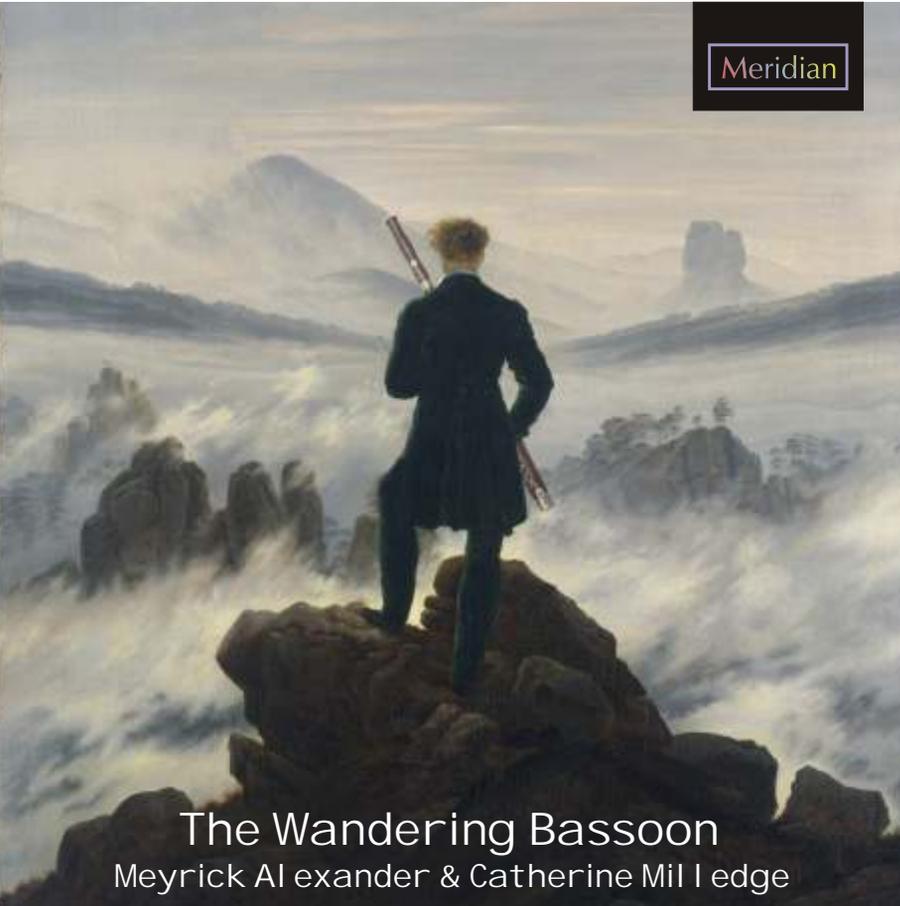


Meridian



The Wandering Bassoon  
Meyrick Alexander & Catherine Millidge



**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 - 1791)**

When Mozart began to write his various solo works for bassoon he was just 18 and cannot have been familiar with the instrument - all those wonderful bassoon parts in the operas, piano concertos and symphonies lay well in the future.

He was approached in 1774 in Munich by the wealthy amateur virtuoso Baron Durnitz who not only commissioned several concertos (only one survives), a sinfonia concertante and a sonata for bassoon and keyboard but must also have demonstrated the capabilities of his instrument. Mozart uncannily captured the flexibility and many characters available to him in the concerto K191 and continued in a smaller scale with this sonata from 1775. The original manuscript has not survived and this piano part was recreated by William Waterhouse in 1980 using the second part of a version for bassoon and cello which was published posthumously.

**GUSTAV SCHRECK (1849 - 1918)**

When the German bassoonist Carl Almenrader set about his radical redesign of the classical bassoon in 1820, he probably did not envisage that the future of his instrument in his country's music was gloomy. Whilst the Russian School of Romantic composers embraced his new instrument with enthusiasm, the personal and vocal qualities of the bassoon did not fit in the German Romantic sound world and the orchestral music of Schumann, Wagner and Bruckner contain few solos for the bassoon; they used it more as a texture.

We are very fortunate, however, to have this Sonata by Gustav Schreck from this period. Schreck was born in Vogtland and studied at the Leipzig Conservatorium and then joined the composition staff in 1874; two oratorios and several other works were premiered in the Gewandhaus and he wrote this Sonata at this time, perhaps around 1880.

In 1893 he was appointed Cantor of the Thomaschor, becoming the tenth successor to J.S. Bach and he became an enthusiast for the authentic performance of the latter's works. He is credited with the rediscovery of the oboe d'amore for which he wrote a Sonata. He also wrote a Nonet for Wind Ensemble.



The Sonata Op.9 for Bassoon and Piano is very much an equal partnership with much of the important writing in the florid piano part. It is in the stately key of E flat major and the opening perhaps a pre-echo of Brahms' clarinet sonata in the same key (1894). The mood is very lyrical, with a serene slow movement and a joyous finale. As so much of the symphonic repertoire is drawn from this period, it is very fulfilling to play this piece, using many of the techniques required in orchestral playing.

**CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)**

Weber originally wrote the Andante and Hungarian Rondo Op35 as a piece for viola and orchestra and was premiered by his brother Fritz. In 1811 he had written the well-known Bassoon Concerto Op75 for the Munich bassoonist Georg Friedrich Brandt (1773-1836) the popular success of which prompted a request for a further work for the instrument. Chronically overworked composing and directing the opera house in Prague, Weber hurriedly reworked his viola piece for the bassoon for which it is very effective.

The opening Andante introduces an operatic theme in C minor, dramatic rather than tragic, which is then treated to a number of variations. This leads to a cheerful "Hungarian" rondo theme in the major and the solo instrument proceeds to jump through a number of hoops, using the full range of the instrument and becoming ever more virtuosic.

The unattributed piano accompaniment appeared in the 1860's.

### GUY WOOLFENDEN (1937-)

One of the most exciting moments of my musical life occurred 1999 when Guy Woolfenden, a composer I admire greatly, announced he was to write a bassoon concerto and asked me to give the premiere. Guy was born in Ipswich in 1937, studied the horn and



composition at Christs College Cambridge and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and for many years was the composer and musical director of the Royal Shakespeare Company for whom he wrote over 150 scores. He has also collaborated with choreographer Andre Prokovsky and has arranged the music

for four full length ballets which he has conducted with major ballet companies worldwide. His many compositions for wind orchestra are in great demand and he is active in the Symphonic Wind Orchestra sphere. He was awarded the O.B.E in 2007.

About the Bassoon Concerto, performed here with his own reduction for piano, Guy writes:

"I am very fond of the music of Carl Nielsen, and first came to love it by playing the horn in his magnificent Wind Quintet. Encouraged by the success of the quintet, the Danish composer planned a concerto for each of the five musicians but sadly, after composing the Flute Concerto in 1926 and the Clarinet Concerto in 1928, Nielsen died before the remaining three concertos could be achieved. So far, with the Bassoon Concerto, I am two wind concertos ahead of my hero, and only have the Flute Concerto left to do.

There are three movements: the first mostly in a gentle 7/8 metre with a gritty D minor episode. The theme of the second movement is folk-like, very English and harmonically obsessed with "false relations" and there is a mediaeval section evoking the bassoon's forebears, the shawm, bombarde and pommer.

The finale owes some debt to Nielsen and Sibelius. I was learning Sibelius' Third Symphony when I composed it, and can detect some influence from that wonderful work.

### FRITZ KREISLER (1875-1962)

One of my musical heroes of my student days was the flamboyant clarinetist Reginald Kell (1906-81), a former Principal Clarinet of the Philharmonia Orchestra before he emigrated to the USA where he made a number of solo recordings. One of these, entitled *Kreisler Favourites*, contains these two miniatures by the legendary violinist Fritz Kreisler who published *Three old Viennese Melodies* by Josef Lanner in 1905. In 1935, Kreisler admitted that they were in fact his own work.

I could not resist including these two; firstly *Liebesfreud*, a cheerful collection of four waltz tunes and secondly the lightweight *Schon Rosemarin*.

Meyrick Alexander





**Meyrick Alexander** has been Principal Bassoon of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London since 1980 where he has played with most of the world's great conductors and soloists. Born in 1952, he was brought up in Leeds, Bristol and South Wales

and studied at the Royal College of Music with Geoffrey Gambold. He has been an orchestral bassoonist since the age of 19 as a member of two ballet orchestras, the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra and the Northern Sinfonia and has played with nearly every orchestra and chamber group in Great Britain. He has also been a regular performer on period instruments with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique. He is a frequent soloist, most notably with Ashkenazy and Sinopoli, with whom he recorded Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Deutsche Grammophon. He has also recorded this work and Vivaldi's Concerto No 24 in Bb with Christopher Warren-Green's London Chamber Orchestra.

Meyrick Alexander is committed to new music and premiered Guy Woolfenden's Bassoon Concerto, of which he is the dedicatee, Michael Daugherty's "Hells Angels" and gave the British premiere, in costume, of his "Dead Elvis".

He teaches at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Birmingham Conservatoire and his bassoon of choice is a Moosmann 222.



**Catherine Milledge** comes from South Wales. After graduating with a first in Classics and English from Jesus College, Oxford she joined the piano accompaniment course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she received a

post-graduate diploma as well as the MMus degree and the School Accompaniment Prize. Her studies were assisted by scholarships from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and the Sir Henry Richardson Awards, and she went on to win prizes including Birmingham Accompanist of the Year 2001, Second Prize for Pianists at the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition and the JBR/Parnell award for accompaniment from the Royal Overseas League.

As a piano accompanist and soloist Catherine has performed in many of the major venues in London and elsewhere, including Wigmore Hall, the Purcell Room and Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. She has given recitals at numerous festivals including Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Brighton and Presteigne as well as for music societies around the UK and in Europe, and is a member of the Temple Trio.

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THE WANDERING BASSOON  
Meyrick Alexander - Bassoon  
Catherine Millledge - Piano

CDE 84582

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A Natural Sound Recording

CDE 84582

TT 66'53"



LC 13637

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MCPS

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Recorded in the Church of  
St. Edward the Confessor, London.  
Recorded by Richard Hughes  
Produced by Susanne Hughes  
Assistant engineers  
Alex Gettinby & Joanna Downing

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The Wanderer by Caspar David Friedrich  
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## The Wandering Bassoon

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (arranged by William Waterhouse)  
Sonata in B flat major for Bassoon and Piano, K292

- |     |         |      |
|-----|---------|------|
| [1] | Allegro | 7:37 |
| [2] | Andante | 5:50 |
| [3] | Rondo   | 3:15 |

### Guy Woolfenden

Bassoon Concerto (written for Meyrick Alexander)

- |     |            |      |
|-----|------------|------|
| [4] | Moderato   | 5:49 |
| [5] | Andante    | 5:15 |
| [6] | Allegretto | 7:26 |

### Gustav Schreck

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op.9

- |     |                       |      |
|-----|-----------------------|------|
| [7] | Allegro ma non troppo | 5:30 |
| [8] | Largo                 | 4:19 |
| [9] | Allegro               | 5:34 |

### Carl Maria von Weber

Andante and Rondo Ungarese for Bassoon and Piano, op.35

- |      |                                 |       |
|------|---------------------------------|-------|
| [10] | Andante - Allegretto (Ungarese) | 10:22 |
|------|---------------------------------|-------|

### Fritz Kreisler

Original Compositions for Violin and Piano  
(arranged Meyrick Alexander)

- |      |                |      |
|------|----------------|------|
| [11] | Liebesfreud    | 3:35 |
| [12] | Schön Rosmarin | 2:18 |

Meyrick Alexander - BASSOON  
Catherine Millledge - PIANO

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