

Michael Collins - Press reviews

Conducts SCO Wind Ensemble:

"...the expert Michael Collins as conductor, performed all three-quarters-of-an-hour of it as if it were the merriest, most exuberant music ever written.

The finale nearly drowned in sweetness – and you had only to look at Collin's beat to see that he was tuned into Strauss's sound world – but nobody could call the verve of its ending anything but explicit."

SCO Reviews, 11 December 2008

Releases Spohr, Clarinet Concertos – No 3; No 4:

"It is thanks to Collins's artistry that relatively prosaic ideas are transformed, with magical echo effects, subtle pointing of rhythm to make the music sparkle in shaping of phrases that is magnetic."

"Collins plays with an inspirational touch, too, and no more so than in the charming and witty "Rondo al espagnol" that rounds off No 4. Beautifully balanced sound, making this an exceptionally attractive disc."

Gramophone

"Michael Collins (whom many contemporary composers have been lucky to have as interpreter) repeats the success of his disc of Nos 1 and 2 with elegantly phrased melodies, immaculate passagework and wondrously even trills. The Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Robin O'Neill again provide alert support, and the recording is outstanding, with a pleasant sense of intimacy embracing wind, strings and soloist. Performance – 5 star
Recording – 5 star"

BBC Music Magazine 2008

Performs at the 2008 Proms:

Stravinsky's Ebony Concerto, an ever-astonishing masterpiece, with clarinetist Michael Collins as stylish soloist, provided the gold standard.

The Evening Standard, 12 August 08

Performs the Weber at the Mainly Mozart Festival, San Diego:

For many listeners the program's highlight may have been the Weber Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73, which opened the concert's second half. The remarkable soloist for this piece (conducted by Atherton) was British clarinetist Michael Collins who impressed almost immediately by emerging heroic and triumphant from the battle waged by Weber's intense first movement.

The Sandiego.com, 15 June 2008

Performs UK premiere of Brett Dean's 'Ariel's Music' with the BBC Symphony Orchestra:

"...Every note was superbly played by the BBCSO - and they also showed real understanding of the UK premiere of a 25-minute orchestral work by Brett Dean called Ariel's Music. Forget The Tempest: this is a memorial for a seven-year-old American girl called Ariel Glaser, who died of Aids. Its two parts, Elegy and Circumstances, are shaped by orchestral writing of exquisite

fragility, of dying falls and angry sighs - and a virtuoso solo clarinet part for Michael Collins, who played it with a moving fusion of sensitivity and showmanship..."

The Times, 22 April 2008

"...Ariel's Music was given a commanding performance by Michael Collins (his part conceived for Dean's brother Paul), aggressive and poetic by turns, and the BBCSO responded with alacrity to the densely yet vividly wrought orchestral writing..."

Classicalsource.com, 21 April 2008

Performs premiere of Kats-Chernin's 'Ornamental Air' with the North Carolina Symphony and Grant Llewellyn:

"...Soloist Michael Collins easily handled all challenges thrown his way, from long-winded Arpeggios reaching the extremes of the instrument's range, to finger-tangling burbles and humorous outbursts. He was especially impressive in the moody, bluesy second movement, which included an eerie fluttering effect..."

The News and Observer, North Carolina, 12 April 2008

"...the incomparable skill and musicianship of Michael Collins..."

"...The audience was held spellbound by Collins' superb solo work..."

"...The brilliant first movement of this concerto is a very brisk allegro requiring the soloist to play phrases frequently connecting both registers of the Basset Clarinet in an unbroken musical line that demonstrated his great technical skill, his musicianship, and his understanding of the composer's intentions. Collins' virtuosity was also revealed in his seemingly effortless ability to play seamless, apparently unending lines of dizzying rapid scale passages which are often legato and just as often characterized by a detached, clearly articulated touch. This ability was clearly exemplified in the magnificent cadenza and ornaments ending the first movement. The beauty of Collins' legato, richly expressive playing in the andante movement filled a house so still that one could almost hear his neighbor breathe. The allegro final movement, unbelievably, was even more brilliant and demanded even more from the soloist than did the first movement, for Mozart in his understanding and deep appreciation of the sonic color and the capabilities of the Basset Clarinet gave the soloist every opportunity to display his virtuosity..."

Classical Voice of North Carolina, 12 April 2008

Performs Mozart with the London Winds and the Scottish Ensemble:

"...Michael Collins last introduced his basset clarinet to a Scottish audience for a performance of the Mozart Concerto in Aberdeen. In front of this stand-up chamber orchestra, its presence made even more sense. Authentic? Probably. Delightful? Assuredly. This was an old favourite as its composer might well have heard it - including the soloist's ornamentations in the famous Adagio. Those who go to hear it are in not just for a treat but a succession of them..."

Glasgow Herald, February 2008

"...For the Françaix, a quintet of strings from the Scottish Ensemble were joined by clarinetist Michael Collins and two members of London Winds. Both groups combined for the final work in the programme, with Collins the soloist in Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. With such a small group of players, this took on the character of an intimate dialogue - at times a rather indulgent one, as Collins lingered lovingly on every sweeping phrase, partnered attentively by the ensemble..."

The Guardian, February 2008

"...Clarinetist Michael Collins and his group, London Winds, joined the ensemble for a stylish

take on Mozart's much-loved Clarinet Concerto. Collins' effortless and engaging interpretation was a delight, as was the sight of the brass and woodwind standing behind the strings, swaying with the music in this finely judged performance..."

The Scotsman, February 2008

"...A special mention has to go to guest clarinettist Michael Collins for his performance of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto which, thanks to his expressive style and engagement with the audience, was endearing, impressive and a suitably showy end to proceedings..."

Scotland on Sunday, February 2008

Performs Turnage, Riffs and Refrains, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra:

"...Under Marin Alsop, the orchestra ended a three-concert Southbank season of Turnage with the London premiere of his Riffs and Refrains, a clarinet concerto in two contrasting movements - the first densely packed with frisky detail, the second sombre, even soulful - written for the virtuoso clarinettist Michael Collins, whom the composer has known since they were teenage music students.

Turnage's familiarity with his soloist's skills are to the fore in this schizophrenic piece, from the aplomb with which Collins riffles through intricate passagework to his enjoyment of such lyrical lines as the opening of its second movement. The false endings to the first are an in-joke characteristic of performer and composer, as is the swivelling of clarinet around the audience at the work's abrupt close. With Collins in top form, as adept at sudden entries as wonderfully sustained passages, the different sections of this fine orchestra savoured the chance to showcase their skills, the strings as silky as the woodwind were ethereal and the brass, well, brassy..."

The Observer, February 2008

Performs Mozart with the New World Symphony in Miami:

"...Mozart's Clarinet Concerto is such popular fare it takes an artist like Michael Collins to make the deceptively simple work breathe with new life, as the English soloist did Friday in a stylish, delightful performance.

Collins possesses a sterling technique with fluent tone, remarkable breath control and a gently subversive style just right for this music. The clarinettist took the Adagio at a flowing tempo, skirting sentiment and floating extra grace notes... Collins was at his finest in the Rondo, in sync with the relaxed virtuosity and bringing out the understated humour with a subtle change of color or dynamics..."

Miami Herald, November 2007

Records Mozart Serenades with London Winds for Onyx:

"...Michael Collins further entrenches his place among the first rank of clarinettists with this rather heavenly recording of Mozart Serenades. He leads the London Winds with great sensitivity and, when called for, virtuosic flair. A class act. A classy disc ... Led with flair and imagination by Michael Collins, London Winds gives a vital, refined performance, exceptionally transparent in texture and full of felicitous detail..."

Editor's Choice, Gramophone Magazine, January 2007

"...Textures are unusually transparent, revealing felicities of scoring that often go for little. In the "Gran Partita", the allegros are spruce and vital, full of witty instrumental interplay, while the two minuets are sharply contrasted, the first done as a stately menuetto galante, the second as a brisk, breezy Ländler..."

Daily Telegraph, November 2006

"...London Winds' divine recording of the "Gran Partita" and "Nacht Musique" Serenades should disarm any listener who is normally suspicious of musical balm. So sweet and direct is their tone, so wittily detailed their dialogue, so neat their *tempi*, so rich the sonority ... A superlative performance, beautifully recorded..."

Independent on Sunday, November 2006

"...a highly accomplished performance, with the music's grandeur evident from the very opening bars of the slow introduction. The C Minor Serenade for Wind Octet K388 [is] a superb performance, by turns austere and warm, that is surely the equal of any recording of this dark work..."

BBC Music Magazine, November 2006

Performs Mozart with London Winds at the Wigmore Hall:

"...Such performances make you wish Mozart's 250th birthday would last forever..."

Evening Standard, 11 October 2006

Performs the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with the Belcea Quartet at the Wigmore Hall:

"...the evening's highlight. The outer movements bubbled along, the violins responding to Collins's florid clarinet sweeps with equal brilliance; but nothing could eclipse their beautifully judged performance of the slow movement, Collins pouring out the long, irresistible melody with superb control..."

The Guardian, 23 March 2006

Gives the world premiere of Mark Anthony Turnage's Riffs and Refrains with The Hallé:

"...Collins brilliantly fires off the agitated, jazzy lines of the opening section ... in the second half, spinning out tranquil legato lines before an ethereal soprano sax floats in to engage the soloist in lyrical dialogue..."

The Guardian, 5 March 2005

"...that most persuasive of clarinetists, Michael Collins ... the second of the two imaginatively scored movements has an elegiac quality, Collins spinning out his yearning, luminous line with a jazzman's freewheeling ease ... until the soloist's agitation reaches an anguished climax. Abruptly, as if its electrical charge had been switched off, it stutters out. Collins's technical control and variation in tone were matched by an orchestral accompaniment in which the players' expressive feel for the music's shape and dynamics suggested that they had the piece right under their fingers..."

The Independent, 9 March 2005

Gives the London premiere of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto:

"...an outstanding performance by Michael Collins..."

The Guardian, 3 September 2004

Performs Elliot Carter's Clarinet Concerto at the BBC Proms with the London Sinfonietta:

"...the soloist Michael Collins was again marvellous - virtuosic, subtle and unfailingly musical..."

Financial Times, 12 August 2003

Performs concertos by Stravinsky and Carter at the BBC Proms:

"...sparkling virtuosity from the clarinetist Michael Collins..."

The Independent, 12 August 2003

Performs with the London Winds:

"...Michael Collins, a great clarinettist, and the superlative London Winds play Mozart's chamber music for winds..... Collins himself lent a beatific serenity to the Kegelstadt Trio, no less than to the immortal Clarinet Quintet..."

The Financial Times

Records Strauss Wind Music for Hyperion:

"...London Winds are second to none in terms of technical accomplishment, expressive commitment and warmth of timbre..."

BBC Music Magazine

Performs the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra:

"...Elsewhere it was Collins' dexterity that dazzled, fingers leaping, tossing off the decorative flourishes, impossibly nimble. Even with the basset-clarinet Collins could probably play this concerto in his sleep. But there was never a hint of the humdrum or mechanical..."

The Times, 23 March 2002

Records Mozart and Beethoven with Mikhail Pletnev for Deutsche Grammophon:

"...This is a fine performance of Mozart's beloved concerto, Collins using the proper basset clarinet, creating some beautiful woody sounds, and touching the depths in the adagio – and yes it is true that Beethoven wrote a clarinet concerto. What we have here is the composer's own arrangement of the same composer's Violin Concerto. As performed with Collins's intelligence and sensitive virtuosity, the bizarre project is fully vindicated. Suddenly there is not just one more item in the clarinet repertory but a towering masterpiece..."

The Daily Telegraph, 2001