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Andrew Marriner

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PHOTO: BEN EALOVEGA

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In 1992, the clarinetist Geraldine Allen gave the premiere of a pioneering cross-cultural work by Sarah Rodgers. Soon afterwards a car accident put Allen's performing career on hold – for 27 years. Now, fully recovered, she tells the story of *The Roaring Whirl's* conception and its subsequent revival over a quarter of a century later

CASSGB Sax Competition selects finalists

CASSGB has announced the six finalists of its Young Saxophone Soloist Competition:

- Charlotte Arthur, 17, Jersey
- Lucia Breslin, 17, Hertfordshire
- Daniel Davis, 16, Gwent
- Olivia Robinson, 18, York
- Rania van den Ouweland, 19, Brighton
- Alfie Ward, 15, Manchester

The panel was delighted with the standard and variety of entries and would like to thank all those who submitted recordings. The final will take place on Sunday 12 January at Craxton Studios in London, where each finalist will perform a 15-minute recital of own-choice repertoire. The jury will be Richard Ingham, Naomi Sullivan and Sarah Watts.

First prize is £1,500 and an invitation to perform at the 2020 CASSGB Single Reed Day, details of which are to be announced at a later date. Second and third prizes are £1,000 and £500. Ticket priority will be given to friends and family of the finalists, and details of any remaining tickets will be announced in the CASSGB December e-newsletter.



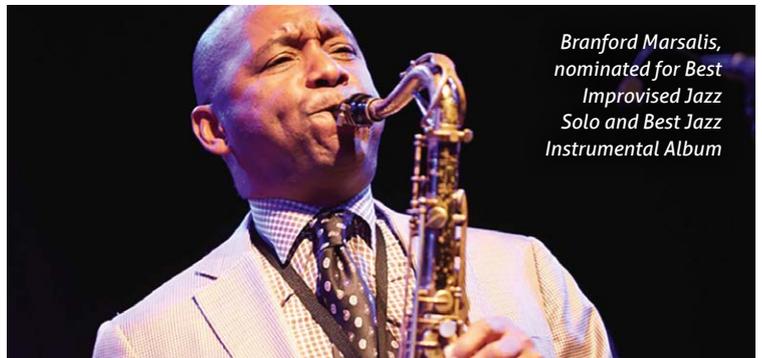
Adolphe Sax International Competition winners announced

The seventh Adolphe Sax International Competition, which is organised every four years, took part last month in Belgium. 544 saxophonists applied to the pre-selection process, as a result of which 94 saxophonists from 19 countries were selected. The 94 players performed live in Dinant, Adolphe Sax's home city, in the first round (29 October to 2 November), from which 18 were chosen for the semi-final on 4-5 November. From this, six 'laureates' took part in the final on 8-9 November.

Each laureate performed two works: a compulsory work, *Noema*, commissioned by the competition from the composer Claude Ledoux; and a concerto chosen from a list of options, accompanied by CASCO Phil – the Chamber Orchestra of Belgium, conducted by David Reiland.

First place went to Kenta Saito (Japan) who won 9,000 euros and an alto saxophone valued at 4,500 euros. Second was Rui Ozawa (Japan) and third was Sandro Compagnon (France). The six laureates comprised three Japanese and three French saxophonists, including two female candidates: Ozawa, and Miho Hakamada, who placed sixth.

<https://adolphesax.com>



Branford Marsalis, nominated for Best Improvised Jazz Solo and Best Jazz Instrumental Album

Single-reed Grammy nominees

Nominations for the 62nd Grammy Awards have been announced, with no clarinet or saxophone nominations in the classical categories but plenty for jazz. These include:

Best Improvised Jazz Solo:

- Melissa Aldana – 'Elsewhere' from *Visions*
- Branford Marsalis – 'The Windup' from *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*

Best Jazz Instrumental Album:

- Joshua Redman – *Come What May*
- Branford Marsalis – *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*

Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album:

- Anat Cohen Tentet – *Triple Helix*

Best Latin Jazz Album:

- David Sánchez – *Carib*
- Miguel Zenón – *Sonero: The Music of Ismeal Rivera*

CASSGB wishes all nominees the best of luck.

www.grammy.com

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Andrew

Marriner

The clarinettist Andrew Marriner has had an illustrious career. Beginning with professional training in the National Youth Orchestra followed by a period of study in Germany, Marriner's symphonic activities took off in a significant way when he was asked to join the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) on a world tour in 1983, which saw him play principal clarinet under Claudio Abbado. This, alongside a burgeoning freelance career with a range of other orchestras and ensembles, led to his appointment a few years later as the LSO's principal clarinet, a role he remained in until earlier this year. To mark the occasion of his retirement from the orchestra, he spoke to *Clarinet & Saxophone*.

CW: Thanks, Andrew, for making time to speak to us. To begin with, perhaps you could tell me a bit about your education?

AM: I learned originally from Amelia Freedman, who founded the Nash Ensemble and was a clarinet player herself. She taught me at King's Choir School in Cambridge. That was at a time when Tony Pay was just coming up as an undergrad, so she took me to listen to him play the Mozart Clarinet Quintet. Then I moved to King's School, Canterbury, where I was taught by Mike Thatcher of the Marine School of Music in Deal, and later I went up to London to have lessons with Jack Brymer. He was able to demonstrate exactly how it should go, and it was amazing to see that all happen at close hand.

I then did what was expected of me, which was go to university, and it was abundantly clear I wasn't going to be an academic musician. I think I had already been principal clarinet in the National Youth Orchestra [NYO] for five years by then, and I thought, 'Principal clarinet of the NYO – it's just a matter of time before joining the profession.' Then I decided I really needed to learn how to play the clarinet, and it was my dad [Sir Neville Marriner] who said, 'Why don't you go to somewhere like Germany to give yourself space to learn to play it properly.' He consulted with Aurele Nicole, the wonderful flute player, who pointed me in the direction of my teacher, Hans Deinzer, in Hannover. His first pupils were an amazing crop who all got jobs very quickly, including Wolfgang Meyer. Wolfgang was Sabine's brother and a fantastic player, and at that time was Hans's assistant. The class included eventually Sabine and her husband Reiner Wehle, who's written fantastic books that I always recommend – perhaps because I recognise the technique that Reiner has put down on paper, which is basically a lot of Hans's sound ideas.

Hans's teaching was extraordinarily thorough and almost exclusively depressing because I was completely inadequate and very slow witted about picking up what he meant. But I observed keenly, and at the end of three years I came back to England to try my luck. I was unemployed – and unemployable – for about two years, but was eventually given amazing chances, helped by wonderful players like Tony Pay, who was very generous with his time when I used to turn up for lessons. We all recognise that syndrome when people turn up for lessons not just because they want to learn but because they're desperate to do what you're doing.

Andrew Marriner took up the position of principal clarinet with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1986. This year he retired from the orchestra after a remarkable 33 years in post. He speaks to Chris Walters about his career

I know from the archivist that I've played Mahler's first symphony in concert more than 145 times

CW: How did you make ends meet during that first period back at home?

AM: I worked as a tour guide in London and had various factory jobs. But eventually I got a lucky break with the London Sinfonietta and the CBSO [City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra]. Colin Parr, principal clarinet of the CBSO, was very generous and he got me in, and I know that my first concert was playing second clarinet in *Daphnis*. I practised and practised and practised, got to Birmingham and was told that I was in dispute with the management because they weren't going to pay for my lunch. To which I said, 'I'd far rather play, I had my breakfast on the train.' But in those days the union was law and I was sent home again.

I was paying £40 a quarter to rent this enormous box that had two spools on it, one for the outgoing message and one for the incoming. You couldn't even buy an answer phone then, you had to rent it, and it was always empty for month after month, so that was quite depressing. And long before IMSLP I had all the first clarinet parts – note first clarinet parts, ever the optimist! I bought them from somewhere in America where the copyright laws were different. I would sit at home with the LPs going round, pretending I was playing in the orchestra.

Then I got lucky with various things. In 1980 they formed Opera 80 and I was part of that, and I started freelancing with what was then called the Richard Hickox Orchestra. There was a fabulous co-principle clarinet of the BBC Symphony Orchestra called Roger Fallows whom many will remember – a really lovely guy and a wonderful player. He looked after me and got me into the BBC Symphony Orchestra as an extra. And then there was the Wren Orchestra, which was Capital Radio's foray into forming a classical orchestra. So it gradually built up and I had a strong freelance career.

The NYO has produced so many people who found it easy to go into the profession because they had not only the musical experience and the aural experience,

AKMI DUO

AKMI Duo are an up-and-coming Swiss pairing of saxophone and piano who recently performed at London's Wigmore Hall as part of the prize for winning this year's Swiss Ambassador's Award. Claire Jackson went along

You never know who you might meet at a concert. It's the point in a Venn diagram of often very different lives where interests intersect. Over the years I've met friends and family of musicians on stage, consultants with specialisms unknown outside the medical profession, and a surprisingly high number of lawyers (often unsung heroes of philanthropy). But it's not often that you're sat next to the ambassador for Nigeria, as was the case at a recent Wigmore Hall recital. On the other side was a civil servant from the Swiss embassy; behind him were a couple of members of the House of Lords. The unusual spread of concert attendees were here on the invitation of Alexandre Fasel, ambassador of Switzerland to the UK, for a special concert to celebrate the recipients of this year's Swiss Ambassador's Award, AKMI Duo – saxophonist Valentine Michaud and pianist Akvilė Sileikaitė.

The opportunity to make their Wigmore debut came as something of a shock to the duo. 'It was an amazing surprise,' says Michaud. 'This isn't an award you can apply for – you have to be recommended for it. We perform all over Switzerland and happily someone heard us – we just received an email to say we had won!' The Swiss Ambassador's Award was introduced in 1998 as an annual accolade presented to one Swiss-based musician or ensemble. It offers young artists the chance to perform at Wigmore Hall, as well as other concerts around the UK. (After Wigmore, AKMI Duo played at Stoller Hall in Manchester and Dora Stoutzker Hall in Cardiff.)

Despite the continuing rise in popularity of classical saxophone music, selecting a saxophone and piano duo for this prestigious prize was still a risk. AKMI Duo specialise in 20th-century and contemporary music, after having played standard repertoire and finding their interests lay in more experimental styles. 'We met at Zurich University of the Arts,' says Sileikaitė. 'That was back in 2015,' adds Michaud, 'We've been playing together ever since. As a classical sax and piano duo there isn't a lot of original repertoire, so we are committed to creating new pieces.'

One of those works is *L'Etang du Patriarche*, written for them in 2017 by Swiss composer Kevin Juillerat (b. 1987). AKMI Duo gave the UK premiere of the piece at their Ambassador's Award concert. *L'Etang du Patriarche* is dedicated to Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov and differs from many works for piano and saxophone in that it focuses on the resonances of that instrumentation as a coupling. 'It tells the story of *The Master and Margarita* [by Bulgakov], specifically the first chapter of the book,' explains Sileikaitė. 'It's about the combination of instruments – the idea is that you cannot immediately define whether it is the piano or saxophone playing.'

The piano has historically been treated as, if you'll excuse the pun, second fiddle in duo repertoire. At the beginning of the 20th century, sonatas began to be reframed for 'violin and piano', for example, but there was still an underlying sense of 'soloist' and 'pianist'. This began to change with composers like Britten, who wrote songs where the piano and vocal lines enjoyed more obvious equality, and lieder duos now emphasise the critical role of the pianist as a partner, not an accompanist. In *L'Etang du Patriarche*, AKMI Duo takes this a step further: Michaud is required to blow air into the strings of the piano, while Sileikaitė must vocalise. The techniques bring the two instruments closer together, both aurally and visually. 'It's about creating a unique timbre,' says Michaud. 'The sounds are obviously so different but they marry well.'



Alastair Penman introduces the Freedom Player – a device, currently at advanced prototype stage, that makes silent practice possible on the clarinet or saxophone

Freedom Player

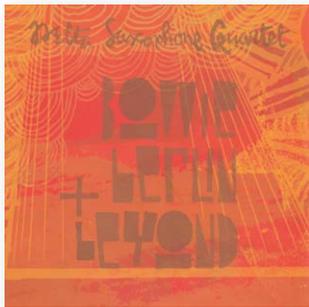
Every so often, something happens that reminds you just how small and interconnected the musical world is. A couple of months ago, I was performing for Musical Rendezvous, a fantastic organisation that takes music into care homes and community centres. Their regular pianist was unavailable, so Lindsay Bridgewater (whose credits are as diverse as The Philharmonia Orchestra and Ozzy Osbourne!) was standing in. After the gig, I was talking to Lindsay and mentioned my interest in electronics. He said I must meet his friend Paul Davey, who was working on a clever new device for clarinet and saxophone. Fast forward a fortnight and I am at Paul's house learning all about Freedom Player, an ingenious patented mute for single-reed instruments, developed by Paul alongside his business partner Dr Brian Smith.

In the past, a number of companies have tried to design a mute for the clarinet or saxophone, with limited success. Most attempts simply deaden the sound by putting something inside the bell, but this makes the instrument resistant to play, affects the tuning and doesn't completely silence the sound. One of the more sophisticated devices is the e-Sax Whisper Mute. This is essentially a saxophone case with holes for your hands and the mouthpiece, so you can play the saxophone inside the case and listen through headphones. This is not only a strange playing setup, but also a very bulky item; certainly not the sort of thing you would want to travel with. The Freedom Player works on completely different principles, and its closest parallel is probably Yamaha's Silent Brass system that has become the standard for 'silently' practising brass instruments.

How it works

Freedom Player is a small plastic unit that is inserted between the mouthpiece and the clarinet barrel or saxophone crook. Now comes the clever bit. When Freedom Player is switched on, it emits a very quiet sound signal that causes the air in the instrument to vibrate. By detecting the vibrations coming back from the instrument, Freedom Player identifies which note you are fingering and plays a digital representation of that note through your headphones.





BOWIE, BERLIN & BEYOND

Delta Saxophone Quartet
FMR Records

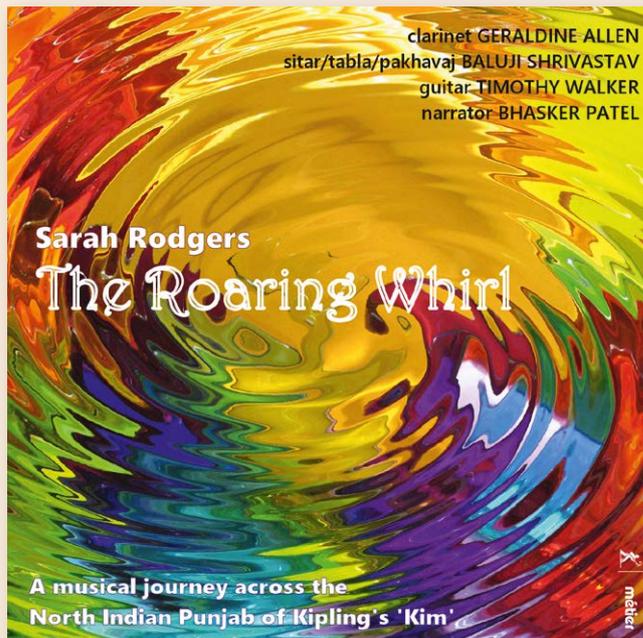
This album is cool. Seriously cool. My initial scepticism over how badly pop songs can translate to instrumental works disappeared within the first 18 seconds of listening to the opening track 'Speed of Life'. And, like a serving suggestion for a fine wine, the album is stamped with the instruction 'TO BE PLAYED AT AMBIENT VOLUME' – I've been unable to stop doing anything else since.

Bowie, Berlin & Beyond is the latest project by the eclectic UK-based new music ensemble Delta Saxophone Quartet (DSQ), and is a homage to the iconic David Bowie (1947-2016). It's a blend of 'traditional' sax quartet playing, free improvisation and electronics that follows, for the most part, in the imaginary footsteps of Bowie and his 'Berlin years': the three years that Bowie lived in Berlin during the 1970s while recording his seminal studio albums *Low*, *Heroes* and *Lodger*.

Bowie, Berlin & Beyond explores and revisits Bowie's experimentation with the ambient world of Brian Eno, free improvisation and the minimalist works of Philip Glass. The saxophone (and clarinet, on 'Music for Airports') playing by DSQ is beautiful and immaculate throughout. From the haunting and ethereal 'Subterraneans' (which, incidentally, Bowie is credited with playing sax on in the original version) to the relentless, thumping powerhouse that is 'Breaking Glass', this is fabulous, committed playing, creating a disc that simultaneously sounds unique to its genre and pays adequate respect to the music of Bowie, Eno and others.

DSQ comprises Graeme Blevins (sop), Pete Whyman (alto), Tim Holmes (tenor) and Chris Caldwell (baritone). Formed in 1984, it continues to be at the forefront of the British new music scene. The quartet has always aimed to merge the boundaries of its sound world, combining contemporary jazz, progressive rock and the avant-garde. This latest album doesn't disappoint, and I highly recommend listening. In DSQ's own words, it's 'a constant mission to surprise and experiment... very much like Bowie.'

Neil Crossley



THE ROARING WHIRL

Music by Sarah Rodgers
Geraldine Allen (clarinet)
Metier/Divine Art Recordings

Editor's
choice

This CD represents a triumph. It was recorded in 1992 but released only this year due to a car accident and drawn-out recovery interrupting clarinetist Geraldine Allen's career. It could have been released earlier, but Allen was keen to get better first so that she could perform the music live when it came out. She has now finally achieved this – a mere 27 years later.

The Roaring Whirl is a single multi-movement work by Sarah Rodgers, its title taken from Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. (You can read more about the work's origins on page 52 in an article contributed by Allen herself.) The music features alternating narrator and clarinet, supported by sitar and tabla. A guitar is also part of things, blending in stylistically with the sitar. Like Indian classical music, the feeling created by this gentle hour is not one of huge contrast, but if you jump randomly between tracks you realise that it does in fact span a range of moods, gradually shifting rather than springing surprises mid-flow.

The clarinet is a counterpart to the narration, and both voices trace lines that refer repeatedly to familiar motifs and shapes against evolving backdrops. I listened to the CD a few times and did not take in the meaning of the narrator's words, instead hearing the narration as an instrumental solo. Allen's clarinet playing is liquid, generous and totally inside the music; she is the second narrator.

We live in a time of raging debate around such matters as cultural appropriation, but in 1992 the current punishing attitude towards western artists 'borrowing' from non-western cultures was yet to take root. One can sense a certain innocence in this recording, which journeys guilelessly through an Indian-inspired soundscape redolent of exotica, meditation and romantic adventure. This makes the listening experience a pleasure, and since *The Roaring Whirl* is available on Spotify as well as in physical form, the minimal effort involved in finding it is more than justified.

Chris Walters