

Evenings with the French Horn



Horn - Mark Papworth

Piano - Rosa Scaffidi

Whilst much of Europe had adopted playing on the valved horn by the middle of the nineteenth century, Parisian horn players persisted with the valveless natural horn until the end of the century. The natural horn was taught at the Paris Conservatoire until 1902. As a result, French composers during this time wrote for both natural and valved horns, and it was common for orchestras to use two natural horns and two valved horns. This CD features repertoire that highlights the two different types of horns used in France throughout this period.

Evenings with the French Horn

Mark Papworth • Rosa Scaffidi

Berlioz - Les nuits d'été op. 7

- 1** Villanelle 2'26
- 2** Le spectre de la rose 6'23
- 3** Sur les lagunes 6'21
- 4** Absence 5'04
- 5** Au cimetière 5'24
- 6** L'île inconnue 3'26

Blanc - Sonate pour cor et piano, op. 43

- 7** Allegro 10'27
- 8** Scherzo 3'34
- 9** Romance 4'58
- 10** Finale 5'45

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The “French” Horn

The name “French horn” is somewhat of a misnomer and is a term only used in English, with other languages simply naming the instrument as the Horn. The French only used horns as part of the hunt, and it was in Bohemia where it was first used as an orchestral instrument. In the 1740s the Dresden based horn player, Anton Hampl, began experimenting with inserting his hand in the bell, and was extremely surprised when he realised this altered the pitch of the instrument. He codified a system where he could produce most notes of the scale through closing the bell off to varying degrees with his hand. This technique was further explored and perfected by his most famous pupil, Giovanni Punto. Punto toured Europe as a soloist and introduced the new way of horn playing to France and England.

The strongest impediment to this new system was the difference in sound between the open and closed notes due to the bell being required to be closed by the hand.

This technique produced a muffled quiet sound on the “stopped” (closed) notes which contrasted with the bright sound of the open notes.

By the time the Paris Conservatoire was opened in 1796, players had become so proficient at this technique that there was minimal difference in sound between open and closed notes. When valves first began to appear in the 1820s, they were very quickly adopted in Germany and Austria, however the French players were reluctant to use the new valved horn as they had grown to appreciate the different sounds that were possibly on the natural horn.

From the 1830s the horn player Meifred introduced a valved horn class at the Conservatoire and he taught alongside the famous natural horn player Gallay. Meifred and Gallay retired within a couple of years of each other and whilst Gallay was replaced by the natural horn player Mohr, Meifred was not. The valved horn was not taught again at the Conservatoire until Bremond introduced

it in the late 1890s.

During this period in France, it was common for orchestral music to use two natural horns and two valved horns, with the valved horns being used to fill in the lower notes not possible on the natural horn. Therefore most horn players in France were quite adept at playing both the natural and valved horn, and solo music was written for both types of horn.

Adolphe Blanc (1828 - 1885)

Adolphe Blanc was born in Manosque in the south-east of France on 24 June 1828 and was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire at the very young age of 13 where he studied violin with Delphin Alard and composition with Fromental Halevy. Blanc was very active in the many Parisian salons devoted to chamber music and also obtained a position as a violist at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire in 1866. Blanc devoted his time primarily to composing chamber music, especially string quartets, keyboard trios, and piano sonatas. He also composed some works for less common instrumentations as well such as his op. 37 quintet for flute, clarinet, horn, bassoon and piano, and using the same instruments as Beethoven did in his op. 20, Blanc's op. 40 septet is scored for clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello and double bass. In 1862 he was awarded by the Academy of Fine Arts, the Charlier Prize, a prize devoted to chamber music. His style remains very classical for the time and his music was, like his personality, distinguished and amiable. He was appreciated and



*French piston
valve horn,
made by
Association
générale des
ouvriers réunis,
Paris, circa 1885*

respected by his peers and critics alike.

In 1860 he wrote his sonata op. 43 for piano and horn, and it was premiered in December 1860 by Jean Mohr on the horn, to whom it is dedicated, with Alphonse Duvernoy on the piano (for the record, the grand-nephew of Frédéric Duvernoy) in the salons of Achille Gouffé, a double bass player at the Société Concerts. The critic Gustave Chouquet reviewed the premiere of this sonata in "La France musicale" on 13 January 1861.

"I don't know many sonatas for piano and horn, and I believe there are very few of them. This is understandable, nothing is more difficult than writing for an instrument whose limited resources condemn a composer to an almost inevitable monotony. Although M. Ad. Blanc's sonata has no less than four movements, it can be listened to from start to finish with extreme pleasure, both the melodies abound, and are marvelously calculated to bring out the two virtuosos. The first three movements have above all a great musical value, and the final rondo, by accelerating it a little more, that the author does not seem to want, will also have a great effect. No research in this elegant work and of a beautiful arrangement, no hard-to-find modulation, no chord that betrays pretension or the spirit at bay. Everything is linked together harmoniously and follows one another without preparation and without effort. From most enjoyable episodes of this remarkable work, which raised storms of applause, I noticed the delightful scherzo and the

romance in A flat, where the muffled sounds of the French horn are used with perfection of the instrument, and whose reprise is accompanied by harmonic coquetry of a charm that's irresistible. M. Ad. Blanc has found in M. Mohr an unparalleled interpreter; this marvelous horn player plays the most great difficulties, and no one knows, like him, how to sigh a cantabile, a broad and poetic song. [...] and we wish everyone who reads us, all friends of beautiful and good music, to have soon, like us, the opportunity to hear and applaud the sonata of Mr. Ad. Blanc. The musical newspapers of the time show that this sonata was performed by Mohr several times after its premier.
CLAUDE MAURY

Hector Berlioz (1803 - 1869)

Berlioz was the quintessential romantic period composer. Living a life that could be the basis of an opera, his music has become some of the most famous and typical works of the Romantic period, particularly his

Symphonie Fantastique, a work that contains many elements that are synonymous with the Romantic period.

During his life, however, Berlioz was better known as a writer and music critic than a composer, much to his chagrin. His Treatise on Instrumentation was a leading guide on how to write orchestral music, and was later revised by Richard Strauss. Amongst his other famous literary works are his memoirs, and "Les soirées de l'orchestre, or Evenings with the Orchestra. That title is the inspiration for the title of this CD. Evenings with the Orchestra is a collection of "tales" told by the musicians in an orchestra in the mid 1800s.

Berlioz completed his song cycle "Les nuits d'été" in 1841 and is a collection of six unconnected poems. It is possible that he was inspired to write these songs by his travelling throughout Italy, where he would sit around campfires in the evenings sharing stories with his fellow travellers.

I have transcribed this song cycle for valved horn in a style that was common

*Orchesterhorn
made by Patterson
Hornworks (2000)
copied after the
Viennese maker
Nicodemus Pechert
circa 1795*



during the late 1800's. While Berlioz liked the sounds that were possible on the natural horn, he also viewed it as lacking many important low notes. He rescored his *Symphonie Fantastique* to take advantage of the new possibilities of the valved horn, using them on the 3rd and 4th parts to provide the low notes that were not available on the natural horn.

There was also a type of playing that evolved in France during this period which combined natural horn technique with valved horn playing. This involved primarily using a valved horn in conjunction with hand technique to close off the bell by varying degrees to add different shades to the sound for musical and dramatic effect. It is this technique that I have applied to this recording of "*Les nuits d'été*", particularly in the third and fourth movements.

The Valved and Natural Horn

For this recording I have used two different horns. For the Berlioz *Les nuits d'été*, I am using a French piston valve horn from the 1880s. The French favoured the piston valve system, similar to that used by trumpets, whereas the German players preferred the rotary valve system, which has become the most common today.

The *Blanc* sonata was specifically written for the horn player Mohr, who only played the natural horn. I have recorded this work on a replica of a 1790 horn from Vienna, made by James Patterson. The two works on this CD highlight the two different horns that were used in France during the 1800s.



Mark Papworth - Horn

Mark began learning the horn at Winchelsea Primary School with Brian Blackett, before completing high school at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School studying with Russell Davis. After high school Mark moved to Perth to study at the University of Western Australia with Darryl Poulsen. During this time Mark developed a strong interest in studying historical performance practice and played the classical and baroque horn. While studying in Perth Mark also performed in major works by Wagner and Mahler with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

After graduating, Mark pursued his interest in historical performance practice and studied baroque and classical horn at Indiana University with Richard Seraphinoff. Mark regularly performs with orchestras and in chamber music on the baroque, classical and modern horns. Mark also has two recordings

on the Move label having recorded on both modern and natural horns. *Siegfried's Story*, highlights from the Ring Cycle arranged for horn, tuba and piano, and *New Wine in an Old Bottle*, new sonatas for natural horn by Thomas McConochie.

Rosa Scaffidi - Piano

Rosa began her life long love affair with the piano and its mighty repertoire at the age of 2. Her first public performance followed soon after at age 8. Rosa has spent a lifetime devoted to the study of music, having received a Bachelor of Music from Melba Conservatorium, Fellowship in Performance from Trinity College London, Honours degree in Music Performance from Monash University and a Masters degree in Performance from the Victorian College of the Arts specialising in solo and ensemble repertoire. She gained entry into the Golden Key International Honours society for outstanding academic excellence through the Monash University chapter.

Rosa performs at many venues in Australia and internationally as a soloist and accompanist. She has worked with all major ballet institutions and Royal Academy of Dancing as Major Pianist. She has also worked with Opera Australia as vocal coach and was Musical Director for *Pot-Pourri*, Music Theatre Australia, who tours both domestically and internationally.

Immediately upon graduating from the Melba, Rosa was on staff as an accompanist, piano teacher, lecturer and performer. She also spent many years at the Victorian



College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS) as Head of Dance Accompanists, as well as being Ensemble Director for major dance performances at the Malthouse Theatre, Southbank in Melbourne. Prior to relocating to New Zealand, Rosa was employed at Carey Baptist Grammar School and Ruyton Girls School as Piano Tutor and Major Accompanist. Recent recordings include Stravinsky's Rite of Spring for 2 pianos in collaboration with Dr. Tony Gould and Siegfried's Story, an arrangement of 12 movements from Wagner's Ring Cycle for Piano, French Horn and Tuba with Bonza Brass Ensemble. Rosa is an extremely versatile musician, highly skilled in the interpretation of many musical styles as as being a proficient improviser.

I would like to say a special thank you to the people that helped me make this CD possible. Firstly to Rosa Scaffidi for all her hard work in rehearsing and recording this with me, Martin Wright of Move Records for producing the recording, and my sister in law Nitasha Singh and Hathi Creations for designing the CD cover for me. I would also like to say a very special thank you to Claude Maury for providing me with the information and CD notes on Adolphe Blanc. Finally I would like to say a special thank you to my wife Kirti Singh for all her support.

Mark Papworth