

Michael Finnissy

Folklore



METIER

Of the many characteristics which define FOLK-music, so wisely and clearly expounded in A.L. Lloyd's *Folk Song in England*, the preoccupations here are with melody (line) without harmonisation (without reference to Harmonic system); a critique of traditional models (though these might stem equally well from art-music); PRIVATE utterance (as distinct from PUBLIC - some folk singers would not divulge certain songs to collectors because they were too precious); a lack of commerce (none of the pieces were written for money, but for love, or to find out what would happen).

In general these pieces are composite and dialectical rather than singular, drawing on different (not necessarily harmonious) cultures and aesthetic-values. 'We are all bearers of some sort of folklore' writes Lloyd, and *Folklore* is intended as an investigation of my own cultural - primarily musical - assimilating. The second (and longest) of the four chapters (recorded here) is dedicated to Sir Michael Tippett (a controversial 'assimilator' himself), making reference to the Afro-American spiritual song *Deep River* which concludes Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*. The chapter is self-sufficient, though it shares materials with the rest of the work - most noticeably the elaborately ornamented modal-line (sustained by the pedal) derived from pìobaireachd - traditional Scottish highland bagpiping.

Other elements are drawn from Rumanian lullabies, ancient Chinese music, Blues, the work of Christian Wolff and Cornelius Cardew, Sussex folksong ('Yonder stands a lovely creature'), reminiscences and variants of Norwegian folk material from Chapter One.

I started composing very early (about four years old), imitating and without tuition, being drawn to musics sensually more than intellectually. The *Polish Dances* (the first two divide three originals between them: 1 plus 2; 2 plus 3) are undoubtedly influenced by Bartók (*Mikrokosmos*, the *Allegro Barbaro*). They take melodies from a volume ('Polskie tance ludowe') given to my parents by a Polish Air Force friend during the Second World War. Other influences were Prokofiev and Satie (my classwork prize at school, aged thirteen, was Rollo Myers' biography of Satie - into which I inscribed a quote from Boulez: 'Le musicien est toujours suspect, dès qu'il a l'intention de ses livres à une introspection analytique'); *Vieux Noël* harmonises the traditional Basque Annunciation-carol certainly more in the manner of the earlier French master.

Three Dukes = Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, - overlaying 'high' and 'low' culture (songs are about something, what is the 'image' of a duke?). The three love songs (Scots, Irish, English) focus on particular compositional notions: respectively - drones; single-note harmonic colouration; editing and eliding (resonance from 'silently'-depressed keys in the bass register).

Terekkeme was originally written for harpsichord, an imitation of, rather than quoting, Azerbaijani folk-dance. The piece alternates (loud) monody and (quieter) two-voice organum.

Lylyly li originated (idea only) in the Hessischen Landes museum, Darmstadt - in the Joseph Beuys exhibit, and particularly in the lists of words (names? places?) in 'Zwei Fräulein mit leuchtendem Brot'. What is *Lylyly li*? The nonsense refrain of an old song? Morse-code 'V'? I started writing it in Amsterdam, staying with my friend Marijke Verberne, teaching at the Conservatorium, finding the source-material (Rumanian folk music) in De Slegte.

The *Australian Sea Shanties* (the first set is for amateur choir, the third for recorder consort) were written in Murrumbidgee, where I was living while composer-in-residence to the city of Caulfield (just outside Melbourne), pondering wide-spaced counterpoint, loneliness, exile, quiet dynamics.

Svatovac is a souvenir from teenage years, when I was accompanist to the Russian-style ballet-classes and folk-dance displays of (as was then) Yugoslav teacher Maria Zybina. I notated the melody from a recording, and a rhythmically more literal transcript was published in *The Dancing Times*.

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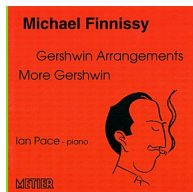
Born in London's Tulse Hill in 1946, Michael Finnissy began composing very early in life. Formal study at the Royal College of Music in London with Bernard Stevens and Humphrey Searle, composition, and Edwin Benbow and Ian Lake, piano, was followed by study in Italy with Roman Vlad.

His role as teacher has encompassed the Dartington International Summer School, Winchester College, the junior department at the Royal College of Music, Chelsea College of Art and many universities as guest lecturer. He currently teaches composition at Sussex University, where he is a research Fellow, and at the Royal Academy of Music.

As composer, he has been recognised in numerous festivals, including Huddersfield and Almeida. His music is increasingly receiving the attention of broadcasters and record labels - notably METIER, NMC, BML and ETC. METIER has recorded other works by Finnissy, including the works for string quartet (MSV CD92011) - due out in April 1998 - and is going into the studio with Ian Pace during the early part of 1998 to record the *Verdi Transcriptions*. Keep an eye on the press for further METIER releases of works by Finnissy and other important contemporary composers. Write to Metier Sound & Vision, P.O.Box 270, Preston, Lancs, PR2 3LZ, England for more details (Tel. 01772 866178).

A new book on the music of Michael Finnissy, *Uncommon Ground* - edited by Henrietta Brougham, Christopher Fox and Ian Pace - is published by Ashgate.

The Michael Finnissy collection from Métier & Divine Art Records

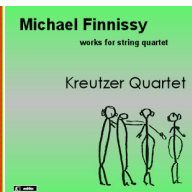


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Gershwin Variations

Ian Pace (piano)



Works for string quartet

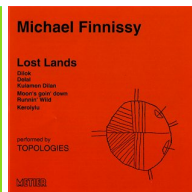
Kreutzer Quartet



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Verdi Transcriptions

Ian Pace (piano)



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Lost Lands

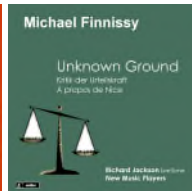
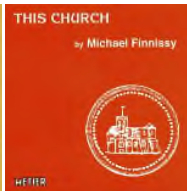
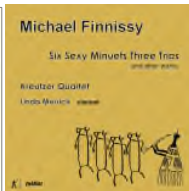
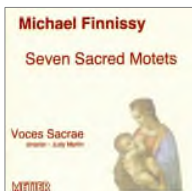
Topologies

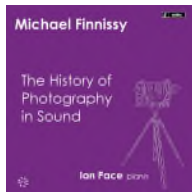
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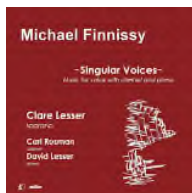
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Grieg-Finnissy Piano Quintets
Roderick Chadwick (piano)
Kreutzer Quartet



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'Mississippi Hornpipes'
Darragh Morgan (violin)
Mary Dullea (piano)



MSV 28557
'Singular Voices'
Clare Lesser (soprano)
David Lesser (piano)

Other works by Michael Finnissy can be found on Métier and Divine Art albums.

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Michael Finnissy

Folklore

works based on folk music

Michael Finnissy - piano

1	Folklore II (1993-94)	29:38
2	Three dukes went a-riding (1977/96)	3:57
3	My love is like a red red rose (1990)	3:40
4	How dear to me (1991)	4:31
5	Willow willow (1991)	2:34
6	Vieux Noël, Op.59 No.2 (c.1958-59)	1:03
7	Australian Sea Shanty, Set 2, No.1 (1983)	1:30
8	Australian Sea Shanty, Set 2, No.2	1:27
9	Polskie Tance, Op.32, No.1: Kujawiak - Kozak (1955/62)	0:25
10	Polskie Tance, Op.32, No.2: Kozak - Drobny	0:36
11	Polskie Tance, Op.32, No.3: Kujawiak	0:59
12	Polskie Tance, Op.32, No.4: Zbójnicki	0:55
13	Terekkeme (1981/1990)	3:20
14	Lylyly li (1988-89)	8:25
15	Svatovac (1973-74)	0:46

All the works on this recording are published by Oxford University Press

Track 1 was recorded in St Martin's Church, East Woodhey
on a Steinway D piano supplied by Jeffrey Shackel Pianos on 24 November 1994

Tracks 2 to 15 were recorded at Nottingham University on 11 September 1997

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