite a few times over the years, when they invited other artistic people, painters and authors. Those evenings made a great impression on me, being very young, and I still have vivid memories of them."

Daniel Kidane b. 1986

UK

2014



Daniel Kidane is the youngest composer on this CD. With an eclectic taste spanning everything from Olivier Messiaen and Bach to Johnny Cash and Pantera, Kidane stands in the forefront of England's vital New Music scene.

Kidane first received composition lessons at the Royal College of Music Junior Department where he studied with Avril Anderson.

He went on to study at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, receiving lessons in composition from Professor Sergey Slonimsky. He has toured with the Manchester Camerata Orchestra, conducting his harpsichord concerto "Feuersturm", written for Mahan Esfahani. Other performances include premieres of his works by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's 10/10 Ensemble and at the Adelaide International Cello Festival 2011, where he was invited as guest composer. "Tourbillon" was commissioned by Elisabet Selin, who specifically requested "a very exciting and demanding piece" to enlarge the repertoire.

The composer writes:

"I have long been fascinated by watches and the intricacies of their movements. In horology, a tourbillon (French for whirlwind) is an addition to the mechanics of a watch escapement, the aim of which is to counter the effects of gravity. With this idea in mind I began to craft an intricate and virtuosic piece. Throughout Tourbillon the two instruments act as one, avoiding the format of one leading the other. Both instruments take on the idea of breaking away from gravity but at the same time are restrained by moments of tranquillity."

Benjamin Britten 1913-1976

UK

1955



5. Moto perpetuo: Down the Piste

Confidently, as fast as possible (♩ = 120)

Descant I

Descant II

Treblic

Musical notation for 'Moto perpetuo: Down the Piste'. The notation is arranged in three systems, each with three staves. The first system includes a treble clef and a tempo marking. The notation is overlaid on a background of a blue sky with white clouds.

Of all the composers featured on this recital, **Benjamin Britten** is the odd man out, being the only one who did NOT compose a work specifically for Michala Petri. Britten was a life-long devotee of the instrument however, featuring it in his opera “Noye’s Fludde” (1957) and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (1960). He was also a fairly good player, himself, and served as president for the *British Society of Recorder Players* from 1958 to 1976. His initial interest in the recorder came through his friend and collaborator Imogen Holst, who was daughter of the composer Gustav Holst.

The Alpine Suite is a delightful pièce d’occasion, written while on a skiing holiday in Zermatt, Switzerland with Peter Pears and the artist Mary Potter. As fate would have it, Ms. Potter fell and injured her ankle. To pass the time while she convalesced, Britten dashed off this little suite (originally for a trio of recorders, here arranged by Michala and Mahan for recorder and harpsichord) for performance during the evening.



In contrast to the more traditional orientation of Jacob, Holmboe and Arnold, Danish composer **Axel Borup-Jørgensen** was solidly rooted in the avant garde. Beginning his musical ascent with a pilgrimage to Darmstadt, the Mecca of Musical Modernity, Borup-Jørgensen would continue to craft and carve and pare down his exquisitely wrought tonal language. “Silence is also music” he was fond of saying. Denmark is not a large country, so it was natural that the composer would eventually meet the young recorder virtuoso. Michala became much more than a family friend; the composer’s daughter, Elisabet Selin, would be her only private student and Borup-Jørgensen would compose a number of works for them to perform (a recording of the complete recorder works has been released on OUR Recordings featuring Michala Petri, Elisabet Selin, Gert Mortensen, percussion, and Ingrid Myrhøj, harpsichord).

“Axel was like a father to me, and I knew him since I was 17 years old. As always, when composers should write for me we met, and I showed him the various sizes of recorders and different techniques, and from that on we developed a close friendship which lasted all his life. I always, since the beginning, liked his music very much and found that it had a very special balance. Through his music I could feel the way Axel was living and thinking: very modestly and humble, but with a strong inner conviction of what was right. I think that Axel, like many great composers, was much ahead of his time. He always had a very special language, completely his own. People today are much more ready to understand this music than they were 40 years ago, and many young people today find his music completely natural.”

Mahan Esfahani

UK

Harpichord



Michala Petri

DK

Recorder



Michala Petri had her debut at age 5. She started her formal education at age 11 at “Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Theater” in Hannover, Germany with Professor Ferdinand Conrad. Since then she has performed at major festivals and in concert halls around the world, as soloist with leading chamber- and symphony orchestras. Amongst the musicians she has worked with are Gidon Kremer, Joshua Bell, James Galway, Keith Jarrett, Christopher Hogwood, and Claudio Abbado. Since 1992 Michala Petri has formed a duo with Danish guitarist and lute player Lars Hannibal, with whom she also performs worldwide. In 2013 she also formed a duo with harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani. Their first release was “*Corelli – La Follia*” in autumn 2014.

Michala Petri’s repertoire spans from early baroque to contemporary music, and her vivid interest in expanding the expressive possibilities of her instrument has made her an inspiration for many of today’s composers. She premiered more than 150 works.

For 30 years she was under contract with the international recording companies Philips/Polygram and RCA/BMG, and in 2006 she formed together with Lars Hannibal their own company, OUR Recordings, in order to have full artistic freedom. Her many recordings have received international nominations and awards, amongst others 4 Grammy nominations and 3 ECHO KLASSIK AWARDS. A series of recordings with contemporary recorder concertos from various countries has been started with the Grammy nominated *Chinese Recorder Concertos* and *English Recorder Concertos*. They will be followed by *Danish Recorder Concertos* and *German Recorder Concertos* in 2015 and *American Recorder Concertos* in 2016.

Michala Petri has received many of her country’s highest civilian honours including the prestigious Léonie Sonning Music Prize in 2000, and was awarded the 1. rank of Knight of Dannebrog in 2011. In September 2012 Michala Petri was appointed Honorary Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in Copenhagen.

www.michalapetri.com

Michala Petri

DK

Recorder

A close-up portrait of Mahan Esfahani, a young man with dark hair, looking slightly to the right. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong red glow on the right side of his face and a blue glow on the left. He is wearing a light-colored shirt.

Mahan Esfahani

UK

Harpichord

Mahan Esfahani was born in Tehran in 1984 and first was exposed to the piano by his father before exploring a teenaged interest in the harpsichord.

After studies in musicology at Stanford University and private studies with Peter Watchorn in Boston, Mahan completed his training with Zuzana Ruzicková in Prague. Since making his debut in London in 2009 and a stint as the first harpsichordist to be BBC New Generation Artist (2008-2010), he has enjoyed a career as a recitalist and concerto soloist in such halls as Zurich's Tonhalle, Vienna's Konzerthaus, the Cologne Philharmonie, Tokyo's Sumida Symphony Hall, New York's Frick Collection, Vancouver's Chan Centre, the Library of Congress in Washington, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, and Wigmore Hall, where he is a regular guest. He played the first harpsichord recital in the history of the Proms, and returned to the Proms with his orchestration of Bach's "Art of Fugue" for the Academy of Ancient Music, which was selected as the "Top Ten of Classical Music" for 2012 in *The Observer*.

A frequent commentator on radio and television and a contributor to various magazines and publications, he works to take the harpsichord beyond the realm of early music into mainstream halls and series. A reflection of this, Mahan was shortlisted in the instrumentalist category at the 2014 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards and was nominated Gramophone "Artist of the Year". Upcoming highlights include appearances in Munich's Bell'Arte Festival, Schloss Elmau, the Leipzig Bach-Festspiele, Bratislava Days of Early Music, and the Barbican in London. Regular collaborators include mandolin virtuoso Avi Avital and Michala Petri. December 2014 Mahan Esfahani was appointed harpsichord professor at Guildhall School.

A disc of C.P.E. Bach's Württemberg Sonatas for Hyperion won a Diapason d'Or, was BBC Music Magazine "Record of the Month", and won the 2014 Gramophone Award for Best Baroque Instrumental Album, while a two-disc set of the complete suites by Rameau received 5 Stars in Diapason. In 2014 Mahan Esfahani signed as an Exclusive Artist with Deutsche Grammophon; his first disc, combining modern and period works, is due to be released in the Spring of 2015.

www.mahanesfahani.com



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OUR Recordings

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