



Bach & Saxton organ works

Jonathan Clinch

PROGRAMME

1. **Bach:** "Dorian" Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 538 – Toccata 5'32
2. **Robert Saxton:** Chorale Prelude, *In memoriam Oliver Knussen* (2019)* 3'09
3. **Bach:** Chorale Prelude, *O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig* (Das Orgelbüchlein), BWV 618 4'02
4. **Robert Saxton:** Chorale Prelude, *Wo Gott zum Haus nicht gibt sein Gunst* (2014)* 2'59
5. **Bach:** Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582 14'07
6. **Robert Saxton:** Tombeau for H.B. (2022)* 3'19
7. **Robert Saxton:** Passacaglia on the name John McCabe (2015)* 5'49
8. **Bach:** Chorale Prelude, *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* (Das Orgelbüchlein), BWV 614 3'41
9. **Robert Saxton:** Berceuse for a baby, on the name Ezra Clinch (2020)* 2'26
10. **Bach:** "Dorian" Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 538 – Fugue 9'07

*Premiere recording. Publishers: Tracks 2, 6, 7, 9, UYMP; 4, Peters Edition. Recital recorded 'as live', May 2022. The organ of the Magnuskerk (Anloo, Holland) by Radeker and Garrels (1717-1719), sampled by PROSPECTUM. (see www.prospectum.com). Recorded using Hauptwerk VII software.

INTRODUCTION - A dialogue between two composers

What does a composer really mean when they say they were inspired by Bach? And what creative avenues does this sort of gesture across the centuries open up for a performer?

For several years now I've been interested in the music of the British composer Robert Saxton, Professor Emeritus of Oxford University. I was lucky enough to be taught by Robert as an undergraduate and in recent years I've taken to inviting him to recitals in which I include his music. This began a process of discussion about the interpretation of his scores. I invited Robert to write more organ music and this began a formal collaboration at the Royal Academy of Music, London. This recording covers all of his current organ works, although more is planned and the earlier 'Music for St Catharine' is being revised by the composer.

During the COVID lockdowns I began to build a digital instrument using Hauptwerk software, which allows sampled historic pipe organs to be played through a midi console. This home instrument enabled Robert and I to collaborate across the internet as I shared recorded sound files for his feedback. Initial questions revolved around what sort of organ was best for Robert's music. Using this digital technology, we were able to explore the creative possibilities of instruments around the world from many different periods. After an extensive search, we selected the organ of the Magnuskerk (Anloo, NL), built between 1717 and 1719 by Johannes Radeker and Rudolph Garrels, two co-workers of Arp Schnitger, sampled by PROSPECTUM. The software allowed us to make adjustment to the acoustic too, in order to create the ideal acoustic space for the music.

From our discussions, it was increasingly clear that Robert's concept of the instrument was based on his childhood memories: 'as a schoolboy, I had listened to, and been profoundly affected by, Helmut Walcha's recordings of JS Bach'. Partly, this was aesthetic, and he would refer to the brilliance and clarity from instruments by builders such as Arp Schnitger, but there was also an interest in the interpretational possibilities that might be discovered using historic instruments. As we worked in detail on the specific temperaments, pitch, registrations, tempos and articulation etc., a much deeper relationship between Bach and Saxton's music emerged. We discussed many of the technical considerations of the generation that grew up with historically informed performance and it was through

discussions of Jacques van Oortmerssen's performances and writings that we began to experiment with the 'Bachian' possibilities in Saxton's music. The use of early fingering as an approach to articulation in modern music was particularly important because many of the textures and motifs seemed to have their origins in the memory of Bach.

The recital programme here was constructed to demonstrate these relationships. Initially this was based on genres - hence choral preludes and passacaglias, but it was then expanded to pair works that had a sort of symbiotic relationship. Through these pairings and the use of similar tonal areas, registrations and approaches to articulation and shaping, I hope to demonstrate the fruitfulness of pairing these composers. The semi-quaver figuration that provides the *moto perpetuo* of Bach's 'Dorian' Toccata falls over into *In memoriam Oliver Knussen*, and the sighing gestures that form the basis of *O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig* reappear in Saxton's *Wo Gott zum Haus nicht gibt sein Gunst*. Bach's Passacaglia has been a central influence on Saxton and this has been paired with two of his own memorial works, the *Passacaglia* for John McCabe and the *Tombeau for H.B.* (Harrison Birtwistle). Bach's *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* has been included as another nod to the Orgelbüchlein Project which commissioned *Wo Gott*, but also to highlight the shared stasis of this and the *Tombeau*. The sense of dance is never far away in Bach or Saxton's music and the Berceuse, written on the birth of my son, presents another facet of this. The programme ends with the 'Dorian' Fugue, providing a grand display of the counterpoint that inspires so much of Saxton's music and a sense of tonal closure to the overall recital.

Although the performance of Saxton was a starting point for this research, through this creative process, ideas have gone back and forth. Ultimately, preparing the Saxton has changed the manner in which I've played the Bach as much as the Bach has changed the way I play the Saxton. For the listener, I hope that this demonstrates the ways in which this 'new' music relates to the past, but also how 'new' Bach's music can appear. As a method of research, I hope this album demonstrates some of the collaborative possibilities of using digital instruments.

Jonathan Clinch
Royal Academy of Music
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Photograph by Rachel Goodhand, 2022

Jonathan Clinch (b.1984) is an organist and academic specialising in British music and culture. He received his early musical education at the *alma mater* of Frederick Delius, Bradford Grammar School, and as organ scholar at Blackburn Cathedral. He subsequently read music at Keble College, Oxford, where he was also organ scholar, studying under Nicolas Kynaston, Colm Carey and David Sanger. Upon graduating he was appointed Assistant Organist at Perth Cathedral, Western Australia, where he also broadcast in the Perth International Festival and taught students at the University of Western Australia. As a postgraduate student, he studied with Dame Gillian Weir at Durham University, graduating with distinction in his performance masters degree. He subsequently completed his PhD in Historical Musicology and Analysis on the music of Herbert Howells under the supervision of Professor Jeremy Dibble. Postdoctoral posts have included Frank Bridge Research Fellow at the Royal College of Music and OCVE Research Associate at Cambridge University. In 2018 he was appointed a full-time Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music, London. Recent publications have included a completion of Herbert Howells' Cello Concerto which has been recorded by cellists Alice Neary (Dutton/RSNO/Ronald Corp) and Guy Johnston (King's College, Cambridge/Britten Sinfonia/Christopher Seaman). His edited volume of previously unknown piano works by Howells was published by Novello in December 2020 and awarded 'New Publication of the Year' in the Presto Music Awards 2021.

www.jclinch.com



Photograph by Katie Vandyck, 2022

Robert Saxton was born in London in 1953 and started composing at the age of six. Guidance in early years from Benjamin Britten and lessons with Elisabeth Lutyens was followed by periods of study at both Cambridge (undergraduate) and Oxford (postgraduate) Universities with Robin Holloway and Robert Sherlaw Johnson respectively, and also with Luciano Berio. He won the Gaudeamus International Composers Prize in Holland at the age of twenty-one. In 1986 he was awarded the Fulbright Arts Fellowship to the USA, where he was in residence at Princeton. He became a DMus (Oxon) in 1992 and was elected an Hon. Fellow of St Catharine's College, Cambridge in 2015.

He has written works for the BBC (TV, Proms and Radio), LSO, LPO, ECO, London Sinfonietta, Nash Ensemble, Northern Sinfonia and David Blake (conductor), Antara, Arditti and Chilingirian String Quartets, St Paul Chamber Orchestra (USA), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival/Opera North, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, City of London, Three Choirs and Lichfield festivals, Stephen Darlington and the choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, the choir of Merton College Oxford, Susan Milan, Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett, Simon Desbruslais, Clare Hammond. Edward Wickham and The Clerks' Group, Teresa Cahill, Leon Fleisher, Tasmin Little, Steven Isserlis, Mstislav Rostropovich, John Wallace and the Raphael Wallfisch and John York duo.

He was Professor of Composition at Oxford University and tutorial fellow in music at Worcester College from 1999 until his retirement in 2021. He has been Composer-in Association at the Purcell School for Young Musicians since 2013 and was appointed Hon Research Fellow at the Royal Academy of Music in 2021. His music from 1972 until 1998 was published by Chester/Music Sales and, since then, by the University of York Music Press and Ricordi (Berlin). Recordings have appeared on the Sony Classical, Hyperion, Metier, EMI, NMC, Divine Art and Signum labels.

Recent works include the opera *The Wandering Jew*; a song cycle for baritone Roderick Williams, *Time and the Seasons* for the Oxford Lieder Festival in 2013; *Hortus Musicae* books 1 and 2, a piano cycle for pianist Clare Hammond; *The Resurrection of the Soldiers*, commissioned jointly by George Vass for the 2016 Presteigne Festival and the English Symphony Orchestra and Kenneth Woods; *Shakespeare Scenes*, commissioned by the Orchestra of the Swan and trumpeter Simon Desbruslais; his fourth string quartet, for the Kreutzer Quartet; *Suite* for violinist Madeleine Mitchell and pianist Clare Hammond; *A Hymn to the Thames* for oboist James Turnbull and the St Paul's Sinfonia; and *Fantasy Pieces* for the Fidelio Trio. Jonathan Clinch premiered *Tombeau for H.B.* for organ in autumn 2022 and has commissioned a major organ cycle as part of a project with the Royal Academy of Music; the English Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kenneth Woods will premiere *Scenes from the Epic of Gilgamesh* in Oxford in March 2023.

Recent recordings include a CD of piano music on Toccata Classics, *Shakespeare Scenes* on Signum, and a portrait CD on Metier released in September 2022.

Robert Saxton is married to the soprano Teresa Cahill.

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