

The deeper the blue...

SOMMCD 275

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) · Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013) · Kenneth Hesketh (b.1968)

Janet Sung *violin*^a · Simon Callaghan *piano*^b
Britten Sinfonia · Jac van Steen *conductor*^c

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra^{ac} [16:58]

- ① I. Allegro pesante 5:44
- ② II. Adagio – Tranquillo 6:46
- ③ III. Presto 4:28

Kenneth Hesketh

④ Inscription-Transformation^{*ac} 14:07

Henri Dutilleux

Au gré des ondes (arr. Hesketh)* [13:49]

- ⑤ I. Prélude en berceuse (à Claude Pascal) 3:07
- ⑥ II. Claquettes (à Jacqueline Bonneau) 1:18
- ⑦ III. Improvisation (à Pierre Sancan) 1:58

- ⑧ IV. Mouvement perpétuel (à Leon Kartun) 2:18
- ⑨ V. Hommage à Bach (à Claude Arrieu) 3:36
- ⑩ VI. Étude (à Geneviève Joy) 1:32

Maurice Ravel

⑪ Tzigane^{ac} 10:17

Maurice Ravel

Sonata for Violin and Piano^{ab} [17:04]

- ⑫ I. Allegretto 8:00
- ⑬ II. Blues – Moderato 5:05
- ⑭ III. Perpetuum mobile – Allegro 3:59

—————*First recordings—————
Total duration: 72:21

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Ravel Sonata: Wathen Hall, St Paul's School, Barnes on 1 December 2018

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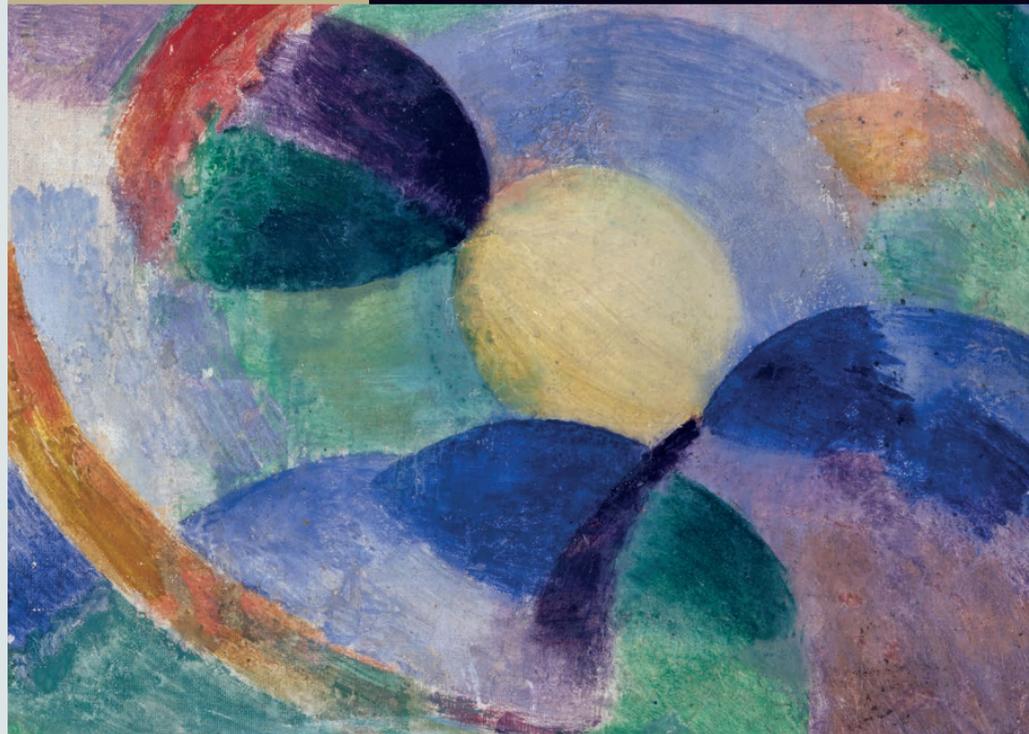
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The deeper the blue...



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS · RAVEL · DUTILLEUX · HESKETH

Janet Sung *violin* · Simon Callaghan *piano*
Britten Sinfonia · Jac van Steen *conductor*

The Deeper the Blue - the Language of Colour

*"The deeper the blue becomes, the more strongly it calls one towards the infinite,
awakening a desire for the pure and, finally, for the supersensuous [...]
The brighter it becomes, the more it loses its sound, until it turns into
silent stillness and becomes white."*

So argued Wassily Kandinsky in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* ('Concerning the Spiritual in Art'), his part-polemical, part-philosophical treatise of 1911 on the relationship between colour, abstract form and the metaphysical. The music recorded here can also be seen as an interrogation – and exploitation – of how instrumental colour and timbre affects form, function and feeling.

The harmonic language of Henri Dutilleux's piano suite *Au gré des ondes* ('At the whim of the waves') boasts a wide colour palette enhanced in brilliance and charm by Kenneth Hesketh's orchestral adaptation. Blending folk-song and neo-Baroque inflections, Ralph Vaughan Williams' Violin Concerto achieves a painterly balance between Bachian allusions and pungent modality, its harmonic colouring finding perfect expression in the reduced instrumentation of a string orchestra.

Harmonic and instrumental colour is central to Hesketh's own music. Dedicated to the memory of Dutilleux and Hesketh's grandmother Muriel McMahon, *Inscription-Transformation* for violin and orchestra is characterised by what one reviewer described as his "seemingly limitless imagination as an orchestrator".

In his fiery homage to Hungarian music, *Tzigane*, Ravel imbues his own distinctive harmonic and gestural world with greater directness in formal articulation and harmonic and instrumental colour. The rich, traditional heritage and combustible musical temperament of the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi (1895-1966) – its first soloist and of Vaughan Williams' concerto – influenced both composers in overt and subtle ways.

Colour is not the only common factor. There is also the intriguing connection between student and teacher: Vaughan Williams and Ravel, Hesketh with Dutilleux and the influence on early Dutilleux of Ravel. Where *Au gré des ondes* can be seen – with Dutilleux's death in 2013 and the passing of its six dedicatees – as a Ravelian *tombeau*, contrastingly, both Ravel works here are brimfull with joy and irrepressible energy. Vaughan Williams' concerto, compact and muscular, combines meditative repose with dance-like extroversion whilst Hesketh's *Inscription-Transformation* explores various relationships between soloist and orchestra.

Speaking in various ways, the varied hues and diversified emotions here communicate directly and deeply while adroitly, articulately, transcending differences of time, place, style, point and purpose.

Michael Quinn © 2019

The piano suite ***Au gré des ondes*** ('At the whim of the waves') is one of the earliest extant piano works by **Henri Dutilleux** (1916-2013). Comprising six character pieces, it was composed in 1946 to a commission for radio interludes. As the French scholar Caroline Potter suggests, the title is probably a pun on 'sea' and 'radio' waves.

Orchestrated in 2014, a year after Dutilleux's death, it is a delightful composition with echoes of Ravel, Milhaud, Poulenc and other contemporaries. Wherever additional material is added, it reflects a latent aspect within the music. Made in fond remembrance of my teacher, *Au gré des ondes* was itself dedicated to six individuals:

I: Prélude en berceuse (à Claude Pascal)

Winner of the first Prize of the 1945 Prix de Rome, Claude Pascal (1921-2017) was chosen by choreographer Roland Petit for his 1953 ballet season (for which Dutilleux composed *Le Loup*).

II: Claquettes (Tap-dance) (à Jacqueline Bonneau)

Jacqueline Bonneau (1917-2007) was a pianist and duo partner to Geneviève Joy. She was best known as a Fauré and French modernist specialist and Conservatoire de Paris tutor (1968-88).

III: Improvisation (à Pierre Sancan)

In 1943, the cantata *La Légende de Icare* won Pierre Sancan (1916-2008) the Conservatoire de Paris Prix de Rome for composition. Also known as a pianist and teacher, his compositional output included three ballets, an opera and a symphony.

IV: Mouvement perpétuel (à Leon Kartun)

Pianist, composer and arranger Leon Kartun (1895-1982) had a strong interest in jazz. He composed study pieces for piano, arranged works by Bach and Nicolò Paganini for piano and edited 36 sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti.

V: Hommage à Bach (à Claude Arrieu)

Composer Claude Arrieu (1903-90) was influenced by neo-classicism as well as Fauré, Debussy and Ravel. In 1932, she received the Conservatoire de Paris' First Prize for composition. In 1935, she joined the Service des programmes de la Radiodiffusion Française, where she worked until 1947.

VI: Étude (à Geneviève Joy)

A piano prodigy accepted into the Conservatoire de Paris in 1932 aged 12, Geneviève Joy (1919-2009) played music by many leading French composers but it was Dutilleux to whom she was most devoted – and married in 1946, the year he composed *Au gré des ondes*. Alongside her work as a solo pianist, she formed a notable duo partnership with Jacqueline Bonneau.

The first performance of the orchestrated version was given by the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra conducted by Christoph-Mathias Mueller in Göttingen, Germany, on January 29, 2016.

Inscription-Transformation for violin and orchestra (2015) is part of a cycle of works that have the idea of Memento mori/Vanitas and memorial at their centre (*Of Time and Disillusionment* and *In Ictu Oculi* being other representative works). Composed for this recording's soloist, Janet Sung,

it commemorates two people: the composer Henri Dutilleux and my grandmother Muriel McMahon (1926-2015) who died during its composition. The title is suggestive of musical structure in the work; specifically, material unfolded at the beginning becomes referred to, mutated and eventually transformed into new material alongside other strands in parallel. A balance of transient and non-transient material maintains inner tension and gives context to features in the work as they change.

Violin and orchestra function in various dialectic modes (oppositional, symbiotic, hierarchic) with a sense of ritualised, cyclical, meditative space interrupted by sporadic violent outbursts. The notion of entropy, another principle in my work, is present here in the Humanist sense; namely that all complex systems eventually fail. Gradually dissipating levels of energy (intentionally different between soloist and orchestra) informs dynamism and contour throughout the piece.

At a private soirée in London in 1922, Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Áranyi met **Maurice Ravel**. D'Áranyi's performance in a post-concert gathering stimulated Ravel's interest in writing for her in a way that reflected her particular performing style and Hungarian heritage (she was the great niece of violinist Joseph Joachim). The piece borne of this meeting was the virtuoso, Gypsy-infused *rapsodie de concert*, ***Tzigane***.

Ravel's technical demands were guided by his favoured violinist interpreter and friend, Hélène Jourdan-Morhange. A telegram to her during *Tzigane's*

composition tellingly read: "Come quickly, and bring the Paganini Caprices with you". Double-stop trills, octaves, harmonics, left-hand pizzicato, extremes of register and colour populate the score and even though not particularly long, significant stamina is required.

Originally for violin and luthéal piano (which produces a cimbalom-like sound), Ravel had already written for the luthéal in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. Due to its rarity, the work is now more commonly accompanied by a pianoforte. Ravel completed *Tzigane* just days before d'Áranyi and pianist Henri Gil-Marchex premiered the work on April 26, 1924, in London. On November 24 that year, d'Áranyi premiered Ravel's orchestration in Paris with Gabriel Pierné conducting the Concerts Colonne orchestra and it is this version that is recorded here.

The traditional Hungarian Czárdás folk dance, noted for its alternate slow and fast sections, furnishes the basic form of *Tzigane*, which begins with an expansive solo 'cadenza', improvisatory and declamatory in nature, in the violin's lowest register. As it proceeds, it ascends in register as the harp's first entry takes on its own dramatic cadenza figure. A rhapsodic *friska*, or fast section follows, formed by a loose set of energetic dance variations. Ravel uses two themes: one previously used in the Czárdás, and another introduced toward the middle of the main section. Apart from one short episode for orchestra alone, the violin plays continually. Various tempo fluctuations add volatility and capriciousness that gather in tension and activity before culminating in a whirlwind finale, exploding in the final D major cadence.

Instrumentally, the colourful, transparent orchestral accompaniment prominently features harp (notably in the opening cadenza) and clarinet, as well as pungent use of bassoons, horns, muted trumpet and pizzicato strings. The added harmonic colour, introduced via semitonal and modal inflections to the basic diatonic language adopted in the *friska* sections, allies the work with other types of musical exoticism found elsewhere in the composer's output and in much late-19th century French music.

Written between 1924-25, **Ralph Vaughan Williams' Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra** is an overt homage to Bach, as can be heard in references to the D minor Concerto for Two Violins (a work RVW regarded with great fondness) and the A minor Violin Concerto. Dedicated to Jelly d'Arányi, it was premiered in London's Aeolian Hall on November 6, 1925, with Anthony Bernard leading the London Chamber Orchestra.

Originally titled 'Concerto Academico', the concerto is squarely in neo-classical style, displaying rhythmic vigour, imitative counterpoint and forward propulsion. Cast in three movements with a central *Adagio* flanked by livelier passages, the *Allegro pesante* opening utilises a rhythmic gesture redolent of Bach's A minor Violin Concerto. The busy interplay of ideas, replete with neo-baroque muscularity and folk-song modality, is counterbalanced by an unusual formal design. A particularly pungent use of false-relation modality and architectural fluidity keeps rhythmic regularity and periodicity in check; two cadenzas, the second exhibiting a Bartókian inflection (heard elsewhere in the concerto), and a rather unexpected final burst of energy at the end of the *Presto*, concludes the movement with an emphatic *Molto allargando* cadence in D.

The central *Adagio* opens with a solo cello cantilena (non muted) against a chordal accompaniment from (muted) string orchestra. Gapped scalic figures reminiscent of the composer's *The Lark Ascending* underpin much of the solo writing. Small whirls of descending minor thirds and specifically whole tones in the solo violin are picked up by second violins towards the end of the first musical paragraph (a feature that underpins much of the remaining movement), sighing alongside gently pulsating triads. Interlocking rising scales lead to an intensely chordal climax, upper and lower strings rhythmically displaced to heighten the many false relations in play. At its waning, the harmonic tension dissipates via various slips and shifts into G minor. The return of 'sighing' falling whole tones supports a canon between solo and first violins which breaks into a series of ascending scales reminiscent of earlier in the movement. After a brief cadenza – the *Tranquillo* returns to G – the cello solo material and rising scales brings us to rest on a serene major chord.

The *Presto* finale begins with material from Act II, Scene 2 of Vaughan Williams' opera *Hugh the Drover* its premiere almost contemporaneous with the concerto's composition. The movement's tireless energy, the shortest of the three, can be found elsewhere in the composer's output but the traces of Bach in the previous two movements have now been excised and a folk-song modality permeates the mood, its alternating major and minor thirds thematically running throughout. A new scherzando theme and contrasting cantabile melody in longer note values alternate in four- and three-bar phrases, breaking up formal patterns to thwart expectations particularly evident in the final solo violin figure that runs its course (and runs down) to a final unison pitch, D, for soloist and orchestra, marked *ppp*.

As memories of the Great War's death and destruction receded with the coming of the 1920s, so new ways and means of expression and style emerged across the Western musical world. For **Ravel**, the sumptuous exoticism of the pre-war years now metamorphosed into a sparser, leaner, often bitter-sweet neo-classicism which, as with Stravinsky, also came under the spell of jazz.

After the Sonata for Violin and Cello (1920-22), where an early redefinition of the composer's musical language can be observed, work commenced on the **Sonata for Violin and Piano**. Ravel's enthusiasm for American jazz had already been apparent in *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and would continue to be explored in the two piano concertos. The absorption of jazz into his idiom was commented upon by Ravel:

"Musicians have asked me how I came to write 'Blues' as the second movement of my recently completed sonata for violin and piano. Here again the same process to which I have already alluded, is in evidence, for, while I adopted this popular form of your music, I venture to say that nevertheless it is French music, Ravel's music, that I have written."

Many Ravelian traits are present: parallelisms, pungent bitonality, bittersweet lyricism and energetic *moto perpetuos* (as in *Tzigane*). However, they are now leaner and embrace a certain acerbity. Perhaps this is due, as Ravel himself believed, to the basic "incompatibly" of violin and piano; Hélène Jourdan-Morhange – Ravel's longtime friend and violinist to whom he dedicated the sonata – spoke of a certain "indifference" the piece requires in performance.

Due to Morhange's severe arthritis, the Romanian composer and violinist Georges Enescu gave the premiere in Paris on May 30, 1927, with Ravel himself at the piano.

The opening *Allegretto*, lyrical but with brief moments of agitation, seems to recall the atmosphere of *Chansons madécasses* (written concurrently with the Sonata) with its linear simplicity and seemingly divergent key centres. Following the initiation of the first theme on piano, the violin continues leading to the first of several theme fragments. The use of parallel fifths in the movement is highly suggestive of Ravel's song *Ronsard à son âme* (again written concurrently with the Sonata), the movement juxtaposing the lyrical and antique with dance-like chirruping in the piano foreshadowing gestures in the sonata's finale.

In the second movement, 'Blues', Ravel's use of strummed chords is clearly evocative of a plucked banjo, as is the violin's proxy 'saxophone' with its wails and scoops (marked *nostaglico*). More readily reminiscent of *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, the unfolding succession of various key centres mark increasingly dramatic bitonal complexes, the stubborn repetition of the 'banjo' strumming only occasionally interrupted by quieter episodes. The movement ends on a somewhat louche dominant seventh adding a final ironic comment.

This *Perpetuum Mobile* finale with its pyrotechnical violin activity was not Ravel's original conclusion for the sonata. The composer Manuel Rosenthal, Ravel's one-time student and friend, recalled his comment about this section of the work:

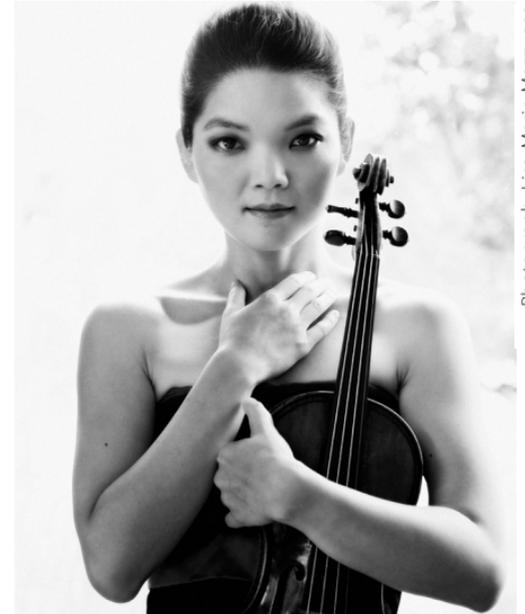
"I have just destroyed the finale of the sonata for violin and piano. [...] I liked it very much. But it didn't fit the sonata. It was not the right kind of finale for the first and second movement. So, I have destroyed it and composed another finale which is not as good, but it's a good finale."

Without any doubt, the violin has centre stage here, the piano reduced, relatively, in technical brilliance. However, the capricious and febrile nature of the interaction between both instruments continuously flashes and sparks through the use of bitonal complexes and parallel major sevenths. Jourdan-Morhange's technical advice, as well as her friendship, was clearly of great importance to the composer, easily discernible here in the last chamber work he composed.

Kenneth Hesketh © 2019

Janet Sung

Hailed by *The Washington Post* for her "riveting" playing and "exquisite tone", violinist Janet Sung enjoys an acclaimed international career recognized for her lustrous, burnished tone and brilliant virtuosity. She has performed worldwide with orchestras including the Pittsburgh Symphony, Busan Philharmonic, Göttinger Symphonie Orchester, Omsk Philharmonic, Britten Sinfonia, Cairo Symphony and Buffalo Philharmonic, as well as the orchestras of Boise, Delaware, Dubuque, Hartford, Las Cruces, Tacoma, Wyoming and others.



Photograph: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Concerto and solo recital appearances include Switzerland's Lucerne Festival, the Aspen, Britt, Sewanee, Peninsula and Bellingham Festivals, and the Conciertos de La Villa Festival de Santo Domingo. In recital, she has been presented in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Louisville, New York, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, as

well as Odense, Denmark, Lausanne, Switzerland, Queenstown, New Zealand and Jiangyin, China. She is Artistic Director of Chamber Music Chicago and is regularly heard at the Bowdoin International, Kreeger, Newport and Green Mountain Chamber festivals, and with the American Chamber Players.

Celebrated for performances of traditional repertoire and championing works from the 20th and 21st centuries, she featured on recordings of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No.1*, the latter with members of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. She premiered Kenneth Fuchs' *American Rhapsody* for Violin and Orchestra, Augusta Read Thomas' *Double Helix* (Nimbus Records) and Kenneth Hesketh's *Inscription/Transformation* for Violin and Orchestra. Featuring works by Britten, Enescu, Missy Mazzoli, Dan Visconti and Gabriel Prokofiev, *Edge of Youth* on Sono Luminus attracted critical acclaim.

Ms. Sung studied with legendary pedagogues Josef Gingold, Dorothy Delay and Masao Kawasaki. She graduated from Harvard University with a double degree in anthropology and music, and The Juilliard School. As artist-teacher, she is String Chair and Professor at the DePaul University School of Music and was the Clifton Visiting Artist at Harvard.

www.janetsung.com

Kenneth Hesketh

"One of the UK's most vibrant voices" *International Piano*

Kenneth Hesketh has been commissioned and performed by many important conductors and soloists including Sir Simon Rattle, Nicholas Daniel, Vasily Petrenko, Clare Hammond, Susanna Mälkki, Sarah Leonard, Martyn Brabbins, Janet Sung, Ludovic Morlot and Pascal Rophé, who described him as having "a strong capacity to build shape and dramaturgy in a piece. [He] has a poetry in the way he treats the orchestra; the mixtures, and the colours".

Oliver Knussen was an important early champion of Hesketh's music and advocates in Britain and Europe include the conductors Christoph-Mathias Mueller and Clark Rundell. He has been represented at festivals in London (BBC Proms), the USA (Tanglewood/Bowdoin) and China (Beijing Modern Music Festival). His BBC Prom commission



Photograph: Liz Thornton

Graven Image elicited the observation that he is “a composer who both has something to say and the means to say it” (*Tempo* magazine).

Hesketh’s fascination with entropy, mutation and existentialism coexists with a notable interest in formal design based on the influence of ‘pathways’ (labyrinths and mazes) and the paradoxical notion of clarity through density.

Composer-in-residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (2007-09), his awards include the Shakespeare Prize (Alfred Toepfer Foundation, Hamburg), the André Chevillion-Yvonne Bonnaud Prize (France), and a British Composer Award in 2017 for his work *In Ictu Oculi*. *BBC Music Magazine* described Hesketh as “a composer at the height of his considerable powers” and his music “an exhilarating and beautiful synergy of form and expression”.

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With special thanks to Kenneth Hesketh for his invaluable guidance during the recording and editing of this disc.

Jac van Steen



Photograph: Timlan Abegg

Jac van Steen was born in The Netherlands and studied orchestra and choir conducting at the Brabants Conservatory of Music.

Since participating in the BBC Conductors Seminar in 1985, he enjoys a busy career conducting the best orchestras in Europe, including the posts of Music Director and Chief Conductor of the National Ballet of The Netherlands, the orchestras of Bochum, Nürnberg, Staatskapelle Weimar, the Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra of Dortmund, Musikkollegium Winterthur and Principal Guest conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He is currently Principal Guest conductor of the Ulster Orchestra and Prague Symphony Orchestra.

He made his debuts with Opera North and the Volksoper, Vienna in 2013 and with Garsington Opera in 2015. He returned to Opera North for *Il tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*, the Volksoper Vienna with Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* and Garsington Opera with *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2017) and *The Bartered Bride* (2019). Regular visits to the UK include the Philharmonia Orchestra, CBSO and Royal Philharmonic. He made his debut in Tokyo with the New Japan Philharmonic. He participates in numerous recordings and live concert broadcasts for the BBC and has recorded a substantial number of CDs with various orchestras.

Besides his conducting activities, he is Professor for Conducting at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague. He regularly works with the Royal Northern College of Music, Chetham's School of Music (Manchester) and the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music, London. In 2018, he led the Jette Parker Young Artists showcase organised by the Royal Opera House, London.



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