



A DECADE-LONG DREAM FULFILLED

ALEC FRANK-GEMMILL'S RECORDING OF THE MOZART HORN CONCERTOS

with

Swedish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Nicholas McGegan

BIS Records SACD release on 8 November 2024 (BIS-2635)

Alec Frank-Gemmill, one of the most renowned horn players of his generation, was introduced to BIS by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust in 2014, the year he received his BBT Fellowship. From the outset he declared his ambition to record Mozart's unsurpassed horn concertos, but taking his time over a ten-year journey towards this achievement has provided him with the valuable opportunity to delve deep into the horn repertoire, as well as develop creative relationships with artists, engineers and producers associated with the award-winning Swedish recording company.

Three meticulously researched and broad-ranging albums precede this Mozart album, all of them on BIS, all supported by BBT and all critically acclaimed. *A Noble and Melancholy Instrument* explores the history and versatility of the instrument using four different period horns coupled with keyboards from the same eras; *Before Mozart* presents late baroque horn concertos; and *Brahms Chamber Music* offers a new perspective on transcriptions of the composer's works not originally written for horn which give context to the famous horn trio also featured on the album. This accumulation of discovery, performance and recording is the background to this personal landmark recording, the *Mozart Horn Concertos*, in which Alec has also written the cadenzas and lead-ins and even collaborated with composer Stephen Roberts on various arrangements, transcriptions and reconstructions, including a groundbreaking completion of Concerto No.1.

Mozart wrote the four concertos over a period of ten years from 1781 for horn virtuoso Joseph Leutgeb, with whom he shared a convivial friendship. The earlier works display dazzling virtuosity and quick-fire repartee between soloist and orchestra, but over the course of their collaboration the works become less exacting and show greater blending with the orchestral sounds, reflecting Mozart's sensitivity to Leutgeb's declining stamina and technical security as he approached 60, but without diminishing his command of subtle, expressive timbres and versatility.

Alec is no stranger to performing on a range of period horns, including the natural valveless horn that Mozart wrote for, but he has opted for the greater freedom of a modern instrument for this recording, although he has incorporated a few of the effects that Mozart intended for the old horn.

What is known as *Concerto No 1 in D major* was in fact the *last* one intended for Leutgeb, but Mozart died before finishing it and no indication of a slow movement was ever discovered among his papers. Alec and Roberts worked together on a transcription to fill this gap with the slow movement of Mozart's violin concerto K 211 which completes the concerto and is an apt tribute to the virtuosity of the younger Leutgeb.

In addition to the four 'official' concertos Roberts has taken two fragments from Mozart's early attempts at a horn concerto, written concurrently in 1781 (not intended for Leutgeb), and assembled them as an exquisite bonus entitled 'Concerto No. 0'.

Ends

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Notes to Editors

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MOZART Wolfgang Amadeus (1756-91)

Concerto No. 1 in D major for horn and orchestra

I *Allegro*, K 412 (1791)

II *Adagio*, K211 (1775) arr. & orch. by Alec Frank-Gemmill & Stephen Roberts 2023

III Rondo. *Allegro*, K 514 (1791) completed by Stephen Roberts 1994

Concerto No. 2 in E flat major for horn and orchestra, K 417 (1783)

I *Allegro*

II *Andante*

III Rondo. *Allegro - Più allegro*

Concerto No. 3 in E flat major for horn and orchestra, K 477 (1787)

I *Allegro*

II Romance. *Larghetto*

III *Allegro*

Concerto No. 4 in E flat major for horn and orchestra, K 495 (1786)

I *Allegro maestoso*

II Romance. *Andante cantabile*

III Rondo. *Allegro vivace*

Concerto 'No. 0' in E flat major for horn and orchestra (1781)

I [*Allegro*], K 370b reconstructed by Stephen Roberts 2008

II Rondeau. *Allegro*, K 371 completed by Stephen Roberts 2008

Alec Frank-Gemmill *horn* · **Swedish Chamber Orchestra** · **Nicholas McGegan** *conductor*

Recorded 22-26 May 2023 at Örebro Concert Hall, Sweden

Cadenza and lead-ins by Alec Frank-Gemmill

Instrumentarium: Alexander 90 Single B flat Horn – gold brass

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Also recorded on BIS with support from BBT:

A Noble and Melancholy Instrument BIS-2228 (2017) with pianist Alasdair Beatson

"The changes of sound and technology are fascinating, but the programme and the playing are what really make this such an excellent recital." BBC Radio 3 Record Review May 2017

Before Mozart : Early Horn Concertos BIS-2315 (2018) with Swedish Chamber Orchestra/McGegan

"virtuosity is consistently placed at the service of expression... An exceptional disc that confirms and consolidates his reputation as one of today's finest horn players, it makes for compelling and essential listening." Gramophone June 2018

Brahms Chamber Music BIS-2478 (2020) with Benjamin Marquise Gilmore (violin) & Daniel Grimwood (piano)

"Fascinating to hear new colours in a familiar work, with Brahms's First Cello Sonata transcribed for French horn. It also makes a fine prelude to a terrific performance of the Horn Trio."

BBC Music Magazine February 2021



ALEC FRANK-GEMMILL horn player and conductor <https://www.alecfrankgemmill.com>

Repertoire: Baroque to contemporary.

Studies: Began playing horn aged 10 (tenor horn at 6) and period instruments at 19. Studied in Cambridge, London and Berlin. Teachers have included Hugh Seenan, Radovan Vlatković and Marie-Luise Neunecker.

Principal Horn with Scottish Chamber Orchestra 2009-19 and with Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra 2019 to present day.

Guest principal horn, soloist and director with leading orchestras such Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony and BBC orchestras, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Düsseldorfer Symphoniker and Sinfonietta Köln.

Chamber music collaborators include pianist Alasdair Beatson and violinists Alexander Janiczek, Philippe Graffin and Pekka Kuusisto, as well as period instrument group Ensemble Marsyas.

Festivals: Soloist in numerous festivals including East Neuk, Spitalfields, Ryedale, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and St. Magnus. A regular at Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove.

Founder and director of Odin Ensemble, a Gothenburg-based group that performs on early 20th century instruments.

Conducting: Mentored by conductors including Mark Heron, John Wilson, Sian Edwards and Paavo Järvi and conducts orchestras throughout the UK.

Awards: Recipient of the Sten A. Olsson Scholarship for Culture from the Stena Foundation 2023, Borletti-Buitoni Fellowship 2014 and a member of the BBC New Generation Artists scheme 2014-16.

Teaching: Professor of Horn at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Films: 'Insight' films on a range of period horns made with the support of BBT in connection with his BIS debut recording, *A Noble and Melancholy Instrument*: http://www.bbtrust.com/2014/fellowships/alec_frank-gemmill_1.html?view=video