



# Clarinet & Saxophone

Summer 2018 Volume 43, No 2

**Howard Goodall**  
ON WRITING FOR SAX

**The gender gap**  
IS JAZZ JUST FOR MEN?

From  
clarinetist  
to conductor  
**KARL-HEINZ  
STEFFENS**



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## Jess Gillam signs to Decca

Jess Gillam has become the first saxophonist ever to sign a record contract with Decca Classics. She commented: 'I'm so excited to become the first saxophonist ever to join Decca Classics! The saxophone is such a dynamic, versatile and expressive instrument and I cannot wait to record some of my favourite music and share my passion for music and the saxophone with as many people as possible.'

The managing director of Decca Classics, Dr Alexander Buhr, said: 'Jess is a unique new voice in the classical music world. She is an exceptionally talented and dedicated musician, and a great communicator. Her charisma and energy are undeniable. We are delighted to welcome her to the Decca Classics family and look forward to partnering with her on her musical journey ahead.'

Jess plays Yanagisawa Custom Engraved AWO20 alto and S901U un-lacquered soprano saxophones. She uses Vandoren reeds, ligatures and saxophone slings.

[decca.com](http://decca.com)



Jess Gillam with Decca managing director Dr Alexander Buhr



From left to right: Andrew Dunn, Heather Nicoll, James Sargeant, Nick Thompson, Adam Lee, Antonio Perez-Barrera and Piotr Dec

## 2018 Yamaha clarinet scholars announced

The Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) recently hosted the UK final of the annual Yamaha Music Foundation of Europe Scholarship awards. The competition's instrumental focus changes each year and for 2018 was the clarinet, attracting students from all over the UK. The three winners, selected from seven finalists, were: Piotr Dec from the Royal Academy of Music; Antonio Perez-Barrera, who studies at the RNCM; and Adam Lee from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The panel of judges comprised clarinettist Heather Nicoll; Andrew Dunn, head of wind, brass and percussion at Trinity Laban; and Nick Thompson, head of wind, brass and percussion at the RNCM.

Each of the winners received €2,000 to be used for the advancement of their studies. They will also gain recognition of their talent through the international profile of the scheme.

Launched in 1989, these international awards provide performance opportunities and financial assistance to talented music students throughout Europe. The scheme to date has provided over 1,000 scholarships in excess of €1 million. The programme is open to UK and Republic of Ireland full-time music students not older than 25.

[europe.yamaha.com](http://europe.yamaha.com)

## Jonathan Radford wins ROSL music competition

The saxophonist Jonathan Radford has been awarded the top prize of £20,000 at this year's Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) music competition, the final of which was held at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on 4 June. Radford performed works by Mark-Anthony Turnage, Takashi Yoshimatsu and Karen Khachaturian. His fellow finalists were bass-baritone Michael Mofidian, pianist Florian Mitrea and violinist Emmanuel Bach.

Radford studied at Chetham's Schools of Music and the Conservatoire National Superior de Musique de Paris (CNSM) with Claude Delangle, graduating in 2017 with masters degrees in saxophone and chamber music, both with distinction. He is currently pursuing an artist diploma at the Royal College of Music with Kyle Horch.

The ROSL was founded in 1910 and is a non-profit private members' club dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding. Its annual music competition is now in its 66th year.

[www.rosl.org.uk/amc](http://www.rosl.org.uk/amc)



Jonathan Radford

[www.cassgb.org](http://www.cassgb.org)

# Karl-Heinz Steffens

*The Berlin Phil principal clarinet-turned-conductor tells Michael Pearce about his career and what encouraged him to step full time on to the podium*



PHOTO: SUSANNE DIESNER

For many musicians, a principal position in the Berlin Philharmonic would be the ultimate job for life. But for the German clarinetist Karl-Heinz Steffens, something was always missing.

'It was always my dream to play in the Berlin Philharmonic. And orchestral playing is fantastic, especially when you have the chance to play with the best musicians in the world. But in the back of my mind there was always a need to take care of more than just my own part. I wanted to take care of the whole thing.'

In 2007, Steffens resigned his full-time principal position in the Berlin Philharmonic to embark on a new career in conducting. This was far from a snap decision.

'For me, it was always a parallel thing,' he says. 'I even had the papers ready to switch to the conducting course when I was a student in Stuttgart, but I decided against it because I was already becoming quite successful with the clarinet. I was also married with children, so I needed to support them and profit from my success. So in the end, the clarinet became the main story.'

After graduating, Steffens held principal clarinet positions in the Frankfurt Opera and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra before successfully auditioning for a rare vacancy in the Berlin Philharmonic. Unbelievably,

It helps that I understand how an orchestra works psychologically. You know how it feels to sit there, what people are thinking, what they are listening for

he decided not take the job. 'I think I was the first person ever to reject a principal job in the Berlin Philharmonic. But at the time, I had my family in Munich so I decided to stay.'

Nearly 10 years later, Berlin called again. Karl Leister, the orchestra's long-serving principal clarinetist, had recently retired and for second time, the orchestra asked Steffens to consider moving to Berlin. This time he said yes, and in 2001 became the latest

in a long line of illustrious clarinetists to occupy the principal clarinet chair.

'In Berlin there are two possibilities,' he says. 'You either belong there and it's very easy, or you don't and it's a horror. It is kind of a chemical thing in a way. Luckily for me, I felt I belonged. From the very start it was easy and really such a joy all the time.'



Howard Goodall and Stephen Darlington at *Invictus: A Passion* recording session in Oxford

PHOTO: DAVID LEE

## A PASSION FOR SAXOPHONE

Howard Goodall has composed a major new setting of the biblical passion with a soloistic role for the saxophone. He tells Chris Walters about his vision for the work

**CW:** Thank you for finding time to talk to us. How did you go about approaching this new passion setting, and what inspired you to put a spotlight on the saxophone?

**HG:** I approached it largely from the point of view of the women involved in the story. Not only is it a female poet whose text is the main narrative, but we also concentrate on the perspectives of Mary, Jesus's mother, and Mary Magdalene. It seems to me that the big themes of the passion are grief and loss. I was looking at ways to get across this feeling of human grief and how we deal with that.

In a way, the soprano saxophone in this piece is a character. It's not acting as part of the ensemble. I wanted it to be the third soloist after the soprano and tenor voices. It contributes a wordless mourning. I made it completely language-free in the sense of international, but also this is a universal human story of a mother losing her son, and therefore I wanted to go for a sound that was completely separate from any language or tradition.

From the earliest moments of conceiving the piece, I knew this was the sound I was hoping to get, with the soprano saxophone in this role. In the baroque passions you have characters singing recitatives – John the Evangelist, Jesus, Pontius Pilot. I don't do any of that. The choir tells us what's going on and where we are, picking up that role from the narrator. The soloists are used to pick out the poems I've chosen that somehow reflect on the themes. So while the story is being told, I come out of it every now and then and have a movement that tries to look at one issue, whether that's compassion, cruelty or whatever comes up.



PHOTO: JANE COX

Howard Goodall

Howard Goodall's new work *Invictus: A Passion* is a contemporary reflection on the themes of the traditional Christian passion story, paying particular attention to the roles and perspectives of women. Poems by various authors are interwoven with a 1611 text by Æmelia Lanyer née Bassano, one of the first female poets to be published in English.

The 55-minute, nine-movement work is scored for soprano solo, tenor solo, SATB choir and an unusually configured chamber orchestra of double (antiphonal) string quartet, bass, piano, horns and soprano saxophone. Goodall has commented that, for him, the soprano saxophone feels closest to the sound of human keening. In this work it weaves among the voices, at times friendlessly isolated.

*Invictus: A Passion* received its world premiere at St Luke's Methodist Church, Houston, Texas on 25 March (Palm Sunday), conducted by the composer. The European premiere, performed by the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, conducted by Stephen Darlington with soloists of the Sixteen and the Lanyer Ensemble, took place at St John's Smith Square, London on 25 May 2018. A recording will be released on 31 August on the Sixteen's own label, CORO Connections.

The soprano saxophone in this piece is a character. It's not acting as part of the ensemble



## PRELUDES AND FUGUES AFTER BACH

Mozart arr Bernhard Koesling  
Three clarinets  
Edition Dohr

These Adagio and Fugues, nos 1, 3 and 6 from Mozart's K404a, are published as three

separate works. They are considered here in one combined review.

At some point, probably from the early 1780s, Mozart worked on transcribing fugues written by members of the Bach family, arranging them for violin, viola and cello and composing an additional slow preliminary movement. This activity was possibly to impress the future Mrs Mozart, Constance Weber, as she had a thing for fugues. Of the six Adagios and Fugues known as K404a, Bernhard Koesling has arranged three of them for clarinet trio. No 1 in D minor and No 3 in F major are by J S Bach and are from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, while no 6 is W F Bach's Fugue No 8.

These are interesting works and all three clarinet parts are independent and of equal difficulty. The music is almost a transcription,

with the three clarinets taking the role of violin, viola or cello. Clarinet 1 is mainly high while clarinet 3 is almost entirely in the low register, following the cello line which has been brought up an octave where the original falls below the range of the clarinet. Musically the Adagios are lovely to play, particularly the two minor ones, counting in eight quavers and subdividing on top of that. The fugues also work well as transcriptions and the independence of the parts means that all three players need to be competent in order to keep the pulse and rhythms accurate. Fugues may look easy but when you get lost it is very difficult to find a way back in!

Aside from the low third clarinet part, these do work well considering they are string transcriptions. While they are not in the same league as the Divertimenti K439b, which were written for three equal instruments, they do offer good ensemble practice and are a useful study of what happens when a musical idea passes through three different composer/arrangers. Between six and eight minutes each, a single Adagio and Fugue pairing would work well in a concert performance, or they are just good fun to work through in an informal rehearsal session. Score and parts are provided, all clearly laid out. If I had to go for just one it would probably be No 1 in D minor, but I liked them all.

Stephanie Reeve

# music

## MUSIC REVIEWS



## IMPROVE YOUR SIGHT-READING GRADES 1-5

Paul Harris  
Saxophone  
Faber Music

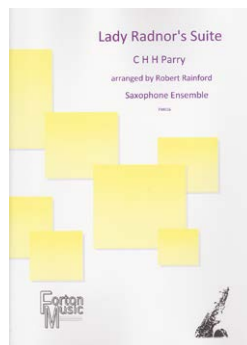
The *Improve Your Sight-Reading* books will already be familiar to most teachers of clarinet, but here is a new edition for saxophone, covering Grades 1 to 5. This edition has been redesigned to support the ABRSM syllabus requirements that came in this year. Earlier editions did not look particularly dated, but Harris and Faber have used

the opportunity to freshen up the appearance. Pages are clearly laid out and user-friendly.

Each grade is divided into three stages which introduce two or three features. Rhythmic exercises introduce new note or rest lengths and time signatures; melodic exercises use rhythmic patterns and introduce dynamic marking, key signature and other musical detail. Prepared pieces cover character and include more variety than the exercises. Plenty of question boxes encourage thought about the pieces and also suggest ways to continue developing, as well as reminders of useful strategies such as clapping the rhythm and counting the beat. Improvisation and composition starter ideas are provided and each stage ends with 'Going Solo!' pieces to work on.

I have not yet taken a pupil through the whole book but I was able to find the right stage to suit the levels of the pupils that did help me test this new edition. The logical progression was understood and those that tried the composition and improvising tasks used the stimuli effectively. The only thing missing – perhaps because this goes without saying – is the instruction to go and join a band or ensemble, as that is the real-world test of sight-reading. However, a mixture of formal and informal learning is the best combination, and this is an excellent resource for teachers and pupils to help improve sight-reading skills.

Stephanie Reeve



## LADY RADNOR'S SUITE

C H H Parry arr Robert Rainford  
Saxophone ensemble  
Forton Music

Parry was a legend. After an early career in insurance he threw it all away to contribute to the Grove Dictionary of Music, becoming professor of

composition at The Royal College of Music where he taught Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Frank Bridge and John Ireland.

Lady Radnor's Suite is a fascinating piece. It's a six-movement suite modelled on the early classical suite of dance movements. The parts are basically for sax octet but the ensemble can be enhanced if the guy with the biggest car owns a bass and has a wild friend with a soprano.

The parts are beautifully arranged and every part has an important entry in the opening fugal 'Prelude'. My favourite movement is the melancholic 'Slow Minuet', which contrasts beautifully with the preceding lively 'Bourée'. I love the space in the arrangement and the fact that there are no passengers. The parts don't go into the danger zones, so the ensemble is safe to take care of what is important, ie the musical line and the flow of the movement. It requires an experienced ensemble and the 'Gigue' starts with alto 1, demanding confident leadership.

Gerard McChrystal