

Michael Collins – clarinet

"...that most persuasive of clarinetists, Michael Collins..." The Independent

Michael Collins' dazzling virtuosity and sensitive musicianship have made him one of today's most sought-after soloists. At 16 he won the woodwind prize in the first BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition and at 22 made his American début at Carnegie Hall, New York. Since then he has performed as a soloist with many of the world's major orchestras, including the Philadelphia, NHK Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, City of Birmingham Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, BBC Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestra. Indisputably one of the leading clarinetists of his generation, Collins has formed close alliances with conductors such as Rattle, Dutoit, Sinopoli, Salonen, Slatkin and Otaka. In 2007, he won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year Award, placing him amongst past recipients of the award who include Itzhak Perlman, Mitsuko Uchida, Murray Perahia and Andras Schiff.

Michael Collins has done much to expand the clarinet repertoire, commissioning and premiering repertoire by some of today's most highly regarded composers. He has given world and local premieres of works such as John Adams' Gnarly Buttons (world premiere with the London Sinfonietta), Elliott Carter's Clarinet Concerto (Uk and Dutch premier), Brett Dean's Ariels Music (German premiere with Deutsches Sinfonieorkester Berlin and the UK premiere with the BBC Symphony Orchestra) and Turnage's Riffs and Refrains. Commissioned for him by the Hallé Orchestra and premiered in February 2005, Collins has given further performances of the Turnage with the Residentie Orkest, Royal Flanders Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, Malmo Symphony and London Philharmonic. Last season he gave the world premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's clarinet concerto Ornamental Air with the North Carolina Symphony and, subsequently, with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia and Tasmanian Symphony.

Collins' current diary includes engagements with Musikkollegium Winterthur, Northern Sinfonia, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, New World Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Symphony. In 2009 he will perform at the opening concert of the Melbourne Concert Hall, returning to Australasia at the end of the year for engagements with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony and Auckland Philharmonia. Collins has a close working relationship with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields with whom he tours Europe frequently.

Also in great demand as a chamber musician, Collins regularly performs in recital with Leon McCawley and in chamber ensembles with artists such as the Belcea Quartet, Martha Argerich, Stephen Hough, Mikhail Pletnev, Lars Vogt, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. His ensemble, London Winds, celebrates its twentieth anniversary this season and, with entirely unchanged membership over those two decades, still enjoys a busy diary with high calibre engagements such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival, City of London Festival, Cheltenham International Festival, Bath Mozartfest and Leif Ove Andnes' Risør Chamber Music Festival in Norway. In a new recent development in London Winds' diary, the quintet has recently established a collaboration with the Scottish Ensemble.

Michael Collins' many recordings include John Adams' Gnarly Buttons with the London Sinfonietta, conducted by the composer, a London Winds' Ligeti disc for Sony Classical (nominated for a Grammy award in 1999) and a disc of Brahms, Schumann and Frühling clarinet trios with Steven Isserlis and Stephen Hough for BMG. His recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto (arranged for clarinet by Mikhail Pletnev) coupled with Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Russian National Orchestra and Pletnev was released by Deutsche Grammophon to great critical acclaim. London Winds most recent release is the first recording in a new partnership with the label Onyx, in which they marked the 2006 Mozart anniversary year with a disc of Mozart wind serenades.

"...A class act. A classy disc..." Editor's Choice, Gramophone Magazine, January 2007