

SOMM
RECORDINGS



WOOD ON THE TRACKS

cellophonics



FIRST RECORDINGS

The human voice aside, there is surely no instrument better suited to a homogeneous ensemble than the cello. Presented en masse, its regal tone and five-octave range allow for limitless harmonic and contrapuntal expression. Add to this a wide palette of timbres – arco (bowed), col legno (struck with the wood of the bow), pizzicato (plucked), sul ponticello (bowing towards the bridge), tapping (fingers on cello) and countless more – and a level of musical eloquence emerges that other same-instrument ensemble combinations struggle to rival.

The demand for multi-cello compositions inevitably comes from places where cellists congregate – orchestral cello sections, cello departments at schools and conservatoires, and collective pupils of private teachers – meaning the practice of multi-cello composing is as old as the instrument itself. From early Baroque pioneers like Jean-Baptiste Barrière in France, through Boccherini in Italy and Spain and on to the extensive German Romantic multi-cello tradition of Julius Klengel, Wilhelm Fitzenhagen and Georg Goltermann, these works tend to be by cellist-composers, though there is a growing tradition – especially championed by “The 12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic” – of commissioning new works from non-cello composers.

Although much cello quartet “repertoire” actually involves arrangements of other works, the eight cello quartets on this album are all original works. Five of them were specially commissioned by Cellophonics, and all of them – apart from the quartet by Marie Dare – are by non-cello composers.



The parts and full score of the opening work, the **Suite for Four Cellos** by York Bowen (1884–1961), were discovered in manuscript by Ben Rogerson in the music library of his late grandfather Haydn Rogerson. Haydn had been principal cello of the Hallé orchestra under Hamilton Harty and John Barbirolli, and the manuscript was amongst music he had inherited from the London Violoncello School, a branch of the Royal Academy of Music founded by Herbert Walenn in 1919.



York Bowen

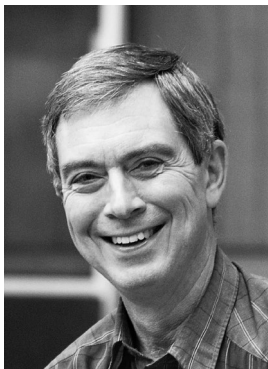
Long considered lost, the quartet was known to York Bowen's biographer Monica Watson: "[In 1930] four pupils of the well-known cello teacher Effie Richardson played a piece written specially for them by York – a suite for four cellos. The suite had three movements – Prelude, Sarabande and Gigue – and one of the cellists was 12-year-old Jean Hill."¹ The BBC *Radio Times* then lists the work as being broadcast on November 5th, 1935 by the Rapaport Violoncello Quartet: Florence Hooton, Dulce Rapaport, Edna Elphick and Nancy Neild, all students of Douglas Cameron at the Royal Academy of Music.

In his day a highly noted British composer and pianist, York Bowen made the first recording of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto and premiered Walton's *Sinfonia Concertante*. Prolific in compositional output, he was also a professional horn and viola player (the present work is unrelated to his *Fantasie Quartet for Four Violas, Op.41 No.1* of 1907), and though his music was widely admired in his earlier years, his essentially conservative language lost favour after World War II; it is only in recent decades that the genuine musicality and heartfelt expression of his work have found new audiences. Although the movement titles

1 Monica Watson, *York Bowen – A Centenary Tribute* (Thames Publishing, 1984).

of the *Suite* acknowledge the 18th-century stylisation fashionable in the opening decades of the 20th-century, Bowen's musical language is not unlike that of his better-known contemporaries Vaughan Williams, Bax and John Ireland.

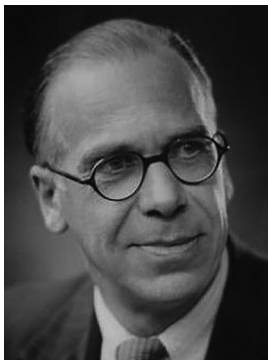
Photo © 2012 New Line Cinema



Roderick Elms

This work is followed by the **Divertimento for Cello Quartet** by Roderick Elms, born in London in 1951. A well-known composer, pianist and organist, and a frequent broadcaster with the BBC Concert Orchestra, his *Divertimento* was premiered by Cellophonics at Brentwood Cathedral in February 2025. Elms writes: "I wanted to explore the wonderfully lush textures available for four cellos, and this approach is evident in the lyrical central section. This is framed by the highly rhythmic, and somewhat jazz-influenced, outer sections, with syncopated rhythms tossed around between the four cellos. I thought it might be fun to have a slightly obscure opening section that, in the context of contemporary music, might lead the audience into a false sense of expectation."

William Alwyn (1905–1985) was a remarkably industrious British composer and professional flautist – as a young man he composed 13 string quartets before completing one he considered worthy to be termed "No.1". It is surely Alwyn's practical approach to composition (his output included around 200 film scores) and his mastery of instrumental writing that endeared his music to professionals and amateurs alike. Alwyn studied at the Royal Academy of Music, and it was in the Lecture Hall of that institution that his **Two Irish Tunes for Cello Quartet** was given its first performance on June 8th, 1933 – by the same Rapaport Violoncello Quartet that was to broadcast the York Bowen two years later, but on this occasion with Peter Beavan in place of Nancy Neild.



William Alwyn

The contrasting Irish folk tunes arranged instrumentally by Alwyn are “They Say My Love Is Dead” and “A Wee Bag of Praties” (“praties” meaning potatoes!). The setting is naturally light in character and remains highly attractive – the composer’s chosen tenor register throughout is most suitable for the original lyrical expression.

The step from the Irish folk music underpinning Alwyn’s transcriptions to the modern language of the contemporary West Country-born Julia Simpson is an indication of the traversal of musical language during some 100 years. Julia Simpson was born in 1977 and grew up in Dorset before studying composition at Royal Holloway, University of London with John Woolrich and Simon Holt. Since then she has established herself as a wide-ranging

composer, particularly for the theatre. According to NMC Recordings her music “could be described as macabre”, although an underlying (occasionally overlaying) vein of humour is also discernible. **Mariposa** traces the incredible four-generation journey of migration made each year by the monarch butterfly, from Canada to the mountains of western Mexico and back. The hand-clapping that begins the piece represents Mexican villagers around a campfire awaiting the arrival of the butterflies, which form a kaleidoscopic cloud of beautiful colour around the time of The Day of the Dead, carrying within them – according to the folklore of the Purépecha people – the souls of their ancestors.



Julia Simpson

Photo © Mike Floyd



Rowland Sutherland

Rowland Sutherland is one of the most multi-gifted musicians and creative figures currently before the public, master of a wide range of disciplines and musical styles. A poet as well as a musician, one of his verses in Haibun style (a traditional form of Japanese poetry that combines prose and haiku construction) forms the basis for the present work, **HOPE**. The musical architecture reflects the A–B–B1–C structure of the poem and the expressive mood of the text:

HOPE *Rowland Sutherland*

The road turns rough, and I find myself stumbling through shadows thicker than thought.

Every path feels blocked; every breath, an effort.

Yet even here, something faint stirs – not certainty, but a stubborn thread pulling me forward.

Hope doesn't erase the dark;
it simply whispers: walk on.



Marie Dare

Marie Dare was the most significant Scottish-born cellist–composer of her day. Born in 1902 in Newport-on-Tay in the north-east region of Fife, she studied cello and composition at London's Trinity College, and following additional cello lessons from Paul Bazelaire in Paris, she gave a debut recital at London's Aeolian Hall in 1919.

Before World War II, during which she served in the Women's Royal Naval Service (the "Wrens"), Dare gave frequent broadcasts and composed much chamber music.

After the war she returned to Scotland, where she continued her twin careers, and added a third – professor of cello at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. Although the decades following the War saw composition assume a less prominent role in her life, her set of **Six Pieces for Cello Quartet**, published in 1958, demonstrates her twin gifts in undiminished fashion. From this set we hear the nobly beautiful fourth piece, “Aria”.



Photo © James Christos

Guy Barker

Born in Chiswick, West London, in 1957, Guy Barker is one of Britain's most admired jazz trumpeters, though musical gifts beyond instrumental playing were soon evident and encouraged to the point where his original contributions to various disciplines – as performing musician, conductor, composer, arranger, director – have been universally distinguished. Nor has every aspect of Barker's original music been created for jazz ensembles, as the intriguingly entitled **Wood on the Tracks** demonstrates.

It wasn't until he completed the work that Barker realised he had written a piece about trains. The second movement, he decided, follows a fast train across Philadelphia, hence his chosen title, *Altoona Express*.

For the first movement, he needed the name of a long, heavy five-miles-per-hour train winding its way along an Idaho river. Author friend Rob Ryan stepped in to help: “I’ve found your train... it’s called the Big Ugly!” Then Ryan's neighbour – a recording engineer – came up with the piece's overarching title, *Wood on the Tracks*, cello-reflecting Bob Dylan's influential 1975 album *Blood on the Tracks*.



Simon Baggs

Another multi-talented British musician presented on this album is conductor, composer and violinist Simon Baggs. Born in Reading in 1973, he grew up in a village in the North Wessex Downs before studying at Wells Cathedral School and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. As a violinist he went on to give world premieres of chamber music by Morgan Hayes, Marlos Nobre and Elisabeth Lutyens and toured the world as a member of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He is now principal conductor of the St George's Chamber Orchestra in London and after 30 years researching the *Enigma Variations* has become a recognised authority on Edward Elgar. His forthcoming book on that masterwork presents what he believes to be the first comprehensive solution to the work's central mystery.

After a 30-year break, Simon returned to composition in 2023 with a double concerto for violin and clarinet, *Rayon de Soleil*, followed by five more works in the course of 18 months. His recently completed works include a cello sonata and two works for solo piano; a nonet for strings is his next commission. The present piece, **Soliloquy** for four cellos (2024), was "written in two all-night compositional fits.

"Although written for four cellos, the work stands as the utterance of one voice, where the melodic material central to the work is passed around the ensemble. It is elegiac in character and represents something of a reflection of a past time. The use of the cello's high register is a distinctive characteristic of the work – one which helps create its pensive nature."

© Robert Matthew-Walker, 2026



Ben Rogerson · Adrian Bradbury · Ian Burdge · Christopher Allan

Champions of all things Cello, **Cellophonics** is the groundbreaking, innovative quartet of cellists Christopher Allan, Ian Burdge, Adrian Bradbury and Ben Rogerson. Since initially coming together for fun, they have performed at festivals throughout the UK and in Ireland, amongst them Chichester, Petworth and Dublin's Spike Fest. They have produced their own Valentine's Tour during the last three Februaries and have been invited to play in prestigious series including the Hugh Lane Gallery, Upstairs at Ronnie's and Jennie Musckett's Music With Love.

One of the qualities often commented upon about their performances is the very palpable feeling of friendship that radiates from the stage. As individuals they have each carved their own niche in London's musical world – be that in the worlds of orchestras, chamber music and solo recitals, musical theatre, dance, opera or commercial sessions. These different experiences feed into the group but also bring so much to the courses, workshops and masterclasses they have devised to inspire both adult amateurs and the next generation of cellists under the auspices of organisations such as the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Chichester University and the Surrey Music Academy.

With the generous support of the Alwyn Foundation, the Hinrichsen Foundation, the Marchus Trust, and a very generous anonymous donor, they have been able to expand the cello quartet repertoire by commissioning new works and rediscovering lost masterpieces. Simon Baggs, Guy Barker, Roderick Elms, Julia Simpson and Rowland Sutherland are amongst the composers who have written especially for them – works by William Alwyn, York Bowen and Marie Dare amongst the treasures they have revealed.



After graduating from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama **Christopher Allan** joined the acclaimed contemporary group “the gogmagogs”.

He plays with the Britten Sinfonia, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the Scottish Ensemble and is co-principal cello with the Orchestra of the Swan.

Christopher is an active chamber musician, performing with the Le Page Ensemble and the Fibonacci Sequence amongst others.

He was solo cellist with the Mike Westbrook company and has collaborated with numerous creators, including John Tavener, Max Richter, Django Bates, Stephen Warbeck, Errollyn Wallen and Paul Clark.

His interest in contemporary and cross-arts work has led to associations with an array of different projects and artists, from Gare St Lazare’s “Here All Night” (an exploration of music in the work of Samuel Beckett), to the Clod Ensemble and Hofesh Shechter.

Christopher has curated many concerts and is founder of “Music on the Pond”, a series of intimate concerts above his local corner shop.

He has made a number of recordings, including Hans Gál’s *Sinfonia Concertante* with Kenneth Woods (solo cello), Philip Glass’s *In the Penal Colony* with Music Theatre Wales and Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* with the Le Page Ensemble. Christopher plays a William Forster cello built in London in 1800.

Adrian Bradbury was a scholar of Churchill College, Cambridge (in Veterinary Science and Music) and then the Royal Academy of Music.

After further study in Berlin he developed an international career in chamber music as the cellist in Composers Ensemble (winners of the Royal Philharmonic Society Chamber Award, 2002), Jane's Minstrels, Trio Gemelli, Touchwood Piano Quartet and Chamber Domaine, giving countless world premieres of solos and chamber works by composers including Thomas Adès, Guy Barker, Judith Bingham, Tansy Davies, Dai Fujikura, James MacMillan, Robert Saxton, Naresh Sohal, Hugh Wood and John Woolrich.

A regular guest principal player with most of the major British orchestras, he is also Cello Tutor to the National Youth Orchestra.

His research into ensemble synchronisation, with Professor Alan Wing, is published by the Royal Society, and his discography includes the complete operatic fantasies of 19th-century cello virtuoso Alfredo Piatti (with Oliver Davies, on Meridian) and *The Pre-Raphaelite Cello* (with Andrew West, on SOMM).

Ian Burdge graduated from the University of Surrey, where he studied with Alexander Baillie, and was awarded the Robert Naylor Memorial Prize. He also spent a year at the University of North Texas, learning with Carter Enyeart of the Philadelphia Quartet.

After graduating he co-founded the string session group Millennia Ensemble and spent his early years in London as a member of the band Drugstore and as resident musician for Corali Dance Company, alongside performing in acclaimed musical theatre productions, including touring on *Beauty and the Beast* and *Miss Saigon*.

Ian has been a long-term member of the Max Richter Ensemble and the Nitin Sawhney band and has performed live with a range of renowned ensembles including the Jules Buckley Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, LSO and LCO, the Heritage Orchestra and the New Blood Orchestra with Peter Gabriel. He has toured for the Rosas dance company with the Duke Quartet, with Jocelyn Pook, Natacha Atlas & the Mazeeka ensemble, Hans Zimmer and John Metcalfe, as well as for live shows with Stevie Wonder, U2 and The Who, amongst others. Ian enjoys collaborating with and writing orchestrations for artists such as Jasdeep Singh Degun, Doves, Garou and Elbow, and has arranged and played live music for Harris Reed's shows, opening London Fashion Week in 2024 and 2025.

He now works predominantly as a session cellist on film soundtracks as well as on pop, television, film and video game recordings. He has featured on numerous studio recordings for artists such as Radiohead, Kylie Minogue, Florence and the Machine and Paul McCartney. Recent films include *Wonka*, *No Time to Die*, *Batman*, *Andor*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *David Attenborough: Ocean* and Pedro Almodóvar's *Room Next Door*.

He is a frequent chamber musician with various groups and has been instrumental in playing and organising regular chamber concerts in the Goodness Brewery and other London venues. Ian plays an English cello by John Betts (c.1790).

Cellist **Benedict Rogerson** is a member of the BBC Concert Orchestra (BBCO) and the London Mozart Players.

He spent the noughties touring the world with the Irish Chamber Orchestra, giving concerts with artists including Maxim Vengerov, Steven Isserlis, Anthony Marwood and Nigel Kennedy in venues as wide-ranging as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Forbidden City in Beijing and the Community Centre on Inishbofin off the west coast of Ireland.

His life with the BBCO involves a genuinely eclectic range of music-making. They play classical, jazz and pop concerts and record music for TV, film and radio, as well as for posterity. "Friday Night Is Music Night" (Radio 3) and "Piano Room" (Radio 2) are their flagship shows. Artists they have recently worked with include Earth, Wind & Fire, Kylie Minogue, the Pet Shop Boys, Ed Sheeran and Robbie Williams, to mention a few.

Ben's recent solo performances include concertos by Beethoven (Triple), Brahms (Double), C.P.E. Bach (A major), Dvořák, Haydn (C major) and Shostakovich (No.1).

In the chamber music field he has played second cello with the Carducci, Merchant, Tippett and St Paul Quartets in performances of the Schubert Quintet.

Ben studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where his cello teacher was Derek Simpson, and at SUNY Purchase (New York) with Julia Lichten. He teaches the cello at the Royal Grammar School and privately at his home in Guildford.



SOMMCD 0731

WOOD ON THE TRACKS

cellophonics

Christopher Allan · Adrian Bradbury
Ian Burdge · Ben Rogerson *cellos*

York Bowen (1884–1961)

Suite for Four Cellos *

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|---|----------------|------|
| | [9:08] | ⑧ | HOPE ** | 7:41 |
| ① I. Prelude | 3:33 | | | |
| ② II. Sarabande | 2:49 | | | |
| ③ III. Gigue | 2:45 | | | |

Roderick Elms (b.1951)

- | | | | | |
|---|--|------|--|--|
| ④ | Divertimento for Cello Quartet ** | 8:03 | | |
|---|--|------|--|--|

William Alwyn (1905–1985)

Two Irish Tunes for Cello Quartet * [5:42]

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|--|--|--|
| ⑤ I. They Say My Love Is Dead | 3:38 | | | |
| ⑥ II. A Wee Bag of Praties | 2:04 | | | |

Julia Simpson (b.1977)

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--|--|
| ⑦ | Mariposa ** | 13:28 | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--|--|

A monarch butterfly migration story

Rowland Sutherland

- | | | | | |
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Marie Dare (1902–1976)

Six Pieces for Cello Quartet

- | | | | | |
|------------|------|--|--|--|
| ⑨ IV. Aria | 3:49 | | | |
|------------|------|--|--|--|

Guy Barker (b.1957)

Wood on the Tracks ** [11:08]

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|--|--|--|
| ⑩ I. The Big Ugly | 5:19 | | | |
| ⑪ II. Altoona Express | 5:48 | | | |

Simon Baggs (b.1973)

- | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|------|--|--|
| ⑫ | Soliloquy ** | 8:04 | | |
|---|---------------------|------|--|--|

Total duration: 67:04

Recording: The Menuhin Hall, Stoke d'Abernon, 2 & 3 November 2025

④, ⑦, ⑧, ⑩–⑫ Recorded in the presence of the composers.

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* **FIRST RECORDINGS**
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CELLOPHONICS

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