



Edward Cowie

The Kreutzer Effect

The Kreutzer Quartet

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Edward Cowie

Glaukopis

Neil Heyde, cello

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|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | I. Athene noctua (Little Owl) | 2:51 |
| 2. | II. Strix aluco (Tawny Owl) | 2:51 |
| 3. | III. Asio flammeus (Short-eared Owl) | 2:30 |
| 4. | IV. Asio otus (Long-eared Owl) | 3:17 |
| 5. | V. Tyto alba (Barn Owl) | 3:48 |

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|----|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 6. | Whatever happened to Icarus? | 17:47 |
| | <i>Peter Sheppard Skærved, viola</i> | |

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|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 7. | One Second Fiddle | 9:48 |
| | <i>Mihailo Trandafilovski, violin</i> | |

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 8. | Menurida Variants | 13:02 |
| | <i>Peter Sheppard Skærved, violin</i> | |

String Quartet No. 7 ("Western Australia")

Kreutzer Quartet

Peter Sheppard Skærved & Mihailo Trandafilovski, violins

Clifton Harrison, viola; Neil Heyde, cello

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| 9. | I. The Road of Flowers | 9:17 |
| 10. | II. Hamelin Pool - Shark Bay | 8:24 |
| 11. | III. The Pinnacles: Nambung National Park | 9:44 |

Total playing time 83:25

Notes by Edward Cowie

STRING QUARTET NO 7 WITH 4 KREUTZER PORTRAITS

For the past eight years and more, I have enjoyed becoming first attached, and then **deeply** attached, to the four members of the truly great Kreutzer String Quartet. They for their part, have performed and recorded six of my string quartets (1-6). It seemed only natural, by 2017 and after a mind-blowing three weeks exploring (north) Western Australia, that I should write a new string quartet, for and with their multiplicity and unique fusion of talents as performers and human beings!

My 7th String Quartet, '**The Western Australian**', is dedicated to the Kreutzer Quartet. Indeed, given the addition of the **Four Kreutzer Portraits**- four 'sonic portraits' of each member of the quartet; beginning with the cello and ending with the first violin- I'm happy to consider the **whole** of this CD as one dedicated to Peter, Mihailo, Clifton and Neil! Hence the somewhat phenomenological title for the project. The 'effect' of this ensemble on the progress and unfolding of my music has been incalculable.

So the more the 'Kreutzer Boys' and I worked together, the clearer it became to me that they were becoming something like a **single instrument that I could play-on at my own will**. Not only have the passing years seen them perform my music with superb poise, ease, technical grace and agility, but it has- I believe- seen the five of us climb or walk into each others' minds and aesthetic. Nowadays, I truly believe they are so familiar with my music that they are able to play it as though it was composed by Haydn or Ravel! However, whilst that may be true of their performances of all six of my earlier quartets, number seven is definitely a new challenge- even for them!

Quartet No 7 'Western Australia'.

I lived and worked in Australia between 1983 and 1995. I visited, studied, explored and creatively responded to a great deal of that continent's east, south and eastern central regions, but I never found my way, (some 4,000 kilometres), to Western Australia until I was able to explore it with my wife in 2017. Nothing could have prepared me for the shock and wonder at its vastness and pervading sense of primevality. The drive from Freemantle to Shark Bay is 600 miles. The road is straight for hundreds of miles. The land on either side of the road is a mixture of scrub, small stunted trees and myriads of wild flowers. It was during the early Australian Spring that we travelled. Not a single plant was familiar to me - even the orchids we found were nothing like the orchids of Europe, which I knew fairly well. Travelling for hours at a time along a straight road and with a constant stream of **new** life forms, I was aware of that, as one would be of a marathon-melody that constantly metamorphoses - here was the possibility of music *that travels and mutates*. There was always a sense of a continuous line but also of 'places' (musical passages), where it is necessary to stop and explore the intricacies and complexity of form at

each pausing-place. It is this constant forward and varying momentum- together with regular 'halts' to take-in details and complexity of things on a much smaller scale- that form the musical materials of the **first movement** of my 7th **string quartet**. At the close, endless horizon becomes a transcendental F sharp in all voices except the first violin, which occasionally slips a dissonant diad against the resolving calm of the F sharp.

The **second and middle movement** travels back 3,500 million years in time. Growing (if that is the right word- coming-into-being might be a better way of putting it), in strange and coruscated dark brown irregular islands of forms in the shallow waters of **Shark Bay**, is an organism so primitive and so ancient that it scarcely merits being described as 'alive' at all. In an area the size of a football field, these blue-green and single-celled algae are thousands of years old and may have been there for thousands of millions of years. You can't walk on them and neither can you approach them close enough to touch- so rare and so important are they in the history of life on earth. I was utterly mesmerised by the import of these strange things. Walking along a raised wooden platform to observe them closely, they have the appearance of something like giant excrescences! However, in addition, there was a glorious paradox there too.

Not only was there a flat plain of electric-blue water under a kingfisher-blue sky but above and under the wooden platforms were the racing, diving, twisting, spinning and weaving forms of dozens of Australian swallows. These birds had built their nests under the walkways. The shade of the wooden slats was ideal for insects. The swallows 'hawked' them in spectacular aerobic displays. Here was the inspirational core of this movement. Blue on blue horizons; ancient primitive and unmoving life forms and the lightning dash of swallows. The movement is a dialogue between movement and stasis and between life and death. As an echo of the first movement, it too vaporises and dissolves into a shimmering stratosphere of possibility.....

The final and **third movement** is inspired by a visit to The Pinnacles in Nambung National Park. The word '*nambung*' is from the Aboriginal and may mean *bending* or *winding* which is what the slow-moving river Nambung does in that National Park. My wife Heather was driving when we arrived in the centre of the park. I was sound asleep after having driven almost 200 miles back down the road of flowers on our way back to Freemantle. I awoke to the sound of the electric window being opened. There before my blinking eyes was a sandy desert with hundreds and perhaps thousands of strange monoliths varying in size from less than a metre to perhaps 3 metres in height. Once amongst them on foot, I realised that it was like a sculpture-park in which the sculptor had played with just about every imaginable variation in form. To the Aboriginals of Australia, this must surely have been a sacred site. Certainly, it filled me with a profound sense of wonderment at the infinite variability of forms in nature and the nature of forms. Processional in nature with a hoped-for atmosphere of mystery and wonder, this final movement closes in a haze of arpeggios- diaphanous and both polyphonic and heterophonic.

When I completed this quartet, I realised at once that it marked a major development in my string quartet writing. There simply isn't anything like it in my earlier quartets, and in many ways, with the exception of my as yet unrecorded String Quintet, (which is concerned with species and behaviours of clouds); I think it may be the most profound piece of chamber music I have composed so far. Its very fabric however, is due to the nature of my friendship and ongoing collaboration with the Kreutzer Quartet. The quartet is a watershed- a zenith- of a fusion between composer and players.

The Solo 'Portraits'

The recording includes four 'sonic portraits' of members of the Kreutzer Quartet. **First**, we have the cello and that means Neil Heyde. In a note in the score, I write '*Neil...reminded me that my one-time tutor in composition, Jonathan Harvey, described the cello as **hermaphroditic**. I know what he meant- not just because of its curious melange of masculine angles and feminine curves, but because it has a voice that can plumb the depths of the male voice as well as ascending, naturally and beautifully, into the realms of the voice of a female.*' **Glaukopsis**, the Homeric name for the goddess Athene but also probably derived from a classical Greek phrase for 'owl-faced' or 'owl-eyed', is described as '*Five atmospheric Nocturnes for Athena*'. It 'places' five different species of European and British owls in their own typical dusk and nocturnal habitats. These may be dark and brooding woods; sparse and remote moorland; jade and black shaded conifer forest or the open pastures of farmland fields and meadows. The first movement is the Little Owl, which has the Latin name **Athene noctua**.

Athene (or Athena) was the classical Goddess of wisdom and war. But paradoxically she was also associated with peace and handicrafts, especially spinning and weaving. Neil Heyde is a Professor in the Royal Academy in London and has a healthy string of academic titles after his name including a doctorate! There is then, in writing a suite of pieces about owls, a deliberate pun or mutative metaphor inasmuch as I wanted to write music '*about clever birds (owls and wisdom are synonymous)*, and I also wanted to write music for a *clever musician*! Passing from little owl to tawny owl and then short-eared and long-eared owls, the suite ends with what (for me at least) is the most charismatic of our native owls- the barn owl. Barn owls fly both at night and daytime. They are 'ghost-white' at a distance though their plumage is actually dappled and 'stitched' (the work of the needle and thread of Athene?) with sulphur-yellows, burnt-orange and blue greys. In flight, they display great grace, but there is something about the glide: about their capacity to spin and turn: to plummet and rocket upwards that imbues them with a kind of sometimes-unnerving avian alchemy. All of these avian and mythological characteristics are evoked in this suite for cello. But I have also tried to write music that embodies Neil's special abilities to 'colour and phrase'. He has a vast array of dynamic and expressive techniques and to see and hear him play is to epitomise an ideal blend of intellect and sensuality in the production of ravishing playing on the cello....

Second we come to one of the most inspiring and splendid violists I have ever heard and worked-with. Once I realised that the progression of the Kreutzer Portraits was going to ascend from the bottom 'C of the cello to the vaporous almost ultra-sonic heights of the violin, I decided to write a piece for Clifton about *ascent and flying*. The viola can act as a kind of 'bridge' between the compass of the cello and that of the violin. What better then (and continuing a Greek mythological theme), than to write a piece about Icarus! It was with great sadness that I heard of Clifton being unable to record this work owing to injury issues. I am profoundly grateful to Peter Sheppard Skaerved for his instant offer to record the piece dedicated to his viola friend.

Whatever happened to Icarus is subtitled '*an aria for solo viola and about Global Warming*'. It begins on the lowest note a viola can play, the mood is dolorous and perhaps slightly claustrophobic. In a series of progress-by-variation(s), the music slowly climbs ever higher. I considered the low beginning as being *music with a low temperature*. But like Icarus, the 'subject' of the music, (in this case Clifton himself of course), the rising music is filled with a sense of wishing to escape the gravity of the base/bass from which the music ascends. But the ascent towards the 'sun' (a zenith of high harmonics), comes at a cost. Ideas are 'burned-away' under the velocity of the music-rising, until at the end, **all** the fertility of the earlier musical ideas are 'vaporised' and dissolved into such high sounds that there is no room for emotion or self-expression. What follows the piece, is that **silence**, the silence of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. It turns out that Icarus is the entire human race. In wishing to progress and **rise**, our species approaches a point of self-destruction- a world-once-noisy left without the 'sounds of life'.

Third we come to the second of the two violins in The Kreutzer Quartet. Mihailo is an extraordinarily gifted composer as well as an outstanding violinist. Amongst several affinities I have with him (we share the same publisher, United Music Publishing), I too am a composer and before a serious injury to my left hand and shoulder in 1964, I was a pretty good violinist myself. Like him, I usually played *second fiddle* in the quartet! The position (I should say 'role') of the second violin in a quartet is an interesting one. First thoughts are that a second violin is simply a duplicate of the first violin and is therefore of less identifiable and noticeable significance than the viola and cello, of which there is only **one** in a string quartet. The doubling of the violin in a quartet is somewhat strange given the constituents of a vocal quartet with four **different** voices- soprano, alto, tenor and bass. A 'chest' of recorders would have at least five different kinds of voices with no duplicates. In the 16th and 17th centuries, collections of **viols** (the precursors of 'modern' violins, violas and cellos), consisted of either **pairs** of 2 trebles, 2 tenors and two basses, or 2 trebles, 3 tenors and a single bass. In any event, by the late 18th century, the string quartet did consist of pair of violins, a viola and a cello. It was a combination that fascinated and became a life-long obsession with Joseph Haydn, who is still regarded as the 'father' of the modern string quartet.

The evolution of what was to become a symphony orchestra had two 'choirs' of violins and single choirs of violas, cellos and double basses. Just how the expression *playing second fiddle* came to epitomise a secondary, complex and significant role in music-making isn't clear. I **do** remember, however, when I first played second violin in a Youth Orchestra, that a lot of my part consisted in less prominent materials than that given to the first violins! They more often played tune to my *um-chug-chug* in minuets and waltzes for example. It was Haydn who first democratised the roles of **all** members of a string quartet. Such are the skills of Mihailo that there was never any question of giving him a role less than equal (and sometimes as foreground) to all other members of the quartet.

The full title of Mihailo's piece is *One Second Fiddle- a piece about Evolution*. I've always been fascinated by plays-on-words. This piece does open with a series of short-time-span musical 'events' which last not much more than one second. But a process of cleavage and fracture begins in these tiny musical 'cells'. They lengthen by means of a biological process of cell-division called Blastulation. Each divided part divides again and again until a much more complex multi-celled structure is created. Blastulation is the process by which complex life-forms are created. So these 'splits' begin to stick together and make a more complex continuum of musical ideas. The 'one second fiddle' has become a 'multi-celled fiddle'!

There are in fact two versions of this piece. One is designed for the concert platform and/or film and the other is for recordings only. This of course is the second version. We quickly become aware of the performer being a somewhat 'strange' person, but like Mihailo, also a person who teaches. '*Listen!* , the player insists. Bit by bit- second by second (time in the form of **seconds**, runs through every facet of the piece) - we realise that an evolutionary process is in motion. Eventually, when the music becomes more and more frantic and frenzied, the player speaks, '*I guess it's time, I guess it's **the** time, I guess **this** is the time*'. Shortly after this, the player starts-up and old metronome set to 60 ticks per minute, which continues to the end of the piece. The climax of the piece comes when the performer whispers, '*give me a minute and a second time to work this out without losing a second and in no time at all I'll have worked this out I promise even though I don't know what time it is because there is no second hand here*'...

Like all of the musical material, these and other words and sounds, have an infinite number of possible meanings and significance. The 'message' here might be one influenced by Beckett. Most or all of it could have been thought and played by one of the two 'strange fellows' in *Waiting for Godot*. Mihailo's own music has (for me at least), a very powerful **theatricality** to it. Of all the members of the Kreutzer Quartet, he perhaps plays more like an actor than any of them! His piece is more than just a series of musical jokes and puns, however. It plays on the very serious business of life itself. I should quote from Jacques, speaking in *As You Like It*.... '*All the world's a stage, And all the men and women **merely** players, They have their **exits** and their **entrances**, And one many in his time **plays many parts***'....

The **fourth** and final piece on the 2nd CD, and the last of the four Kreutzer Portraits, is of and for the resplendent and amazing Peter, the first violin and founder of the Quartet. Peter is a dear and precious friend and way too substantial in character to be just a chip off the same block as me. I might one day have become quite a reasonable violinist (I'm a much better pianist than I expected!), but Peter is unimaginably greater than I could ever imagine for myself. Himself a gifted visual artist and extraordinary polymath (in the Leonardo sense), Peter has commissioned, performed and recorded several major solo works I have composed. So I chose an inspirational focus on a subject very close to my heart- the song and visual displays of one of the world's greatest avian composers, the Australian Lyrebird; (*Menurida* is the Latin name for the species).

I completed a huge cycle of 24 bird-portraits on Australian Birds directly after I'd composed another epic cycle on 24 British Birds. The first was for Violin and Piano (*Bird Portraits* with Peter on violin and the great Roderick Chadwick on piano). The Australian cycle was for flute(s) and piano and recorded stunningly by Sara Minelli on flute(s) and again with Roderick on piano. The last bird in that cycle is the Lyrebird. How better to complete this project than by sharing a personal and deeply moving experience of Lyrebirds with Peter. I lived in Australia for a total of 12 years- half of the time in Wollongong, south of Sydney and the second half in Townsville in North Queensland. My New South Wales home was perched at the foot of Mount Keira - a mountain heavily clothed in rainforest.

Hearing that Lyrebirds lived and bred in the forest on the heights of that mountain, I drove and then walked to a suitable forest habitat at 5 am in the morning. The sky was fast altering from jade shadows and indigo darkness into bronze and fiery copper and red dawn light. It was at this hinterland between night and day that a solitary Lyrebird began his *grand cadenzas on the sonatas of the night*. So magnificent; so complex; so virtuosic and rich was this song that I doubted I could ever compose something that would evoke (not imitate) the magic of that morning. But Peter has done just that in this recording.

My 7th Quartet is dedicated to the Kreutzer Quartet and collectively, so are the four solos. In a description of the process leading to the creation of great poetry, William Wordsworth described **four** stages, (or creative positions), namely: *observation- recollection- filtering- composition*. No four states (and estates) could better describe how I approach musical composition. But neither can they be separated from the methods, talents, desires, skills and realisations of four great musicians, who singly as well as collectively have added new regions and realms of musical possibility to my sonic world and cosmos....

Edward Cowie

August, 2023 - Cumbria, UK.



Recording The Kreutzer Effect

Notes by Neil Heyde, Royal Academy of Music

The dedication of this collection of 'owl pieces' to Athena is not just historically and mythologically appropriate, but speaks directly to what I most appreciate and respond to in Edward's music. (That it is co-dedicated to me is icing on the cake!)

The association of Athena with the Little Owl (*Athene noctua* – the first of the set) belongs to the ancients, and because of it the owl has been symbolically linked throughout our history with knowledge and wisdom (though not obviously with warfare and craft, Athena's other potent connections). There is uncertainty about the way(s) in which this association developed, but it has become a powerful metaphor, as can be gauged by the appearance of one of the most famous, evocative and suggestively poetic passages of 19th-century philosophy on the Wikipedia page for Athena's owl:

Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready. History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. *The owl of Minerva[1] takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering.*

G.W.F. HEGEL, *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT* (1820), "PREFACE"; TRANSLATED BY S W DYDE (1896)

The idea that 'knowledge' comes only at the end of a process strikes me as peculiarly apposite for this piece: I feel it as keenly as a listener as I do as a performer. In English, we use a borrowed French word, *première*, to describe the first performance of a piece of music, but French uses a much more philosophically potent formulation, capturing the idea that the music does not exist – as *music*[2] – until it is performed: *création*. Literally, of course, this can be applied to any piece of music, but whereas some pieces reveal themselves extensively during the process of making, others retain their mystery until they are performed with an audience (and indeed afterwards). It is not an uncommon experience for the Kreutzer Quartet to walk off stage after a first performance talking to one another with surprise at what has just been 'discovered', despite the hours of rehearsal beforehand. Of all of the music I have played I think this is perhaps most true of Edward's, and it is especially so for *Glaukopis*.

Why might this be the case? Partly it is in the essence of Edward's specific approach to nature portraits that they dissolve unpredictably between different kinds of transcription of actual sounds ('songs', calls, cries, and other sounds of the natural world, including flapping, scratching, wind noise etc.) and other kinds of music that capture/suggest environments or habitats, and/or the psychology of interactions with them. Beginning work on *Glaukopis* it is easy to observe specific owl calls, for example, but as one spends time in the music's world, the relationships between the various elements becomes stranger and richer, and even the calls no longer seem to be 'transcriptions' but something with an identity almost entirely their own. It is not uncommon to listen back for the first time to a recording I have made and to be surprised by how the music *feels*, even though I have physically experienced the performance, but here I was struck by a sensuous mystery I did not really expect.

That sensuousness is intimately connected with feeling for the instrument. This is undoubtedly difficult music from a technical perspective, but its difficulty is of what I might playfully describe as the 'right kind'. Edward knows the feeling of a violin in his hands, and by extension the cello. Nothing is a 'reach' or a 'struggle' unless those qualities are somehow ideally captured in the material itself, so the search for technical strategies for tackling the physical challenges is always a hunt for expressive discoveries rather than engineering solutions. Those discoveries are still happening at the moment of realisation, and it is only listening back that I am able to recognise what has happened. The next performances will also bring new discoveries and I hope that something of the sensitive mystery of these owls taking flight 'only when the shades of night are gathering' is present here in a way that captures your imagination too.

[1] Although Athena is not directly equivalent with the Roman goddess Minerva, she is at the core of a syncretic fusion.

[2] Perhaps we might see in this a distinctively 'Athenian' fusion of knowledge and craft?

Violin and Viola: the Lyrebird and Icarus - Peter Sheppard Skærved

It has been my luck, and my honour, to premiere a number of Edward Cowie's extraordinary works for solo violin and solo viola. This journey began in 2017 with his 'G.A.D': this piece which laid a fascinating foundation for my exploration of his works for solo string instrument. A central feature of 'G.A.D.', is that it evokes what happens in real time, to the music, to the player, to the listener, as well as the particular affect of the psychological condition it describes.

This feeling of a 'present-tense' evocation is central to the way that Edward approaches the instrument, the player, alone. When we enter the world of one of these pieces, things begin to happen, and continue happening. Most important of all, however well the player, listener, and I venture to say, the composer, know the music, they will be surprised by what transpires, the journey, the story, that results. And this is the case, even when the outline of the tale is already known, is part of our vernacular, our 'wheel of stories', as J.R.R.Tolkien called it.

We all know the story of Icarus, or we think we do: but in truth, every time we tell, hear, or see the tale, its trajectory takes us aback, is always newly shocking. In this particular, Edward joins an extraordinary circle of story tellers: Ovid, Breughel, W.H.Auden. He brings a vivid new element to their narrative weavings, that of autobiography: He is Icarus, and by extension, viola in hand, so am I. To play Cowie's 'Icarus', is to attempt a hard-won pitch at the vault of heaven...on the viola. Personally, beginning my ascent, I am less Icarus and more Milton's Satan, beginning his earthwards flight at the end of Book Two of *Paradise Lost*:

So he with difficulty and labour hard

Mov'd on, with difficulty and labour he;[...]

The nature of this piece, in performance, and listening, is the realisation that every flight, has to be endured, undergone, essayed. Of course, every artist knows this extremely well, and that it is fundamentally hubris. Woody trenchantly observes about Buzz Lightyear's serendipitous acrobatics:

'This isn't flying, it's falling with style.'

Cowie's solo works for strings take us, to the roots of the extended violin or viola monologue, to passacaglia, and alongside that, or maybe buried within it, chaconne. These are forms about which Edward often speaks, and has remade, with his steps and wingbeats.

'Passacaglia' demands, that we take a 'walk in the street' (as its etymology implies) and that what happens, happens, and keeps happening. As with all journeys, musical settings-outs and arrivals have two simple manifestations, we either leave from one place and either return there, or like Icarus, reach

heavenwards and do not return. Both types of journeys leave us changed, as does this music.

But with both pieces, Edward asks that we begin our travel, our travail, with his works, by getting into to character, wear ‘those clothes, which as it seems, make thee.’ For the violist, in this case, me, the costume is a tragic one, as Icarus’ was, is, or seems to be , a story that we know, or think we know. He, I, am doomed to fail. Playing the piece, I find that I-as-the-doomed boy, gradually finding my way up the range of the viola, towards the Apollo/Helios, have dark thoughts. ‘Am I like my cousin Talus/Perdix, punished for the jealousies and vanity of my father Daedalus? Doomed to be a lost, forgotten, a partridge? What kind of justice is this?’ But then, as I play, I notice that Edward has done something brilliant, the story is transformed. Unlike Breughel’s jewel-like vision of this pathetic ascent and fall, it seems that I/Icarus will not be reduced to ‘the splash, the forsaken cry, [...], the white legs disappearing into the green water’, as Auden would later put it. Cowie, it seems, has other ideas, and I become hopeful, that tragedy might averted. So it transpires: ‘viola-Icarus’ is granted reprieve, even an apotheosis. As I strive to maintain my final altitude, it seems, grace is offered, a release from gravity; the music floats into the ethereal. *Per ardua ad astra* indeed.

Menurida Variants offers a different kind of challenge. more familiar for me, as a devoted performer of Edward Cowie’s music – to be a specific bird. I have performed and recorded, to date, over fifty birds from his aviary! Up till now, these have nearly all been European, and almost all doing birdlike things. But his ‘Superb Lyrebird’ is a complex creature, and consequently this wildly virtuosic (I use both words carefully and precisely) piece offers both adventure, and, yet again, metamorphosis, much of it zoomorphic and anthropomorphic.

The zoomorphic is, bizarrely, the simplest aspect of this; I have to do everything I can, enabled by the extraordinary physical and timbral inventiveness of Cowie’s score, to be the Lyrebird. As so often with Cowie’s music, this *mimesis* is as much to do with movement, as it is to do with song. But there is also vocalisation, amidst all the coruscating fireworks and colouristic inventiveness of the pure violin writing. I am required to literally voice some of the spitting, often sibilant aspects of the Lyrebird’s utterances.

There is also anthropomorphic aspect to this Superb Lyrebird/ *Menura novaehollandiae*. The species is renowned for its extraordinary imitative talent and enthusiasm. But the particular bird in depicted here had an appetite for music, most particularly Haydn.

In amidst music’s indebtedness to avians as our teachers and inspiration, there has long been a creative human reciprocity. In 1622, Giovanni Pietro Olina published his *Uccelliera overo discorso della natura e proprieta di diversi uccelli*. This groundbreaking survey of the characteristics, behaviour and songs of

birds, instructed readers how best to feed captive wild birds so that they sang well. At the beginning of the 1700s, the London music-publisher John Walsh offered *The Bird Fancier's Delight, or Choice Observations And Directions Concerning the Teaching of all sorts of Singing Birds*. And famously, Mozart kept various singing birds from Canaries to Starlings, from his teens until the last few months of his life. He taught one talented Starling to in the mid-1780s, and the singing was memorialised in the finale of his *Piano Concerto No 17*.

So, our Lyrebird is part of a splendid tradition, but sings only Haydn. The moment that gives me the greatest pleasure is when Cowie imitates the Lyrebird singing the opening 1st violin gesture of Joseph Haydn's *D Major Quartet Op 64 No 5*, which famously imitates a Lark. In true Cowie-esque fashion, Haydn's glorious melody is as much about the Lark's brave reach for the sky, as it is in about its song. The Superb Lyrebird not a great aviator, and I think that this example wished it could join it lark in the blue. I sympathise, and remember Wordsworth's sentiment:

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a Faery,
Up to thee would I fly.

Viola, Icarus, Lyrebird, composer, and violinist. We all share the same dream.

1. John Milton – *Paradise Lost*, Book 2, Lines 1020-1021
2. *Toy Story*, 1995
3. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act 4, Scene 2, Line 779
4. W.H.Auden, *Musée des Beaux Arts*, 1938
5. Poems (Wordsworth, 1815)/Volume 1/To a Sky-lark

Reflections on Edward Cowie's *One Second Fiddle*

In November 2020 (the midst of the Covid pandemic), Edward Cowie e-mailed me to describe a dream he had had: the two of us were walking in a wild estuarine habitat; Edward had a violin case with his old violin, and after a conversation about music and nature, he took out his instrument and played a piece that consisted of a 'procession' of one-second pieces. He remembered all the 55 one-second pieces the next day, and wove them into a multi-dimensional work: a network combining filigree-like, detailed, virtuosic cells; their interaction and evolution over time; an exploration of the concept of time (e.g. the interaction between continuous pulse and silent gestures that disrupt the flow and expand the concept); the performer's relationship with the material — playing, talking, acting ...

Much can be said about the fascinating and brilliant relationship between these elements in *One Second Fiddle*. There is a vibrancy and virtuosity about the work which I have not encountered in any other piece (including Edward's considerable string music output, much of which I know in detail, e.g. his quartets and his *Particle Partita* violin duo). I find some aspects of the performance, such as the intricate nature of the virtuosic cells, quite natural; others (talking / acting) were / are more challenging for me. The piece certainly demands a committed and virtuosic approach — but the result, from a performer's point of view, is uniquely rewarding.

What I perhaps find most absorbing about this piece is my personal relationship with the material, and with Edward. His ability to write with such insight and depth with regard to the individual characteristics of a player is wonderful. But I feel that our relationship as composers, or simply, musicians, is also reflected in the music, in ways that I find totally captivating: the fascination with time, particularly as experienced in music and performance; the physical relationship of the performer with the instrument and the audience; the parallels and interaction of musical elements with art, nature, and science; and finally, the complementarity of micro and macro, details and whole. This is a work of miniatures, and simultaneously, of immense scope.

Mihailo Trandafilovski, September 2023

Afterwords

Now that this recording – *The Kreutzer Effect* – is complete, and I've been able to hear the extraordinary results, I'd like to add a few more words to what I wrote earlier. Many composers have benefited directly as a result of direct collaborations between themselves and another musician. Messiaen was profoundly affected by the pianistic skills of his wife, Yvonne Loriod and there's no doubt about the deep influences that the voice of Peter Pears had on his partner, Benjamin Britten.

Several String Quartets have had special partnerships with composers. Terry Riley gained phenomenal support and insights in his work with the Kronos Quartet and Brian Fernyhough has benefited hugely in his collaborations with the Arditti Quartet. I'm one of several lucky composers to have been 'adopted' by the magnificent Kreutzer Quartet. It's been a relationship of almost ten years now and has included premieres and recordings of seven of my string quartets (released on NMC (3,4, and 5) and Metier Divine Arts (1,2, and 7)). But there have also been significant solo and duo works such as my GAD for solo violin and written-for and recorded-by the redoubtable Peter Sheppard Skaerved; and my Particle Partita duo for two violins and recorded by Peter and composer/violinist Mihailo Trandafilovski.

As an ex-violinist (sadly robbed of further development due to a serious rugby injury to my left hand in my early 20s), I have always been fascinated-by, (if not a little fearful-of) the string quartet as a medium for the expression of perhaps the deepest emotions and sensory inventions of my life so far. Whilst a composer may sit in a studio inventing new music with no apprehension of the musician(s) who will perform the music, there is (in my experience anyway), an enormous advantage in **knowing** the musicians concerned in the making of a new work designed for their medium.

From the very first experience of meeting-with and hearing the Kreutzer Quartet play my music, I knew that here was a very special collective of musical minds and personalities. Although my first six quartets were not in fact written for them, quartets 1 and 2 were substantially revised after hearing them play my quartets numbers 3,4 and 6. My music is far from being simple or easy to play yet the Kreutzers have always made my music sound as easy for them as the music of Haydn or Beethoven! However, there is also something about their playing that is transcendent and I know that this is due to their uncanny ability to get inside the music- to take possession of it- and to *shape sound* in a unique and richly inventive way.

This recording is a testament to the brilliance of each and every player and though it saddens me that Clifton wasn't able to play his solo 'portrait piece' due to hand injury problems, his superb playing is a huge part of the quartet's stunning performance of the most profound and (I think) advanced of

my string quartets so far- my quartet number 7: '*Western Australia*'. I'm profoundly grateful to Peter Sheppard Skaerved for performing not only **his** solo violin portrait but also the one written for viola- thus keeping the intent and spirit of every work on this album as part of *The Kreutzer Effect* on my musical mind and imagination!

Edward Cowie

Cumbria. 2023.



Edward Cowie © Chloe Rosser

Edward Cowie

‘Considered by many to be the greatest living composer directly inspired by the Natural World’

Edward Cowie’s first Prom commission was *Leviathan*; a large scale orchestral work premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1975. It marked the first major event in a career that was to gain him national and international recognition for a new kind of ‘voice’ in the music world. Its title, arising from a conjunction between the mighty whale and a book by Hobbes with the same name can be seen as a signal of a composer whose imagination is deeply embedded in and inspired by the forces of nature. Throughout the 1970s and beyond, a stream of works inspired by wild places on this planet flowed into being, works like his sumptuous *Gesangbuch* (1975/6), (just released on Signum Classics), the *American Symphony* (1984), *Mount Keira Duets* (1985), and his powerful Choral Symphony, ‘*Symphonies of Rain, Steam and Speed*’. This immersion in the study of nature was born of a childhood spent in rural Suffolk and the Cotswolds and continues to form the core of his fertile imagination today.

But two further strands underpin and inspire Cowie’s musical practice and ideas. His undergraduate studies in Physics and practical studies in Painting have been integrated into a kind of ‘fusion-world’ of ideas where science, the visual arts and music coalesce in a kind of creative continuum. In recent years, he has increasingly worked towards his music by means of ‘field studies’, theoretical research and painting-drawing. Studies and collaborations with leading physicists, for example, have not only seen exhibitions of his pre-compositional drawings, but have added a body of new music that directly translates scientific theory and experiment into music. His monumental solo piano series *Rutherford’s Lights* was inspired by a study of the relationships between theories of light and colour, and his more recent *Particle Partita* for two violins – with a sonic time-line of the history of particle physics.

These ‘fusions’ of disciplines, the bridges between study and practice are an essential part of the composer’s quest for new ways of forming. Parallels can be found between the linear and pointillist textures, forms, and motifs in his music with the writings and paintings of Klee and Kandinsky. During his period as first Composer in Association with the BBC Singers (2002-5), Cowie produced a string of large and small-scale pieces that moved through landscapes and natural habitats all over the world. *Gaia*, *INHabitAT*, *Lyre Bird Motet*, *Bell Bird Motet* are classic examples of a music that engages with all of the senses in a profound respect for the power that nature has to move us.

Cowie was the first Granada Composer/Conductor with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

between 1982/4. This led to many conducting dates with other orchestras including the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra; the BBC Singers, ABC symphony orchestras of Sydney, Adelaide, Queensland and Tasmania and the Seymour Group and the Australia Ensemble. He was the first Composer in Association with the BBC Singers between 2003/5 and first Artist in Residence with The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for the same period. His work for television has included a major film on Edward Lear for Granada TV and his acclaimed BBC2 film *Leonardo* of 1986. He has also written and presented major radio series commissioned by ABC FM Australia as well as for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

Major public lectures include the Gertrude Langer Memorial Lectures in Australia, and the Kate Springett Memorial Lecture in London as well as a Ruskin Lecture at Oxford. He has been invited to give keynote lectures and recitals all over the world. As a visual artist he has had over 40 one-man shows in important galleries in the UK, Germany, USA, Australia and New Zealand and his paintings and drawings are in public and private collections in 19 countries.

Other musical honours have included a Gulbenkian Award to study at The Royal Ballet; The Radcliffe International Composer's Prize and a Chopin Fellowship to study with Lutosławski in Poland. Cowie acknowledges Alexander Goehr as a major influence (as Cowie's professor and teacher) on his life and work- an acknowledgement that continues in a warm and ongoing friendship.

As an academic, Cowie has held major professorships in two Australian and one British University as well as Visiting Professorships in Germany and the USA. He has two doctorates- a PhD which includes studies in physics, mathematics, music and fine arts and was awarded the first Doctorate in Music (DMus) from the University of Southampton for his work as a composer. He was awarded a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship for inspirational visits to Africa and California, both leading to major compositional outcomes concerned with bringing music to the world that 'warns of the dangers to the wild and living world through the continuing destruction of it at the hands of humanity'.

Cowie's reputation continues to grow world-wide, and new recordings emerge with high praise and appreciation. His collaborations with major soloists and chamber groups are also enlarging and deepening. He still regards the human voice and the chamber-music mediums as the 'the most fabulously rich and varied palette of possibility in the expression of emotion and sensation'.

Cowie returned to Australia to live there permanently in November 2023. He and his visual artist wife, Heather Cowie, intend to continue their exploration of the natural world as vigorously and comprehensively as ever!

The Kreutzer Quartet

The Kreutzer Quartet, renowned in the UK, performs regularly at major London venues and has recorded extensively for the BBC and European networks. Their diverse repertoire spans numerous countries including Italy, France, the US, and Poland. With a strong commitment to musical exploration, they have received critical acclaim for recordings of contemporary composers like Gerhard, Weir, and Birtwhistle, while also delving into classical works, evidenced by an upcoming Beethoven recording. Formed in 1988, their rise to prominence was fuelled by their adventurous repertoire and collaborations with contemporary composers, leading to awards and notable recordings on labels like Metier and Naxos.

Peter Sheppard Skærved – Violin

Peter Sheppard Skærved is acclaimed internationally for performances of a vast range of solo repertoire. His repertoire stretches from the late 16th century to hundreds of works written for him: these include major works by composers by established ‘greats’ such as Hans Werner Henze and George Rochberg, to the many young composers with whom he collaborates worldwide.

Peter is a Grammy-nominated recording artist, with over one hundred critically acclaimed albums to his name. These range from concerto discs with orchestras including the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra to the complete Tartini Solo Sonatas, 24 Telemann Fantasies, cycles of Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert Sonatas, eight discs of solo works from the 1600s and many recordings of the works dedicated to him. Upcoming releases include the Westhoff Suites, complete Julius Röntgen solo works, Bartok Duos, Nielsen solo works, Rode Caprices, and Norwegian traditional Slåtter. Peter is currently performing, filming, and recording on great instruments in the collections of the Library of Congress, Washington DC, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Metropolitan Museum, New York City. Peter is Honorary Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, London, and visiting Research Fellow of Goldsmiths, University of London. He regularly gives masterclasses and workshops at schools across the USA, including Peabody Conservatoire, Vanderbilt University, Ithaca College, Middlebury College, Cornell University and many more.

Peter’s wide ranging ‘Knowledge Exchange Violin’ Project brings together institutions ranging from the National Gallery of Art Washington DC and the Museo Stradivari in Cremona, through to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK, with a linked series of concerts, recordings, residencies, films, recordings, podcasts and much more. To follow this project go to: <https://www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com/?p=30925>

Website: www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com

Mihailo Trandafilovski - violin

Macedonian-born, London-based composer, violinist and educator Mihailo Trandafilovski's latest CD for Métier was released in 2022, and followed albums on Neuma (2021), Métier (2018), Innova (2015), Clarinet Classics (2013) and Lorelt (2011), featuring close collaborators Peter Sheppard Skærved, Neil Heyde, Roger Heaton, Roderick Chadwick, Linda Merrick, Saki Kato, Hugh Millington, Odaline de la Martinez, Lontano, Kreutzer Quartet and the New London Chamber Choir. These enduring creative relationships have been at the centre of his work as a composer and have allowed him to explore and stretch instrumental techniques in idiomatic and often uncompromising ways.

His music has been performed by leading contemporary music groups such as Quatuor Diotima (France), Reconsil Ensemble (Austria), Ensemble Horizonte (Germany), Icarus Ensemble (Italy), Ensemble Fractales (Belgium), Meitar Ensemble (Israel), Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble (Russia), The Cory Band (Wales), the European Contemporary Composers Orchestra; and has been broadcast throughout Europe, America and Asia.

As a violinist, Mihailo has recorded and performed extensively, both as a member of the Kreutzer Quartet and in solo/duo settings; most recently, he released his solo album Step(pe)s (violin/computer) in 2021. He has an avid interest in the application of new music to pedagogy, and has led a number of shared projects among the arts promoting contemporary artistic creativity to a wider audience.

Mihailo's music is published by United Music Publishing.

Clifton Harrison - viola

American viola and viola d'amore player Clifton Harrison has performed as a chamber musician, recitalist, and in orchestras throughout Europe, the United States, Central America, and Asia. He is the viola player in the acclaimed Kreutzer Quartet with whom he has recorded extensively. As a member of the quartet, Clifton has been artist-in-residence at Oxford University, Goldsmiths, Southampton, and Bath Spa University and continues a close association with the Royal Academy of Music and Royal Northern College of Music.

Parallel to his quartet duties, Clifton regularly gives masterclasses, workshops, and lectures worldwide on viola performance, chamber music, artistic and professional development, and topics surrounding his main research areas. He has a strong passion for educating the next generation. Most recently, he has given lectures and masterclasses at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Vanderbilt University (USA), Royal Academy of Music, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music

& Dance, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He is also a viola tutor for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and Nicola Benedetti's Benedetti Foundation.

As a researcher, Clifton focuses on three distinct areas: Seventeenth and eighteenth century viola d'amore music from the Germanic region, Black, Asian and ethnically diverse classical and contemporary composers/sound artists, and South American baroque composers of colour.

Clifton is a graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, America's oldest and most prestigious boarding school for the arts. This was followed by studies at the Juilliard School (violin/viola) and the Royal Academy of Music (modern viola/baroque viola).

In 2019, the Governing Body and the Honours Committee of the Royal Academy of Music elected Clifton Harrison Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM). This honour is awarded to a select number of former students who have made a significant contribution to the music profession.

Neil Heyde - cello

has been cellist of the Kreutzer Quartet since the mid 1990s and has performed extensively as a soloist in the UK, mainland Europe, China and the USA, broadcasting on the major radio and television networks. He has made nearly 50 commercial recordings of music ranging from the 17th to the 21st centuries, expanding the repertoire for both quartet and cello through exploratory collaborations with composers – and by championing music from outside the mainstream. He heads the postgraduate programmes at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where his work focuses on relationships between performers and composers – past and present – and he has held visiting professorships at the Sibelius Academy Helsinki, and the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL.

Performance with electronics has been an important component of his solo work and he worked closely with Brian Ferneyhough on a film project on the Time and Motion Study II (1973-76) and with Jonathan Harvey on Advaya (1994). He has recently released the outcome of a long collaboration with American composer Richard Beaudoin (Dartmouth) under the title Digital Memory and the Archive (New Focus Recordings). Each of these six groundbreaking pieces is a form of transcription of an iconic recording: Argerich playing Chopin, Casals playing Bach, Debussy playing Debussy, Gould playing Schoenberg, Monk improvising on Johnny Green, and Maggie Teyte and Alfred Cortot performing Debussy.

Next up he is leading a project to record a double disc for Métier of the music of Justin Connolly, with the cello at the centre. Connolly has slipped from the public stage in the last decades, but in a 1988 interview Pierre Boulez indicated that he was one of only five British composers who interested him

during what he described as 'golden years' in London. Justin wrote a cello piece for Neil in the 90s, and working with a close group of collaborators to bring this extraordinary figure back to life is exactly the kind of project for which his joint role in the Kreutzer Quartet and at the Academy could have been custom made.



Composer Edward Cowie with violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved © Malene Sheppard Skærved

Recording days:
7th Quartet - 7th June 2022,
One Second Fiddle & Glaukopsis 28th June 2022
Icarus 21st June 2023
Menurida 19th February 2023
Hastoe Village Hall, Herts
Engineer: Jonathan Haskell
Producer: Peter Sheppard Skærved

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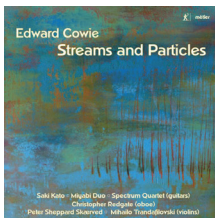
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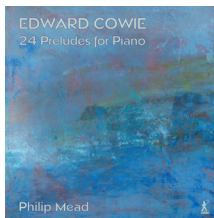
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Further Recordings from Edward Cowie



Streams and Particles

MSV 28612



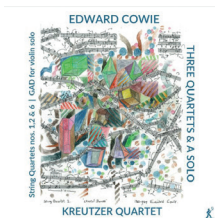
24 Preludes for Piano

MSV 28625



Orchestral Works

MSV 92108



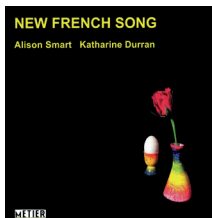
Three Quartets and a Solo

MSV 28603



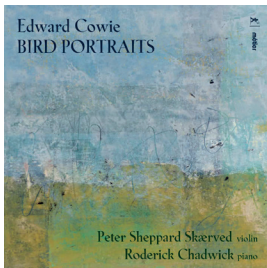
New Music for Oboe Vol. 2

MSV 28531



New French Song

MSV 92100



Bird Portraits

A cycle of 24 'sonic portraits' of different British birds from 4 distinctive habitats. After much study and extensive field-work, Cowie has drawn even closer to composing music that not so much imitates nature, but understands and portraits the birds, how they sing and their environment.

Peter Sheppard Skærved violin

Roderick Chadwick, piano

MSV 28619

"Cowie strives to depict the birdsongs as they really are, and they do often stand out with remarkable clarity"

– British Music Society

Where Song was Born – 24 Australian Bird Portraits

The second of the 'Bird Portraits' cycles featuring 24 of Australia's remarkable birds. Following British *Bird Portraits* (Métier MSV 28619), it contains new music with highly original treatments of the relationships between the bird singers and where and how they sing.

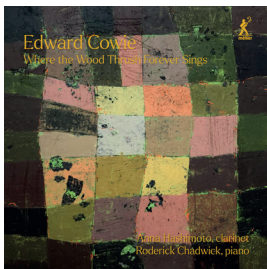
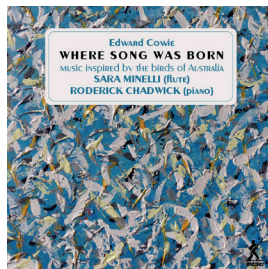
Sara Minelli, flute

Roderick Chadwick, piano

MSV 28620

"Cowie has created a stunning sonic tapestry"

– Fanfare



Where the Wood Thrush Forever Sings

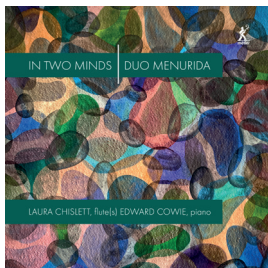
The third of the 'Bird Portraits' cycles. In this latest cycle, Cowie draws inspiration from the avian wonders of the Americas, presenting a symphonic ode to 24 distinct bird species.

Anna Hashimoto, clarinet

Roderick Chadwick, piano

MEX 77104

"Cowie is an endlessly inventive composer and this is a treat." – BBC Music Magazine



In Two Minds - Duo Menurida

Duo Menurida is the collaboration between composer Edward Cowie (piano) and renowned Australian flautist, Laura Chislett. The album, a testament to their enduring creative connection, offers a unique fusion of musical expression and the natural world

Edward Cowie, piano
Laura Chislett, flutes
MEX 77121

Upcoming Recordings from Edward Cowie:

Rutherford Lights
MEX 77116

Where They Have Songs (Bird Portraits 5)
MEX 77122

Piano Sonatas 1-3
MEX 77123

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Left to right:

Peter Sheppard Skærveld, Edward Cowie, Heather Cowie, Clifton Harrison,
Mihailo Trandafilovski and Neil Heyde



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