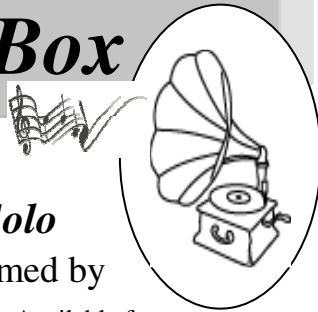


The Music Box



Michael Nyman's

Yamamoto Perpetuo for Solo

Flute, transcribed and performed by

Andy Findon. © 2008 MN Records. Available from Chesters Music Ltd., cduniverse.com, cdbaby, amazon, even target.com (!) -- and elsewhere.

reviewed by Eileen Yarrison

The flute leaps boldly, willingly, spectacularly into the 21st century

This piece should be heard at an NFA Newly Published Music Concert, if it has not already! I highly recommend that you add this CD and the music to your library. I predict that this piece will be appearing, in whole or in part, on recitals in the very near future.

From Andy Findon's CD liner notes: "In 1993 Michael wrote "Yamamoto Perpetuo" for solo violin. It was commissioned by Yohji Yamamoto for his fashion show that year in Paris and later turned into String Quartet No. 4. My task was to turn it back into a solo performance. (...) I was also determined that this should be a performable piece, rather than a book of virtuosic studies."

And WOW! What an exciting recorded result! The energy which flows from this disc is positively overwhelming. Andy Findon's command of the flute is amazing- a wide palette of sound colors in all registers, from lowest B to highest C#, multiple tonguing of blazing speed and enviable quality, a wider dynamic range than most flutists, and a sense of rhythmic drive that I expect comes from his time playing in the Michael Nyman Band. Like Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*, Moussorgsky's *Pictures at An Exhibition*, or Charles Koechlin's *14 Pieces*, each of the 11 sections of Yamamoto Perpetuo works well alone, but dramatically, I'm sure you'll agree "the whole is more than the sum of its parts". Certain parts may remind you of Edgard Varese, Katherine Hoover, Robert Dick, Fai-To Leung, or even Jethro Tull.

My personal favorite moments: In #5, which to me sounded like ancient Asian folk music with a lingering flavor of jazz, the triplets which surround a hidden melody are way cooler than anything Andersen or Kuhlau ever wrote. The tremelandos of #6 are positively ornithological, interweaving with another faintly Eastern folk-like tune until one can't remember which interrupted which? #7 had the most Varesian flavor, with high C#s which force their way into the musical flow. Findon's tone in #8 (a dark and modal melody) is alternately bamboeey, sharply metallic,

and darkly woody, all in a *good* way. Fans of Robert Dick and Ian Andersen will love the opening of #9 (but be careful not to blow your speakers!) and #10 is sweetly rambling- the sherbet which follows the firey spice of #9.

The CD packaging is decidedly environmentally friendly (a simple cardboard folder) but unfortunately, there was no room for detailed commentary, so Andy graciously provided notes via email. For those both listening to the CD and those learning the piece, here they are:

- 1) The work opens with a serene, legato theme played in the highest octave, leading to a cantabile melody, using the entire range of the flute, from low B for three octaves.
- 2) This is a true "perpetuo" style piece. I have inserted deliberate rests in the semiquavers to act both as breathing points and musical "restarts" on occasion. The accents are the main driving force and should be extreme.
- 3) For the first time I decided to change the original key in order to create a wider gap in pitches, as the flute hasn't the range of a violin. To emulate the high violin sustained harmonics, I've contrasted a warm vibrant lower register with piano high notes with no vib. This movement also contains characteristic accented frenetic semiquaver passages. The coda is expressive, similar to the end of movement one.
- 4) Another "perpetuo", this starts with a heavily articulated lower register contrasting with the layer high register interruptions. I changed the key again to exaggerate this difference where possible. During the recording, Michael suggested even more extreme accenting that in the violin part, certainly an approach I'm used to on baritone (sax) in the band.
- 5) Accents and forward rhythmic motion are paramount here. In the rolling figures of the middle section I have once again written in breath stops. This time they are not to interrupt the rhythm at all but are there to get through without breaking the flow.
- 6) Double stopping becomes pianissimo tremelando, dynamics being exaggerated in the opening slow, repetitive section. In the faster passages I'm using an extreme vibrato and edgy articulation to roughen the sound and bring out accents.
- 7) This movement has fast, accented low passages contrasted with faster, double tongued figures. There are two very high sections, one including fortissimo high C#s.
- 8) Here is the challenge of four consecutive slow passages (some material from the first movement) ending in a faster coda. I've used different sonorities and vibratos to overcome this. "No vibrato" being a most important effect in this context. Michael is very specific about his use of accents and sostenutos both in piano and forte passages, fast and slow.
- 9) The most aggressive approach so far, opening with

throat/flutter/growl for 4 bars then setting off at a furious tempo. This is the nearest thing to playing in the band at full throttle. The growl effect returns later, after a further hike in tempo.

- 10) This is the most violinistic, arpeggiated movement whilst containing, at the same time, extremely expressive melodic content. The breathing is once again an integral part of the musical flow.
- 11) The finale is another drive forward, with furious double tonguing combined with flutter effects.

If owning a CD is like having a lesson from that artist permanently “on hand”, I know I’ll be learning a lot from Andy Findon every time I listen to this recording. For more information about Andy Findon, please visit www.andyfindon.com.

Word has it Findon will perform
@ the NFA Convention in NYC!

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Revelations, Robert Willoughby, flute; Wilbur Price, piano; Wayne Rapier, English horn; and others Boston Records BR1071CD Available from Flute World (fluteworld.com), bostonrecords.com, etc.

reviewed by Eileen Yarrison

If the PBS TV shows *Great Performances* and *American Masters* collaborated, this CD would be the product. How wonderful to have these performances by Robert Willoughby and colleagues, originally recorded between 1965 and 1972, re-released on CD. The acoustics of the Warner Concert Hall of Oberlin College must be fantastic- the clarity of the sound makes me believe I'm sitting in about the third row of the audience! These works were practically “hot off the press” when Willoughby performed them, and his commitment to truthful and passionate playing of the music of his lifetime is evident in each stunning performance. The music is as fresh today as it was then, and I encourage you to add this CD to your collection. You should become familiar with the pieces of the mid-20th century and the playing of one of America's most treasured flute teachers.

The disc opens with Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* (The Blackbird-1952), with Wilbur Price, pianist, joining Mr. Willoughby. Oliver Messiaen (1908-1992) devoted much of his compositional lifetime to the sounds of birds (*Catalogue d'Oiseaux, Oiseaux Exotiques*) and *Le Merle Noir* may be seen as the preview to these larger works. Formally, the work is an arch, where highly charged soliloquies by the flute-bird alternate with mystical, lyrical conversations between the flute and piano. Emotionally, I was transported into a black-and-white daydream, looking out a large window at a woody scene where rain dripped in overlapping rhythms from the trees, while an ambassador from another planet, taking shape as a blackbird, tried emphatically, desperately, angrily to make himself understood. It's been a long time since a CD performance affected me so... thank you to Mr. Willoughby and Mr. Price!

The *Concerto da Camera* for flute, English horn, and strings, was written in 1948 as a commission from American musical patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. It is here presented with piano reduction.

Wayne Rapier, English horn, joins Willoughby for this work. Their intonation and interplay are models for any aspiring chamber musician. In the *Allegretto amabile* first movement, the flute and English horn play their most characteristic roles: the flute is agile, melodic, and birdlike, while the English horn sounds plaintive, introspective, and mellow. When they play together in close harmony, the blend of sound is so well-done that one can't tell where the flute leaves off and the English horn begins. It's like a slow-motion tennis match, the way the phrases are lobbed back and forth by the players. In the *Andante* second movement, the flute practically woos the English horn over the piano's well-grounded chords: I can't wait to hear this with strings, because I sensed the slight loss created by the absence of gentle vibrato in the piano's lines. Flute and English horn float back to earth towards the end of the movement, singing in octaves like any good operatic pair where unison melodic lines represent unity of spirit. The third movement, *Vivace*, with its vigorous dance character, will be the most accessible to anyone whose knowledge of Honegger has heretofore been limited to *Danse de la Chevre*. Willoughby's incredible command of the flute is undeniable here as he literally plays rings around the English horn's lines, with long, spun-out phrases and *brilliant* double tonguing the whole way.

The 1949 *Capriccio* for solo flute by Roberto Gerhard (1896-1970) was a new piece for me and I am so happy to make its acquaintance. To cite the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, a capriccio is “often characterized by an idiosyncratic departure from current stylistic norms” and a certain type of capriccio.[has] “shorter sections that are often repeated, contrast textures and moods more strikingly, and [...] may also have unexpected chromatic twists”. Although Gerhard's *Capriccio* is “atonal, but not strictly serial” (from the CD liner notes), the dictionary commentary is useful here. From its strong and active beginning motives, with flutter tongue and great dynamic contrast, the piece moves through several subsections, some more relaxed, others more energetic. There is a sense of developing variation as a fragment (or more) from original motifs is reused, recast, expanded, decorated. This work needs to be heard in recital more often!

I was not familiar with Thea Musgrave's *Trio*, from 1960, before receiving this CD. The flute, oboe, and piano weave in and out of dissonances and intricate lines, punctuated with poignant pauses. The intonation is so fine that one really can't tell where the oboe and flute leave unison for solo passages. To hear the same pitch repeated a moment later in the piano- sigh- what bliss! It's intriguing, unusual music, and it's played here as naturally as breathing. The fluency with which these people play this mid-century musical vocabulary is inspiring.

Charles Wuorinen wrote the *Flute Variations II* for Harvey Sollberger in 1968. I'm reminded of Mr. Willoughby's 1990 masterclass “cherry pie” analogy when it comes to flute tone- while cherry pie is his favorite dessert, he certainly wouldn't want it for every meal, and not even every day. The class was encouraged to develop a wide variety of colors, vibrato speeds and sizes, and dynamics. If I had heard this recording at that time, I would REALLY have known what he meant. Without trying to sound like a catalogue- this work has multiphonics, harmonics, pitch

bends, glissando and tremelando, dramatic use of vibrato, key clicks, what Robert Dick calls “color trills”, double tongue, flutter tongue, single pitches which challenge the lung capacity, highest E and F (I ran to the piano to check!), and trumpet tones, which I believe are made by buzzing one's lips into the headjoint. And yet, the piece is so much more than just a vehicle for the flute's extended technical capabilities. These devices carry forward the emotional content of the work, and once their shocking quality has passed and the piece is listened to again, one realizes this is an amazing, expressive piece of music, played by a flutist at the height of his powers.

The disc also includes Elliott Carter's *Eight Etudes and a Fantasy* (1950), for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon. This work originated as studies written for an instrumentation course Carter taught at Columbia University. Each etude is restricted to a single idea: extreme ranges of the instruments, a single D-major chord, coloristic effects, etc. The outstanding playing of the other pieces is here repeated and is made more breath-taking by the larger size of the ensemble. The Irving Fine *Partita* was described by the composer himself as “...a set of free variations, although only the second movement bears any resemblance to the formal and tonal scheme of the 'theme'. The material for the entire work is evolved out of two melodic fragments.” (From the CD liner notes.)

Robert Willoughby has been honored by the National Flute Association with both the Lifetime Achievement Award (1996) and a tribute concert (2000). For his 80th birthday, students from around the world commissioned Boston's own John Heiss to write *Apparitions*, premiered at a concert in honor of Mr. Willoughby at the Longy School of Music. This CD belongs in your collection—it belongs in your CD player!—so you can have Mr. Willoughby's playing and the music of the 20th century in your ears at all times.

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Dr. Eileen Yarrison has been the conductor of the Nashua (NH) Flute Choir for eleven seasons, leading the group to three CD recordings and two world premieres of commissioned works. She also teaches flute and conducts flute ensembles at Indian Hill Music School in Littleton, MA. Her past conducting experience includes sixteen years of leading flute choirs at SYMS at UNH. She conducted the NFA Professional Flute Choir in 2005, and has conducted the NH All-State Honors Flute Ensemble three times in ten years.

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Concert Review, The Kaleidoscope Chamber Ensemble and The Rosewood Chamber Ensemble, May 17, 2009: sponsored by Brannen Brothers—Flutemakers

reviewed by Barbara Skaggs

Spring into Summer! was the theme of the concert presented by GBFA at Brannen Brothers Recital Hall. The program was a delightful exploration of 19th and 20th century folk tunes. Kaleidoscope opened with a performance of *Miniatures* by the American composer William Grant Still (1895-1978). The composition, written

for flute, oboe, and piano, is based on five North and South American folk songs, and included a mournful cowboy tune, a Negro spiritual, and a Peruvian lament. Each movement was evocative of its culture, and showcased the group's range of tonal colors.

Next, Kaleidoscope performed an arrangement of *Concerto da Camera* for flute, English horn and piano (originally string orchestra) by the Swiss-French composer Arthur Honegger (1892-1978). This piece was also influenced by folk music, particularly the first movement, which had a lovely pastoral quality. The final movement featured the flute and English horn in lively counterpoint passages requiring the flutist to double-tongue at rapid speed, breathing optional. The ensemble playing was superb, and in fact, the group has been playing together for more than 20 years in various configurations. Jill Dreeben, the flutist, has performed in numerous solo flute and chamber music concerts in New England and New York, and has premiered several works by local composers. She currently teaches part-time at Brandeis University, and maintains a private studio in Arlington, MA. Charlyn Bethell played oboe and English horn, and Guy Urban was the pianist.

The second half of the program featured the Rosewood Chamber Ensemble with Barbara Hopkins, flute, and Judy Handler, guitar, performing early American (1800-1865) song, dance, and hymn tunes. Hopkins played two wooden flutes made in the 1830's by Asa Hopkins of Litchfield, Connecticut. One of the flutes is made of rosewood, as is Handler's guitar: thus, the Rosewood Ensemble.

Hopkins related that when she moved to Hartford fifteen years ago to play assistant principal with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, she discovered that Asa Hopkins is her cousin. She passed the flutes around so that the audience could see the beautiful workmanship, complete with cracks that had been repaired over the years. Hopkins said that she also found a price list for her ancestor's flutes from the 1830's: the prices ranged from \$10 per dozen to the most expensive flute listed at \$19!

Some of the tunes the duo played were familiar (by Stephen Foster, Robert Burns, and Lowell Mason). Other pieces were rediscovered by Hopkins, who teaches flute at the University of Connecticut and researches scores of the early 19th century. One particularly charming tune, *The Spinning Wheel*, was found in an anonymous notebook of handwritten manuscripts. Hopkins explained that there is a wealth of dance music written for flute in that era, because dance masters who traveled from town to town often played the flute to accompany the dances. The pieces were played with great style and joy, resulting in a captivating performance.

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Barbara Skaggs "rediscovered" the flute after a 23-year hiatus. She studies with David Chu, performs regularly with the St. John Flute Choir in Sudbury, and participates in the New England Conservatory Summer Metropolitan Flute Festival Orchestra.

