

ORNITHOLOGY

(2016, 15-20 minutes)

by composer KIM ASHTON

written for pianist CLARE HAMMOND



O'ahu 'ō'ō

Extinct Birds by Lionel Walter Rothschild (1907)

“Five birds: two songbirds, one bird of prey, one waterbird, and one famous for its parasitic nesting behaviour. The flight and the songs of birds have always held a fascination for me, while the variety of their shapes, sizes and colours has inspired many artists and poets – and hunters – through history. The starting point for *Ornithology* is five poems chosen for their striking evocations of the birds they portray. Lines from the poems entitle each movement in what will be a diverse and very colourful set, ranging from the ethereal through the elegiac to the dazzlingly brilliant. Two poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins bookend the set: his short stanza on the cuckoo known as ‘Fragment 146’ provides inspiration for the atmospheric opener, while the famous *Windhover* makes for a *tour de force* finale. In between, contemporary Dorset poet Elisabeth Bletsoe’s very personal responses to the Goldfinch and Grey Heron sandwich a lament on the passing of the O’ahu ‘ō’ō, a stunning Hawaian bird from a genus entirely hunted to extinction for their colourful feathers.”

Kim Ashton

Ornithology for solo piano (2016, 15-20 minutes)

1. Cuckoo: 'Repeat that, repeat, cuckoo, bird, and open' (G.M. Hopkins)
2. Goldfinch: 'Days of brief transparency, viewed through a window of ice, lifted.' (Elisabeth Bletsoe)
3. O'ahu 'ō'ō (endemic to Hawai'i, now extinct): 'You. Explosions of soft black tendrils everywhere.' (K. von Aachen)
4. Grey Heron: 'Pastures garlanded with wire & electricity. Barbed & tanged.' (Elisabeth Bletsoe)
5. Kestrel or Windhover: 'Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume' (G.M. Hopkins)



KIM ASHTON

Composer – teacher – conductor – gardener – baroque oboist. Kim Ashton's music has been heard in concerts and festivals in the USA, France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Croatia, and throughout the UK. Kim's recent orchestral work *Spindrift*, written for the London Symphony Orchestra, is shortly to be released by the LSO on their own label, complementing existing recordings of his chamber pieces on the Lorelt and Nonclassical labels. Recent large-scale works have been performed by Ensemble InterContemporain, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Orchestra of Opera North, and Orquestra Gulbenkian, while he regularly collaborates with chamber groups and solo artists such as Lesley-Jane Rogers, Oliver Coates, Sound Intermedia, VOCAALLAB, Huw Watkins, Geoffrey Paterson, Juliet Fraser, and players from the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. His interest in opera/music theatre is reflected in a long-standing relationship with Paris-based theatre collective *La Chambre Aux Echos*, while in the UK his music-theatre piece *Tonseisha* was performed at the 2014 Tête à Tête Opera Festival with funding from the Arts Council. During his PhD, Kim studied with Silvina Milstein and George Benjamin at King's College London; he is now a visiting lecturer at Cambridge University, where for the last 10 years he has taught composition, history, and analysis.

<http://kimbashon.wordpress.com>



CLARE HAMMOND

Acclaimed as a pianist of “amazing power and panache” (*The Telegraph*), Clare Hammond is recognised for the virtuosity and authority of her performances and is developing a “reputation for brilliantly imaginative concert programmes” (*BBC Music Magazine*, ‘Rising Star’). The Guardian described her as a “dazzling athlete” following her Barbican debut in 2015, while in 2014 she gave debut performances at 7 festivals across Europe, including the ‘Chopin and his Europe Festival’ in Warsaw, world premieres of works by 10 composers, and three broadcasts for BBC Radio.

Hammond's latest disc release, ‘Etude’, has received unanimous critical praise for its “unfaltering bravura and conviction” (*Gramophone*), was selected as Critic's Choice by Classical Music Magazine, and the BBC Music Magazine stated that “this array of wizardry is not for the faint hearted”. ‘Etude’, and Hammond's previous disc of music by Andrzej and Roxanna Panufnik, ‘Reflections’, have been featured on BBC Radio 3's ‘In Tune’ and ‘CD Review’, and on radio in Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands, the US and Canada. In 2014 Hammond recorded music by Sibelius and Rangström as part of a BBC Symphony Orchestra studio concert for ‘Afternoon on 3’ while in 2012 her live recital broadcast of Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* from the Wigmore Hall was chosen as one of Radio 3's highlights of the month.

Hammond completed a BA at Cambridge University, where she obtained a double first in music, and undertook doctoral study with Ronan O'Hora at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and with Professor Rhian Samuel at City University London.

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