

solo!

Harmonic Monologues



Nick Shipman

Harmonic Monologues with Nick Shipman

Gavin Bryars

Three Elegies

for solo clarinet with multi-track clarinets

Paul Harvey

Three Etudes on themes of Gershwin

for solo clarinet

Graham Fitkin

Switching

for solo clarinet with multi-track clarinets

interval

Igor Stravinsky

Three Pieces

for solo clarinet with original animation

Joan Tower

Wings *for solo clarinet*

Artie Shaw

Jazz Etudes (selection) *for solo clarinet*

Steve Reich

New York Counterpoint

for solo clarinet with multi-track clarinets

The programme for 'Harmonic Monologues' was developed with the idea of taking the clarinet out on the road, a one-man clarinet show as it were. There is a wonderful and varied repertoire of works for solo clarinet and with the advantage of modern technology there is an even greater range of possibilities.

The idea began with New York Counterpoint, Steve Reich's iconic, innovative and highly original work for ten pre-recorded clarinet and bass clarinet lines with a solo clarinet part to be performed live. The challenge was to find enough other works for solo clarinet that would both compliment New York Counterpoint and add their own worthy contribution to the overall programme. After a great deal of thought and many revisions the current line-up of pieces achieves that goal. The other main large scale work is Three Elegies by the British composer Gavin Bryars. Like New York Counterpoint it has a number of pre-recorded clarinet lines, eight in total, but the score calls for basset horns (or alto clarinets), bass clarinets and a contra bass clarinet in addition to the B flat clarinets. This backdrop provides an almost orchestral, sometimes organ-like, rich texture over which the live solo clarinet spins a beautiful melodic line. The opening has a haunting, introverted character which slowly unfurls into sublimely uplifting, highly melodic music which returns in the final section to a more sombre, yet astonishingly beautiful epilogue. Bryars uses the whole range of clarinet timbres to brilliant effect. Paul Harvey combines some of Gershwin's best known melodies with complete mastery in his Three Etudes on Themes of Gershwin. Written very much in his own style, he takes us on a whistle-stop tour through the clarinet's character. These original works are at times jazzy, humorous, haunting, lyrical and acrobatic.

Graham Fitkin wrote Switching for Nick in 2016. It is based on the model of New York Counterpoint, with solo clarinet and pre-recorded clarinets and bass clarinets, and is the perfect companion piece to the Reich. The solo clarinet begins, gradually introducing the many different rhythmic and melodic ideas of the piece, each one with a distinct character clearly marked in the score. The pre-recorded lines enter in turn, taking on the ideas introduced by the solo clarinet. The whole thing builds and builds until the final, dramatic climax.

Igor Stravinsky was the first great composer to write for solo clarinet. His Three Pieces are seminal works for the clarinet and simply had to have a place in this programme.

Written by the highly celebrated female American composer Joan Tower, Wings is a musical depiction of a large bird flying high, gliding along thermal currents moving at times slowly and at others looping and diving at great speeds. This is followed by Kate Romano's three short, characteristic pieces Clockwork toys, again for unaccompanied clarinet.

The programme ends with New York Counterpoint, bringing the programme to an uplifting and euphoric close.