

twisted skyscape

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new music for woodwind orchestra by British composers

PHILIP SPARKE • ADAM GORB • GARY CARPENTER • CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY



Česká filharmonie

CZECH PHILHARMONIC WIND ENSEMBLE
conducted by SHEA LOLIN

"A fantastic way to delve into the colourful world of the woodwind orchestra, with music which is varied but always approachable." **CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE**

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1	OVERTURE FOR WOODWINDS PHILIP SPARKE	6:10
	PANTOMIME* GARY CARPENTER	
2	I. Prologue	2:48
3	II. Cavatina and Polka	2:51
4	III. Dream Calypso and Farewell	4:30
5	IV. Grand March (of the Chief Executive)	3:38
6	V. Waltz—Finale (Depravity)	3:31
	DREAMTIDE* CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY	
7	I. Twilight's Haze	3:35
8	II. Wild Reality	5:13
9	III. A Dream within a Dream	6:29
	BATTLE SYMPHONY* ADAM GORB	
10	I. Flourish; II. Courtly Dance; III. Flourish (reprise)	3:06
11	IV. Sword fighting practice; V. Soldiers' drunken panic; VI. Preparation for battle; VII. The Battle	3:35
12	VIII. Lament for the Dead; IX. Triumphal Dance; X. Flourish (reprise)	3:46
	TWISTED SKYSCAPE* CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY	
13	I. A Natural World	3:49
14	II. The Human Footprint	5:41
15	III. Nature's Conquest	4:42

*World premiere recordings

Total time: 63:24



Czech Philharmonic Wind Ensemble
conducted by **Shea Lolin**

Flute/Piccolo: **Radomír Pivoda, Jan Machat** • Flute: **Petr Veverka, Andrea Rysová**

Oboe: **Ivan Sequardt, Jiri Zelba**

Clarinet: **Tomas Kopacek, Zdenek Tesar, Jaroslav Marek**

Bass Clarinet/Clarinet: **Michal Kostiuik** • Contrabass Clarinet/Clarinet: **Petr Sinkule**

Bassoon: **Jaroslav Kubita, Tomáš Františ** • Contrabassoon: **Václav Vonášek**

Alto Saxophone: **Lukas Dietrich, Pavel Fiedler** • Tenor Saxophone: **Pavel Skrna**

Baritone Saxophone: **Antonin Mülhanzel**

A Divine Art recording • Producer: **Christopher Hussey**

Recorded and Mixed by **Jonas Christian Persson** • Assistant Engineer: **Vitek Kral**

Session Fixer: **Radek Křižanovský** of **TRIART Management**

General Manager of Czech Philharmonic: **Robert Hanč**

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TWISTED SKYSCAPE—the sound of the woodwind orchestra

The purpose of this recording is twofold—to promote British composers and their works, and to promote the woodwind orchestra. Many societies and organisations exist to promote British music, but none exist to specifically support the woodwind orchestra. It's easy to see why—there are very few in the world! The active listener might ask the question: “what is a woodwind orchestra like?” My reply would be, “it isn't like anything else I have heard!”

Civic wind groups in the United Kingdom can be traced back to medieval times. The father of English literature, Geoffrey Chaucer, wrote in his poem *House of Fame*: “*Then I saw standing behind them...many scores of thousands, who made loud minstrelsy with bagpipes and shawms and many other kinds of pipes, and skilfully played both them of clear and them of reedy sound...*”



Shea Lolin conducts the Czech Philharmonic Wind Ensemble in a recording session for this album.

During the sixteenth century, wind music flourished in the courts of Europe. Henry VIII celebrated his coronation in 1509, which included three days of entertainment, with performances from several wind groups. In 1749 Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* was performed as a piece for winds after King George II ordered Handel to remove the string parts. ‘Harmoniemusik’, the term used to describe music for wind ensembles at the time, played an equally important role in the eighteenth century for open-air events and important social occasions. Together with the string quartet, the ensemble and genre most typifies the Classical era. In 1782, Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor, founded his Imperial Wind Ensemble in Vienna. Harmoniemusik had an important influence on the development of the symphony orchestra. Mozart and Beethoven became more daring in the way they wrote for the wind sections in their symphonic works. Anton Reicha and Franz Danzi were chief amongst those pioneering composers of the wind quintet. But by the end of the nineteenth century, interest in this ensemble began to fade.

It was around this time that the wind orchestra became an important vehicle for composers to advertise their operas and orchestral works. Rossini, Liszt and Wagner appointed bandmasters to arrange their works to be performed to the masses at bandstand events. Holst, Vaughan Williams and Grainger began writing original works for the wind orchestra at the turn of the twentieth century. These works were the seeds which grew into the now extensive body of repertoire which exists for the medium. Further into the twentieth century came a renewed interest

in the wind quintet. Many leading contemporary composers have produced wind quintets which have become standard chamber repertoire.

In the United Kingdom much has been done to promote wind music through organisations, institutions, music retailers and passionate individuals, but this is largely focussed on the wind orchestra genre. Indeed, it is the development of the wind orchestra which procured an environment whereby music for the woodwind section was required. Two such works exist on this very recording but it is the later works which explore and develop the deeper orchestral sound of this instrumentation.

Since 2005 I have been Musical Director of the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble, an adult amateur ensemble in central London. It soon became clear that very little material existed for woodwind orchestra and so I began a process of commissioning original works and arrangements for the group which continues today. The second of these original works was created in 2008 when, as part of the Adopt-a-Composer scheme, Christopher Hussey composed *Twisted Skyscape* for the ensemble. Christopher has since composed and arranged extensively for this instrumentation, and through our collaboration, we have both discovered the nuance that can be achieved with this combination of instruments. And so, back in 2013, after conducting a performance of the woodwind version of Christopher's *Dreamtide*, and with a collection of original British contemporary commissions in the library, I resolved to record an album devoted to new works for these forces, in the hope of preserving and promoting the featured repertoire



Shea Lolin & Christopher Hussey discuss the scores at a rehearsal of the music in the Rudolfinum's Suk Hall.

and to encourage more music making in this area. Since that time, Chris and I have spent many, many months laying the groundwork to make this recording happen. We are very grateful for the financial support of our patrons and well over a hundred individual supporters, who have all helped us realise our vision.

This album showcases the woodwind orchestra in all its voices: *Overture for Woodwinds* is bright and lyrical, while *Pantomime* is joyously comical with moments of heartrending nostalgia. A notable shift in the language comes with *Dreamtide*, which is a beautiful expression of the subconscious, with delicate and tender lines. *Battle Symphony* is a pictorial suite containing elements of pastiche in ten highly original sections. The album concludes with *Twisted Skyscape*, a vibrant and excitingly powerful piece. I hope the album will inspire music lovers of all backgrounds. It is a feast which could not vary more from piece to piece. It is a true example of the woodwind orchestra.



Rehearsal at Suk Hall, Prague.



Recording session at Smecky Music Studios, Prague.

Shea Lolín, conductor

Shea Lolín is a dynamic and versatile freelance musician living in London. His principal studies were in clarinet performance, composition and conducting at the Colchester Institute, and he has since developed an inimitable portfolio career as a conductor, performer and teacher.

A major aspect to his conducting portfolio is directing wind groups. These include the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble, City Wind Orchestra, East London Clarinet Choir and the London Woodwind Orchestra. The latter is the result of his dedication to the woodwind orchestra which also led him to record this very album with the wind soloists of the Czech Philharmonic in 2014.

Always putting the accuracy of the music first, he is equally unwavering about the importance of good programming, research and a neat sense of stagecraft. Shea has conducted several world premieres, having secured funding from all the major awarding bodies in the United Kingdom.

He is passionate about music education and is Artistic Director of the 'Woodwind Orchestra Play Day' at premiere venues throughout the United Kingdom, providing amateur musicians with valuable playing opportunities. He runs solo and ensemble courses at Benslow Music in addition to numerous independent societies and groups.

www.shealolin.co.uk



Interview with Shea in Smecky's control room.

1. OVERTURE FOR WOODWINDS (1999)

Philip Sparke

Overture for Woodwinds was commissioned by the Berkshire Young Musicians Trust (Berkshire, UK). They managed a strong wind programme, and it was a feature of their programme to teach wind and brass separately. So, in addition to running several brass bands, they organised a large woodwind ensemble for their student players. *Overture for Woodwinds* was premiered at the Bracknell Music Centre in 1999.

Opening with a strong unison passage, interrupted briefly by faster figures based on the interval of a fifth, the work develops with an often passionate *legato* melody. Reaching a climax, this is followed by the main *vivo* section of the work, whose main theme is based on the earlier 'fifth' figures. A bridge passage leads to a short chorale figure and a rhythmic climax which dissolves into a plaintive solo for oboe over *staccato* clarinets. This theme is taken up by the whole group and leads back to a recapitulation of the main theme and earlier material. The oboe tune returns triumphantly in the major key before the opening unison passage reappears to provide a stirring coda.

Philip Sparke (b.1951) was born in London and studied composition, trumpet and piano at the Royal College of Music, where he gained an ARCM. It was at the College that his interest in bands arose. He played in the College wind band and formed a brass band among the students, writing several works for both ensembles.

At that time, Sparke's first published works

appeared—*Concert Prelude* (brass band) and *Gaudium* (wind band). A growing interest in his music led to several commissions, his first major one being for the Centennial Brass Band Championships in New Zealand—*The Land of the Long White Cloud*. Further commissions

followed from individual bands, various band associations and the BBC, for whom he three times won the EBU New Music for Band Competition (with *Slipstream*, *Skyrider* and *Orient Express*).

Sparke has written for brass band championships in New Zealand, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Australia and the UK, including three times for the National Finals at the Albert Hall, and his test pieces are constantly in use wherever brass bands can be found. A close association with banding in Japan led to a commission (*Celebration*) from and eventual recording of this music with the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra. This opened the door worldwide to his wind band music and led to several commissions, particularly from the United States. In 1996, The US Air Force Band commissioned and recorded *Dance Movements*, which won the prestigious Sudler Prize in 1997. Philip Sparke's conducting and adjudicating activities have taken him to most European countries, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the USA.

www.philipsparke.com



2-6. PANTOMIME (1995)

Gary Carpenter

Much of the material for *Pantomime* is derived from a musical version of *Aladdin*. The suite attempts, in the composers words, “to invoke the shadowy and half-forgotten world of smoky Music Halls, Vaudeville, Burlesque and their later, often televised, incarnations”. It was written as a present for the Haffner Ensemble, who gave the premiere in Hove Town Hall in December 1995.

Prologue opens the suite with boldly articulated notes to gather the attention of the listener. Busy lines fly around, giving the listener a sense of a mythical far-eastern market place. *Cavatina* is a heartrending melody sung by Aladdin as he finds himself alone in a cave. A playful passage signals him finding the lamp. *Dream Calypso and Farewell* opens with a soft, playful calypso evoking a mesmeric slumber. An expressive clarinet and saxophone melody take the centre stage in a love duet between Aladdin and the Princess. *Grand March (of the Chief Executive)* accompanies the first arrival of the Emperor and his court. The composer writes, “The Administration can only be trusted to organise melodies of no more than four notes at a time, and this they usually mess up by arriving in inappropriate keys and providing equal opportunities for the wrong harmonies”. The movement is not without its visual drama too with bells up for the oboes in one section! A proclamation of the opening bars of the *Prologue* call order before making its way into the ballroom for the *Waltz—Finale (Depravity)*. Playful rhythms and articulations keep the witty nature of the score. A coda brings the piece into a fast frenzy to conclude the work.

Gary Carpenter (b.1951) studied composition at the Royal College of Music with John Lambert. He has lived in Holland and Germany and has written operas, musicals, ballets (mostly for Nederlands Dans Theater) and a radio music-drama—*The One Alone* with Iris Murdoch—as well as a substantial amount of concert music. Musical director and/or arranger-orchestrator on many stage shows and films (including *The Wicker Man*), he won the British Clavichord Society Composition Competition in 2004 (*Van Assendelft's Vermeer*) and a 2006 British Composer



Award with his harp trio *Azaleas*. A portrait CD—*Die Flimmerkiste*—is available on NMC.

Recent works include *The Listening Project Symphony* (Radio 4, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, nominated for Prix Europa 2013), *Fred and Ginger* (LSO, Daniel Harding), *Bassoon Concerto* (Alan Pendlebury, RLPO, Vasily Petrenko), *Piano Trio* (Fournier Trio, RPS Prize Nomination 2012), *SET—Concerto for Tenor Saxophone and Orchestra* (Iain Ballamy—tenor sax, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, HK Gruber), *The Food Of Love*—a sequence of 12 Shakespeare songs in four books for choirs and piano, and *Dadaville* for The First Night of the 2015 Proms.

Gary is Professor of Composition at the RNCM, Manchester and a professor of composition at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where he was elected an Honorary Member (HonRAM) in 2013.

7-9. DREAMTIDE (woodwind version) (2012) **Christopher Hussey**

Dreamtide was originally written for mixed choir, with a text inspired by a selection of poems concerning dreams by Lord Byron, William Blake, Edgar Allan Poe and Amy Levy. It was commissioned by Music In Offices as the prize for the winners of their inaugural Office Choir of the Year competition in 2010. This arrangement was commissioned by Shea Lolin and the Bloomsbury Music Group, receiving its first performance by the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble at St. John's Waterloo, London, in March 2013.

*"Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy."*

from 'The Dream' by Lord Byron (1816)

The work comprises three movements, performed in segue. It opens with the sound of breathing, a scored inhalation performed by the players that evokes the sense of a dream, followed by pointed, bell-like entries marking out close harmony. Melodic fragments enter organically and build the texture.

The second movement is faster, dominated by a motor rhythm in 5/4 which pulses brightly. Earlier harmonic progressions are sweetly superimposed over this pulsating figure. New combinations of instruments add colour and nuance, and the music builds slowly but surely, with the motor rhythm becoming evermore imposing.

The third movement sees a sharp contrast, returning to the stillness of the opening, with no

more than a quartet of players at any one time. The tenor saxophone weaves in a jazz-influenced solo line, before the ensemble arrives at a homophonic tutti, which rises in volume with two marked chords at the climax. The piece ends in a similar manner to its beginning, with close harmony and scattered, tender melodies, as the dreamscape concludes.



*Christopher Hussey (producer/composer)
preparing a score at Smecky Music Studios.*

13-15. TWISTED SKYSCAPE (2008) **Christopher Hussey**

Twisted Skyscape was written for the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble, an adult amateur woodwind orchestra based in London and conducted by Shea Lolin, as part of the Adopt-a-Composer scheme, funded by the PRSF and at the time run by the spnm (Society for the Promotion of New Music) in association with Making Music. The project grew into a double commission, with the commissioning of a new silent film with assistance from the National Film and Television School, which was created in tandem with the score. The work was premiered in December 2008

at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, London, and the performance was synchronised with a screening of the film *Flux* made by Matthew Kemp.

The work opens with dark brooding calls from the bass instruments. This is contrasted with shimmering trills and flickers of light in the form of melodic development. Sporadic bursts of movement become more constant with an energetic and articulated section. This gives way to triumphant syncopated fanfare-like passage with an irregular meter. As a climax rises, it is contrasted sharply with the hushed tones of the opening, the music now possessing much greater urgency. This section grows towards the main climax of the piece, marked 'Grandioso' and featuring a diatonic reinvention of an earlier angular theme, this time sitting firmly upon a second inversion F major chord. The work concludes with interplay between chords in the upper instruments and melodic fragments in the lower instruments as it reaches its final cadence.

Christopher Hussey (b.1974) is a composer, arranger, orchestrator, audio producer and educational author. He studied composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama under Malcolm Singer and Robert Saxton, and at the University of Cambridge under Robin Holloway. His original works have been performed internationally and include concert pieces for symphony orchestra, choral music, jazz, music for theatre and film, educational music and music for amateur musicians.

Christopher's music has received acclaim in the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival's Young



Composers Award, Marimolin Composition Competition (USA) and the BBC/spnm's Manchester Platform for Composers. In 2006, Christopher was selected to join the spnm's Composers Shortlist, and he was shortlisted for BASCA's 2012 British Composer Awards, in the Making Music

Award category, for the original choral version of *Dreamtide*.

Recent performances of his work include his Christmas carol *Give From Your Heart*, premiered by The London Chorus conducted by Ronald Corp OBE, and *Songs for Now and Then* performed by the school choirs and County Youth Orchestra of West Sussex, and subsequently by the New London Children's Choir.

Christopher has published over 2000 sheet music arrangements, transcriptions and orchestrations in many genres, including classical music, pop, jazz and film music, and for many different forces, including big band, woodwind orchestra, symphony orchestra and choir. He has devised and written over 150 published educational titles, and is published by many of the leading UK, European and US sheet music publishers.

www.christopherhussey.co.uk

10–12. BATTLE SYMPHONY (1997)

Adam Gorb

Battle Symphony was commissioned by the Berkshire Education Authority and was first performed by the Berkshire Youth Wind Ensemble, conducted by Robert Roscoe, at Leighton Park School in Reading, UK in July 1997. Originally titled *La Batallia*, it is modelled on the highly descriptive programme music so beloved of audiences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where fanfares, drum rolls and general noises of battle are such a feature. The piece is written in a pastiche seventeenth century idiom but with occasional unpredictable expeditions into modern dissonance.

The work opens with a brightly articulated homophonic section for lower instruments with the rest of the ensemble following suit. By contrast, the *Courtly Dance* begins with a flute duet with clarinet chords. A short reprise of the opening brings us to a sword fight, where the upper instruments are featured with sharply articulated notes and high tessituras. This is followed by a section marked 'presto' with canonic entries, which builds to a wild climax of parallel dissonances—the *Soldiers' Drunken Panic*. A solemn and deeply resonant chordal section follows, with flute and oboe interjections. *The Battle* is fierce, with ostinato repeating patterns leading to a percussive climax. A unison tune for the ensemble progresses towards a harmonic sigh, when the bright final section begins. Saxophones begin with an ostinato over which other instruments weave their bucolic outpourings. This builds up to a tutti climax where the opening material is recapitulated for the grand finale.

Adam Gorb (b.1958) studied music at Cambridge University and composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he graduated with the highest honours including the Principal's Prize, in 1993. His compositions include orchestral, ensemble, chamber, solo and choral works, and have been performed, broadcast and recorded worldwide. In the UK his compositions have had performances at contemporary music festivals in Huddersfield, Cheltenham, Hampstead and Highgate, Spitalfields and Canterbury, and he has had concerts entirely devoted to his music in the UK, the USA and Canada. He has been featured composer at Luton and Bromsgrove music clubs.

His concert band composition *Metropolis* has won several prizes, including the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize in the USA in 1994. Three other wind ensemble works—*Towards Nirvana*, *Adrenaline City* and *Farewell*—have won British Composer Awards. His works have been performed by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Maggini Quartet, the BBC Singers, the Tokyo Kosei Wind Ensemble, the Royal Marines and the Ensemble 10/10. Adam is Head of School of Composition at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

www.adamgorb.co.uk





Jonas Christian Persson



Shea Lolin



Jonas Christian Persson, Christopher Hussey,
Shea Lolin & Philip Sparke



Gary Carpenter & Shea Lolin



Christopher Hussey & Gary Carpenter



Gary Carpenter, Tim Watchorn,
Jonas Christian Persson & Colin Izod



*Players of the Czech Philharmonic Wind Ensemble
during the recording sessions:*

*Tomas Kopacek (principal clarinet),
Ivan Sequardt (principal oboe), Jaroslav Kubita
(principal bassoon), Jan Machat (piccolo),
Lukas Dietrich (principal alto saxophone)*





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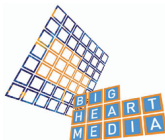
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