



Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 (J 114); Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat major, Op. 74 (J 118); Clarinet Concertino in E flat major, Op. 26 (J 109); Horn Concertino in E minor, Op. 45 (J 188)

**Michael Collins (clarinet), Stephen Stirling (horn)
City of London Sinfonia, Michael Collins**

CHAN 10702

On this disc, exclusive Chandos artist Michael Collins plays the clarinet in three works for clarinet and orchestra by Weber, as well as conducting the City of London Sinfonia. The disc also includes Weber's horn concertino, featuring the soloist Stephen Stirling.

The two concertos and the concertino for clarinet and orchestra are considered among the repertoire cornerstones for today's clarinetists. Weber wrote the works for his personal friend Heinrich Bärmann, the principal clarinetist of the Munich court orchestra, whose own embellishments of the works (changes of articulation, extra grace notes, and even an added accompanied cadenza in the first concerto) have been incorporated in the performances recorded here. Michael Collins suggests that these changes 'do not make the music any easier to play, but they do make it more thrilling'.

Each of the works displays a well-balanced mix of virtuosity, daring, humour, and sheer beauty, and throughout, the role of the orchestra is much more than a mere accompaniment. The woodwind solos, a trio of horns, blaring trumpets, and dashing violins contribute greatly to making these works so captivating.

Written in 1806, when Weber was just nineteen years old, the virtuosic Horn Concertino pushed known horn techniques to new limits, requiring the soloist among other feats to produce a 'four-note chord', the technique known as multiphonics. The work is today considered a gem in the horn repertoire, and our soloist, Stephen Stirling, is 'a player gifted with the utmost sensitivity and imagination, which is shown through the beautiful way he shapes musical phrases and the extraordinary range of colours he employs' – in the words of the late Richard Hickox.