

# Chaconne Brass

25 Dancing in the Dark



## **Richard Baker - Keck**

This title of this short quintet – commissioned by the Hampstead and Highgate Festival for Chaconne Brass – is the German word for ‘cheeky’. It is also the performance direction Mahler gives for the lusty unison melody in the Scherzo of the 5th Symphony, which is quoted in the horn part at the climax of the piece. It’s transplanted into a rather different harmonic and rhythmic context here, and the cheerfully incongruous result is hopefully worthy of the title.

## **Torbjörn Hultmark - A Lullaby**

A Lullaby is scored for brass quintet, live electronics and electroacoustic tape. The sounds on the tape are all directly connected to the composer’s parents: sounds from home, church bells, funeral music, a priest reading a poem, voices, harmonica, out-of-tune care-home piano, rain and blackbirds outside a hospice, a whole array of bells of different kinds as well as a four-part choir; the lyrics are by the composer, put together from different lullabies and other sources, including a specially written lullaby by Brian King. The singer on the electroacoustic tape is the composer’s niece, Lotta Hultmark.

The different sections in the score are marked: Dreaming, Burning, Release and Sleep. The sounds on the tape are heavily treated and blurred; they can be seen as the last thoughts of a sharp but increasingly hazy and frightened mind.

## **Vagn Holmboe - Quintet Op. 79**

It would be hard to argue against Vagn Holmboe being the most important Danish composer after Carl Nielsen, although it was only relatively late in his 60-year composing career that he began to receive the recognition he deserved outside his native Denmark. Just as composers in Finland have inevitably been influenced – either directly or indirectly – by the great Jean Sibelius, the spectre of Nielsen looms large in Danish music in the 20th and 21st centuries. That having been said, Holmboe has one of the most instantly recognisable styles of any composer, with any influences being fully absorbed and subsumed into his own unique musical character.

Holmboe was born on 20th December 1909 in Horsens, East Jutland to keen amateur musicians and died in 1996. It was Nielsen himself who recommended Holmboe’s enrolment at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in 1926, where he studied with Knud Jeppesen and Finn Høffding. After a year’s study with Ernest Toch in Berlin in 1930, he later travelled to Romania to study that country’s folk music during 1933-34. It was there he met the Romanian pianist Meta May Graf, who was to become his wife and lifelong companion.

Holmboe was a prolific composer; his works numbering well over 300 and his output is consistently of a remarkably high quality for a composer who wrote so much music. The bulk of Holmboe’s output is instrumental music – 13 symphonies, 21 string quartets, many concertos for almost every

instrument and a vast array of chamber music for many instrumental combinations. Among these chamber music works are two remarkable brass quintets, the first of which has become a staple of most quintets’ repertoire.

The first quintet was written in 1961-62 for the New York Brass Quintet, following the ensemble’s visit to Ramløse in Denmark where they met Holmboe and asked him to write a work for them. The resulting piece, which was simply entitled Quintet Op 79, is cast in four movements. The first is very short and has the nature of overlapping fanfares – something of a call to attention to what was to prove one of the world’s greatest brass quintets. The second movement is a lively affair with many interwoven musical lines, demanding the utmost ensemble discipline from the quintet musicians. The Adagio third movement is still and mysterious and makes much use of muted effects in the brass instruments. The last movement revisits the nature of the previous Allegro second movement and shows Holmboe’s considerable contrapuntal skills at their best before a short reprise of the fanfares from the work’s opening.

## **Mark Kesel - Nachna**

Nachna is a Hindi word for dance and was inspired by the rhythms, energy and inflections of Bhangra music. The piece is a fusion of this with Classical styles using a 4 beat rhythmic tala typically used in Bhangra, as well as Tabla drums alongside the traditional brass quintet. The whole is designed to hint at the dignified party atmosphere often cre-

ated by Bhangra which is itself a fusion of Indian music with disco.

## **Cecilia MacDowall - Tango Oscuro**

In Buenos Aires, birthplace of the tango, there is an old tango hall just off the Avenida Corrientes which is known as ‘the street that never sleeps’. A faded sign hangs over the stage: ‘Salon Argentina – not just a place but somewhere to make friends.’ In the hall the dancers move under a dim light in grim, passionate embrace. In this homage to Piazzolla, the tango opens with an air of desolation and loneliness, but then gradually gathering itself into a dance of defiance.

Tango Oscuro (dark tango) was commissioned by Chaconne Brass and first performed at St John’s Smith Square London in 2000. Since then the work has appeared in many guises; there are nine different versions of it, including an orchestral work for violin and double bass solo and chamber orchestra (Not just a place), a brass tentet (Salon Argentina) as well as a number of arrangements for chamber ensemble.

## **Edward Longstaff - Symphony for Brass Quintet**

Edward Longstaff writes; Symphony for Brass Quintet is a marriage – a marriage between two periods in a city’s history.

At the time Chaconne Brass commissioned me to write a piece for them, I had been experimenting

with tone rows; the building blocks in Arnold Schoenberg's serial method of composition. I decided to base the brass quintet on these ideas but to combine these relatively modern methods with older, classical forms. Hence the idea of a symphony – and hence the marriage. Schoenberg and his followers were known as the Second Viennese School, a twentieth-century development from the classical Viennese "school" of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. I therefore modestly hope to have bridged two hundred years in a city's cultural life!

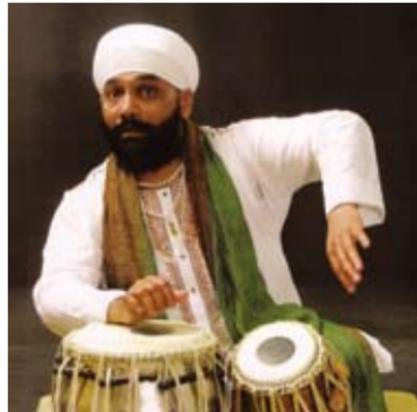
Schoenberg's aim in serial composition was to codify a method of writing that would produce atonal (music in no key) results. There are a number of rules to his method, most of which I have ignored. My piece does have major and minor chords, does allow notes to be repeated, and does aim to produce tunes that you can whistle.

The four movements of the Symphony follow a traditional, classical structure. The first movement has a slow introduction followed by a sonata allegro. There is a slow movement built up over a repeated rhythmic idea and a fleet-footed scherzo. The finale brings the various rows used in the first three movements (which develop out of each other) together, includes some quasi fugal writing, and resolves all the different ideas into an optimistic coda in D major.

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### Sukhvinder Singh Namdhari

Sukhvinder Singh Namdhari is one of India's most dynamic tabla players, recognized worldwide for the spontaneity, power, and virtuosity of his unique style of playing. Sukhvinder has performed across the globe with many eminent musicians including sarod virtuoso, Ustad Amjad All Khan, India's legendary sitarists, Pt. Ravi Shankar and Ustad Vilayat Khan and he has toured across the USA and India with Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. Sukhvinder played on the famous CD, which won a Grammy Award In 1994, "A Meeting by the River".



### Chaconne Brass

Since its formation in 1984 Chaconne Brass has built a reputation for imaginative programming and integrating the brass quintet with elements such as technology and improvisation, as well as with musicians from other ethnic and musical cultures. The diverse backgrounds of the individual players in the ensemble enable them to bring many different influences to bear on their repertoire and this has always been a feature of the groups work. This CD showcases repertoire that demonstrates that span, from Mark Kesel's *Nachna* with its unique take on Bhangra and the sublime talents of Sukhvinder Singh Namdhari's tabla playing to Torbjorn Hultmark's *A Lullaby* utilising live electronics and a many-layered electroacoustic track. This latter is the most recent piece on the CD but, in keeping with Chaconne's tradition of featuring the best of the standard quintet repertoire alongside their own compositions and commissions, the CD also celebrates the centenary of the birth of the great Danish composer Vagn Holmboe with probably the first recording by a British quintet of his *Quintet Op 79*. This substantial piece is balanced by the equally considerable *Symphony for Brass Quintet* by Edward Longstaff, Richard Baker's witty miniature *Keck* and the darkly evocative *Tango Oscuro* by Cecilia MacDowall.

[www.chaconne.co.uk](http://www.chaconne.co.uk)





Simon de Souza (horn) studied with the international virtuoso Ifor James at Colchester Institute, where he also won many prizes for chamber music, followed by a post-graduate year at Trinity College of Music. Simon's career has encompassed a wide variety of freelance playing: as a recital and concerto soloist, in orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Bolshoi Ballet (though only as a horn player!), London's West End and touring shows, many chamber groups and, of course, Chaconne Brass! Simon is also among the most highly regarded teachers of the horn in Britain, holding specialist posts at Birmingham Conservatoire, Wells Cathedral School, the Junior Royal Academy of Music, and works as a consultant and coach to many other establishments and organisations. He writes extensively on horn playing and teaching matters and is Vice-Chairman of the British Horn Society. When not playing the horn he reads, cooks, cycles, makes highly detailed models of historic railways and follows Reading Football Club.



James Doherty (tuba) joined the National Youth Orchestra at 16 and was a finalist in the Shell London Symphony Orchestra competition, before gaining a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. He enjoys performing with orchestras and ensembles (becoming a member of Chaconne Brass in August 2000), and has also appeared as a soloist several times. Alongside a busy playing schedule, James has held teaching posts at a number of Independent Schools in Surrey and is currently the low-brass specialist with Berkshire Maestros where he also conducts a variety of ensembles.

James has worked as Orchestral Manager, Librarian and Stage Manager for the New London Orchestra (of which he was co-founder) and the European Community Youth Orchestra, including tours to all the European Capitals, America, Russia, Scandinavia and India. Away from music, James is a passionate motoring enthusiast and coaches advanced driving on road and track events in the UK and Europe. His ambition is to experience all the historic motor racing circuits before they all become housing estates and theme parks!



Torbjörn Hultmark (trumpet) was born in Sweden in 1957 and came to live in England in 1985. He currently works as a musician, teacher and composer. Torbjörn studied trumpet, conducting and composition at the Gothenburg Conservatoire of Music and at the National Centre for Orchestral Studies, Goldsmiths' College, London where he was taught by Bengt Eklund (Gothenburg) and John Wallace (London). Alongside his work as a member of Chaconne Brass, Notes Inégales and the Headspace Ensemble, he works with orchestras and ensembles such as the London Sinfonietta, The

Philharmonia and Chamber Orchestra of Europe as well as film and TV session work. Torbjörn has worked as a soloist with the Northern Sinfonia, Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the BBC Philharmonic and at the Albert Hall Proms. As a composer, Torbjörn's music has been performed extensively and recorded on CD, as well as broadcast in Britain on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM and abroad. Torbjörn runs TootProductions, a specialist recording business. He also teaches at the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music.



Mark Kesel (trumpet) was inspired to pursue a career in music by his first teacher Jimmy Norden and continued his studies with Sidney Ellison at the Royal Academy of Music. After obtaining a degree in music from the University of Reading, Mark was appointed trumpet teacher there. He conducted a series of performances of the rarely staged opera by Stanford called *The Travelling Companion*, was principal trumpet with the touring opera company Opera East for twelve years and has worked as a freelance trumpet player and guest soloist. Mark founded Chaconne Brass in 1984

and was the driving force behind the group in its early years. He was responsible for devising their popular family and educational programme *Oh Good Chips for Tea!* which has been performed to tens of thousands of children in Britain and abroad. Mark directed two lottery-funded educational projects with Chaconne Brass in his hometown of Reading and has composed and arranged several works for the group, a number of which are recorded on their CDs - *Chaconne Brass (CB CD 597)* and *We Are Not Alone (CB CD 1101)*. Mark lives in Reading with his wife, two children and dog, is a keen supporter of Reading Football Club and enjoys his tennis and mountain walks.



Emily White (trombone) Emily was inspired to play the trombone at Wells Cathedral School by Alan Hutt, and went on to study at The Royal Academy of Music. She studied with Ian Bousfield, Dudley Bright and Sue Addison. Emily gained a Masters Degree from Guildhall School of Music and Drama where the professors included Simon Wills and John Kenny. Emily has gone on to work as a freelance trombonist and sackbut player with orchestras such as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, The Gabrieli Consort and The Academy of Ancient Music. She is a member of the English Cornett

and Sackbut Ensemble, and directs the group *Musica Antiqua of Dursley*. She has played as a musician at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre since it opened in 1997, and was musical director of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2007. Emily's main love is chamber music, and she has recently broadcast the Stravinsky Octet and recorded the Poulenc Trio with the Fibbonacci Sequence as well as premiering the *Secret House* sonata written for female trombonist by John Kenny. Emily teaches sackbut at the Royal College of Music, Trinity College of Music, and has coached at Wells Cathedral School.

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## 25 Dancing in the Dark

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|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1                          | Keck 3:35             | Richard Baker     |
| 2                          | A Lullaby * 8:49      | Torbjörn Hultmark |
| Quintet Op. 79             |                       | Vagn Holmboe      |
| 3                          | Poco Lento 2:09       |                   |
| 4                          | Allegro 2:52          |                   |
| 5                          | Adagio 4:45           |                   |
| 6                          | Vivace 4:23           |                   |
| 7                          | Nachna 5:42           | Mark Kesel        |
| 8                          | Tango Oscuro 5:55     | Cecilia MacDowall |
| Symphony for Brass Quintet |                       | Edward Longstaff  |
| 9                          | Adagio – Allegro 4:23 |                   |
| 10                         | Adagio 4:45           |                   |
| 11                         | Scherzo 1:50          |                   |
| 12                         | Allegro 3:42          |                   |

\* commissioned by BBC Radio 3



Recording Producer Chris Wheeler  
Recording Engineer Patrick Naylor  
Recorded at St Martin's Church, North Nibley, Gloucestershire



Simon de Souza  
*horn*  
James Doherty  
*tuba*  
Torbjörn Hultmark  
*trumpet*  
Mark Kesel  
*trumpet*  
Emily White  
*tr trombone*

with  
Sukhvinder Singh Namdhari  
*tabla*