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CLASSICS

THE ROMANTIC HORN

Richard Watkins
HORN

Julius Drake
PIANO



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	Horn Sonata, Op. 17	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)	
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2	II. Poco Adagio		[1.34]
3	III. Rondo		[5.31]
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6	Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70	Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	[9.26]
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RICHARD WATKINS HORN
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NOTES BY RICHARD WATKINS

This recording represents a selection of some of the most well-loved works for the horn. As our repertoire is relatively small, it seemed an ideal opportunity to select a programme of music from most European countries. *The Romantic Horn* was a fairly obvious title, given that all the works highlight the lyrical side of the horn - which is, essentially, what the instrument does best. I have always had a soft spot for *Hunter's Moon* - Gilbert Vinter being a leading figure in the light music movement, at its height in the 40s and 50s, but sadly now out of fashion. Finally, this project was the perfect opportunity to celebrate my collaboration over many years with Julius Drake, my friend and colleague with whom it has been the greatest privilege and honour to work.

Beethoven's **Sonata, Op. 17** was first performed on 18th April 1800 in Vienna, with the virtuoso horn player Giovanni Punto and Beethoven as the pianist. This piece is typical of Beethoven's sonatas in that it could easily be described as a piano sonata with a horn obligato. Allegedly Beethoven had first arrived in Vienna and was rather bemused to see a

billboard for a concert the following day to include a new sonata for horn and piano. As he had no time, he quickly wrote out a horn part for Punto and improvised the piano part himself. At the performance the piece was rapturously received, so much so that the audience demanded a repeat performance!

Franz Strauss was a renowned horn player in the Bavarian Court Orchestra under the conductor Hans von Bülow. By all accounts, Franz Strauss was quite a character with von Bülow describing him as the 'Joachim of the Horn' and also commented 'the fellow is intolerable but when he blows his horn, you can't be angry with him'. Wagner agreed with von Bülow: 'Strauss is an unbearable curmudgeonly fellow but when he plays the horn, one can say nothing, for it is so beautiful.' As Father to Richard Strauss, he was an equally capable composer in his own right. This **Nocturno, Op. 7** was published in 1904; it is a beautiful lyrical work which has become a staple part of the horn repertoire.

It is perhaps no surprise that Richard Strauss's writing for the horn represents some of the most idiomatic and challenging music for the instrument. Apart from his two celebrated

concertos, Strauss's tone poems and operas all heavily feature the horn. This short and beautiful **Andante** was written in 1888 to mark his parents' silver wedding anniversary.

Schumann's **Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70** was composed in 1849, which the composer described as 'my most fruitful year'. He had been influenced and inspired by the virtuoso horn player Joseph Lewry. The horn was undergoing a radical transformation with the recent invention of the valve, making the instrument fully chromatic. Although some composers, notably Brahms, were wary of this new-fangled device, Schumann was quick to exploit the advances the valved horn afforded him. As well as the *Adagio and Allegro*, Schumann also wrote the *Konzertstück for Four Horns and Orchestra* and a deliciously rich *Andante and Variation* for the unusual combination of horn, two cellos and two pianos. The *Adagio and Allegro* is a hugely dramatic piece exploiting the range and stamina of the player – there are only seven bars rest in the horn part. It is generally regarded as one of Schumann's lovelier chamber music works, so much so that other versions exist for cello, violin and viola.

Alexander Glazunov's **Rêverie, Op. 24**, published in 1890, is a much-loved work amongst horn players. It is a short, dreamy piece exploiting the lyrical side of the instrument. In fact Glazunov studied the horn, in addition to the piano, violin, cello, clarinet, trumpet and trombone! I recently heard an anecdote involving the great British horn player Anthony Halstead, which I think encapsulates the piece perfectly; when the LSO went on their great tour of Russia with André Previn, the horn sections of the LSO and Leningrad Philharmonic ended up in the apartment of Vitaly Bujanovsky, the orchestra's legendary Principal Horn. The English didn't speak a word of Russian, nor did the Russians speak any English. Bujanovsky picked up his horn and said one word to Tony, also an accomplished pianist: 'Glazunov'. No music of course but it was obvious what he had in mind. Tony played those great chords of D flat major and off they went! At the end the combined sections of both orchestras were in tears.

Scriabin is most well known for his exquisite and lush piano writing, yet this **Romance**, probably written at a young age, is a simple yet charming chamber music work. It was not published during Scriabin's lifetime.

Although not challenging technically, it is a beautiful piece and unmistakably Scriabin.

Brass players are indebted to French composers who wrote much of their music as test pieces highlighting all aspects of the instrument's techniques. This lovely piece, **Villanelle** by Paul Dukas, is, in my opinion, one of the very best of its kind. It was written in 1906 for the Paris Conservatoire. At its core is the beautiful opening melody to test the lyrical side of the horn – this also has the option of being played using the natural harmonics. The rest of the piece follows the usual pattern of more nimble writing followed by a 'stopped' passage where Dukas instructs the player to transpose a semitone higher. This gives the sound a unique and ethereal quality which Dukas also used in his *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Villanelle then explores the muted sounds and ends virtuosically. We are very fortunate to have this piece in our repertoire as Dukas destroyed much of his music and it is a great favourite amongst horn players.

Poulenc's powerful **Élégie** was written in memory of the great horn player Dennis Brain, who was tragically killed in a car crash in 1957. It also holds particular significance for Julius

and myself as we performed this piece as part of our Wigmore Hall début together. I remember once playing the *Élégie* at a horn event in Sweden and introduced the piece suggesting the music almost depicted the life of Dennis Brain. After my performance, I was followed by the great French player, Michel Garcin-Marrou, who said he enjoyed my charming little story but explained he would have to tell the truth behind the *Élégie*! After Brain's untimely death, Poulenc's publisher was continually trying to persuade him to write a piece in Brain's memory. As he admitted, not knowing much of the instrument's capability, Poulenc phoned Georges Barboteu, the Principal Horn of the Orchestre de Paris and invited him to his apartment to discuss writing the piece. However, they discovered they both had a penchant for fine Chablis so in the end they drank several bottles of wine together and then Poulenc wrote the piece! It is an intensely moving work and to quote my teacher, Ifor James, 'as long as the horn is played, Dennis Brain will always be remembered.'

Gilbert Vinter wrote **Hunter's Moon** for the horn player, John Burden, when they were both posted to Torquay in 1942. It was first

performed with the local Torquay Municipal Orchestra but an arrangement for horn and piano was made later the same year. It also became a 'party' piece for Dennis Brain towards the end of his life. Originally titled *Diana of the Chase*, the piece certainly has many hunting connotations. Perhaps the opening marking, 'Allegro (with good humour)' sets up the tone for the rest of the piece. There are loud 'stopped' notes and upward glissandi, perhaps suggesting hiccupping and burping of our hero huntsman who then falls asleep represented by a lovely dreamy theme first on the horn then on the piano. The catchy 6/8 theme returns before ending in a blaze of glory. All this, of course, suggests a connection between our hero horn payer and rather too much alcohol. Vinter and John Burden always insisted this piece represented the full moon after the harvest moon, yet the fact that there was a pub in Torquay called 'Hunter's Moon' perhaps gives the game away! This is a brilliant example of light music and an exuberant way to end this recital.

RICHARD WATKINS

Richard Watkins is one of the most sought-after horn players of his generation. He was Principal Horn of the Philharmonia Orchestra for twelve years, and is currently a member of the Nash Ensemble and a founder member of London Winds.

Richard Watkins has appeared at many of the world's most prestigious venues in the UK, Europe and the USA, and has worked with conductors such as Giulini, Sawallisch, Salonen, Slatkin, Sinopoli, Rozhdestvensky, Petrenko, Andrew Davis and Mark Elder.

His extensive discography includes recordings of the horn concertos by Mozart, Malcolm Arnold, Glière, Ethel Smyth and Colin Matthews, as well as Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* and chamber music for Horn by Schumann, Schubert and Poulenc. Recent releases include a Wigmore Live disc of Britten's *Canticles* with Mark Padmore, Alexander Goehr's Horn Trio for NMC, Edward Gregson's Horn Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic for Chandos and *Sea-Eagle* for NMC featuring works by British composers composed for Richard Watkins.



Richard Watkins has a long association with Aldeburgh Music, first performing Britten's *Serenade* with Sir Peter Pears in 1983. Since then he has appeared regularly as soloist and recitalist, performing concertos by Colin Matthews and Oliver Knussen as well as performances of Britten's works for solo horn, the *Serenade* and *Canticles*. He has been

actively involved with the Britten-Pears School, coaching and giving masterclasses. He has also recorded Britten's *Serenade* with Allan Clayton and Aldeburgh Strings and has directed the inaugural Britten-Pears Brass Week.

In recital, Richard Watkins regularly performs with singers such as John Mark Ainsley, Ian Bostridge and Mark Padmore, and with pianists Barry Douglas, Julius Drake, Paul Lewis, Roger Vignoles and Ian Brown.

Closely associated with promoting contemporary music for the horn, Richard Watkins has given premières of concertos by Maxwell-Davies, Osborne, Lindberg, Muldowney, Lefanu, Tansy Davies, Colin and David Matthews. Recent premières have included Colin Matthews' Horn Concerto and Trio, horn quintets by James MacMillan, David Matthews and Mark-Anthony Turnage and horn trios by Huw Watkins, Alexander Goehr and Gerald Barry.

Richard Watkins holds the Dennis Brain Chair of Horn Playing at the Royal Academy of Music where he is also a Fellow.

JULIUS DRAKE

The pianist Julius Drake lives in London and enjoys an international reputation as one of the finest instrumentalists in his field, collaborating with many of the world's leading artists, both in recital and on disc. He appears regularly at all the major music centres and festivals: the Aldeburgh, Edinburgh International, Munich, Schubertiade and Salzburg Music Festivals; Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Centre, New York; The Royal Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall and BBC Proms, London.

Julius Drake's many recordings include a widely acclaimed series with Gerald Finley for Hyperion, from which the Barber Songs, Schumann *Heine Lieder* and Britten Songs and Proverbs won the 2007, 2009 and 2011 Gramophone Awards; award-winning recordings with Ian Bostridge for EMI; several recitals for the Wigmore Live label, with among others Alice Coote, Joyce Didonato, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Christopher Maltman and Matthew Polenzani; recordings of Kodály and Schoeck sonatas with the cellists Natalie Clein and Christian Poltera for the Hyperion and Bis labels; of Tchaikovsky and Mahler with Christianne Stotijn for Onyx; English song



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with Bejun Mehta for Harmonia Mundi; and Schubert's *Poetisches Tagebuch* with Christoph Prégardien, which won the *Jahrespreis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik* 2016.

Julius Drake is now embarked on a major project to record the complete songs of Franz Liszt for Hyperion – the second disc in the series, with

Angelika Kirchschrager, won the BBC Music Magazine Award 2012 – and a series of four Schubert recitals recorded live at Wigmore Hall with Ian Bostridge.

Concerts in the 2018-19 season included recitals in his series, 'Julius Drake and Friends' at the historic Middle Temple Hall in London; concerts in Cologne, Brussels and Schwarzenberg with Ian Bostridge; in Amsterdam, Madrid, London and Philadelphia with Sarah Connolly; in Vienna, Zurich, and Leeds with Angelika Kirchschrager; in Vienna, Hamburg, and London with Gerald Finley; in Bilbao and Vilabertran with Christoph Pregardien; in Copenhagen with Alice Coote; and in New York with Matthew Polenzani. Further engagements include a tour of the USA with Holger Falk, of South Korea with Ian Bostridge, and a recording of Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* with the Bavarian Radio Choir in Munich.



Portrait of Richard Watkins by Rachel Gadsden

**Richard Watkins would like to thank Paxman
Horns and the Horn section of Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra
for their generous support of this recording.**



Recorded in the Britten Studio, Snape Maltings, UK from 22nd to 24th March 2018.

Producer & Editor – Tim Oldham

Recording Engineer – Mike Hatch

Cover Image – © Rachel Gadsen

Design and Artwork – Woven Design www.wovendesign.co.uk

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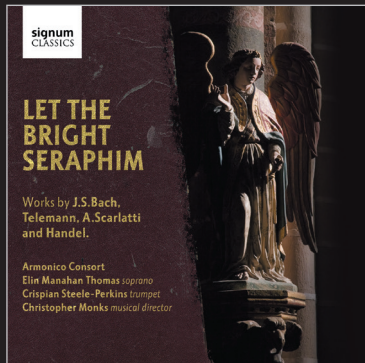
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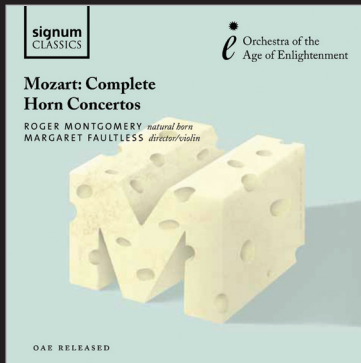
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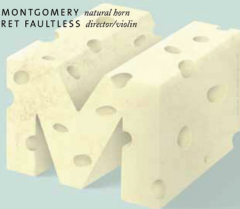


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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

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