



# DANCE MAZE

Chamber Music by  
**Tom Armstrong**

**Simon Desbruslais** trumpet  
**Jakob Fichert** piano  
**Nicola Meecham** piano  
**Audrey Riley** cello  
**James Woodrow** electric guitar  
**Fidelio Trio**

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Simon Desbruslais *trumpet*<sup>7</sup>  
Jakob Fichert *piano*<sup>6-7</sup>  
Nicola Meecham *piano*<sup>1-3</sup>  
Audrey Riley *cello*<sup>5</sup>  
James Woodrow *electric guitar*<sup>5</sup>

Fidelio Trio:  
Darragh Morgan *violin*<sup>4&8</sup>  
Robin Michael *cello*<sup>4</sup>  
Mary Dullea *piano*<sup>4&8</sup>

## Morning Music (2012–15)

1. Limit	[1:47]
2. Trails	[1:10]
3. Aubade	[8:06]
4. Divertissements (2009)	[11:12]
5. Diversions 3 (2015)	[17:53]
6. Dance Maze: Variations for Piano (1994, revised 2008, 2017)	[12:05]
7. Dance Maze: Duos for Trumpet and Piano (2016–17)	[19:37]
8. Akin (2008)	[6:23]
Total playing time	[78:18]



Tom Armstrong  
Photography: Francis Western

## Dance Maze: Chamber Music by Tom Armstong

### Revision and Re-working

All but one of the pieces on this recording sit on a continuum bounded by revision and re-working. Whilst some (*Dance Maze: Variations for Piano, Divertissements*) involve greater or lesser adjustments to an original version, others (*Dance Maze: Duos for Trumpet and Piano, Diversions 3*) contain fundamental changes that transform the way an earlier work sounds.

Revision is used here, then, to refer to a process that produces a replacement of the original as part of an attempt at improvement. An area of ambiguity immediately arises, though, in the numerous cases where composers' successive improvements have accrued in different versions creating potentially tricky, even insurmountable, editorial decisions. Related to this are certain philosophical questions such as deciding when a work may have reached its final version, whether the final version exceeds its predecessors, and whether the 'rightness' of this version can ever be proved.<sup>1</sup> Moving across the continuum, the practice of self-borrowing is less concerned with such questions; it

encompasses self-quotation – such as found frequently in Shostakovich's output (a practice that can occasion as much debate as the existence of competing revisions) – and the recycling of extant pieces as part of new, larger works as exemplified by Handel, Bach and (less well-known) Lou Harrison.<sup>2</sup> The change of genre that often accompanies recycling (for example, Bach's re-purposing of music from a solo violin partita as orchestral music for a cantata Sinfonia) produces co-existing versions that can sit less controversially alongside each other than is often the case with revisions. As the far end of the continuum is approached the original and its re-working become more distinct from each other; changes are not wrought by recontextualisation, as in recycling, but from within. Luciano Berio's harmonic and timbral elaboration of *Sequenza VI* to create *Chemins II* is a good example of such diversification; in no sense is the latter an improvement of the former, rather a recolouring, an amplification and a filling out at the centre of which the original viola solo remains intact. Re-working was also a preoccupation of Pierre Boulez but underpinned by processes of proliferation rather than commentary such that extreme differences in duration are found between both versions (see for example *Dérive I* and *II* – the latter also subject to a process of revision).

Towards the end of his life Boulez wrote that the principle of 'open form' could be used to symbolise his view of composition itself, that the "basic premise" of a piece could serve as a point of departure for "revisions, reevaluations, reconsiderations."<sup>3</sup> This notion of openness is one embraced by many of the works on this recording but they also go further, with later versions actively questioning earlier ones by adopting, for example, very different means of organisation or notation. In this way the gap between the past and the present found at any point on the revision/re-working continuum remains palpable and, it is hoped, sets up a productive and expressive tension.

### The Music

The solo piano collection, **Morning Music** (2012–15), consists of three short 'satellite' pieces ('Limit', 'Trails' and 'Replay') orbiting a longer one, 'Aubade'. The latter was composed first as a standalone piece, then 'Limit' and 'Trails' were added in 2014. These pieces present different readings of the sequence of six-note chords that runs through the original: 'Limit' presents just the uppermost note of each chord as a gradually expanding monody, whilst 'Trails' breaks the chords into ever-changing patterns scattered across the keyboard. Written in 2015,

'Replay' is a severe compression of 'Aubade' by means of which its character is changed markedly; the brief, concentrated ideas that make up both pieces are now articulated aggressively and silences become interruptive, not containers for reverberation. The satellite pieces are re-workings (rather than revisions) of 'Aubade', channelling the material of the original into discreet off-shoots instead of usurping it.

The piano trio, **Divertissements** (2009), is a revision originally composed as a replacement for its forebear but, at the time of writing, that version is also undergoing revision – there is always a danger of musically 'painting the Forth Bridge' when revising works! The choice of piano trio represents a complete change of medium from the original line-up of electric guitar and harpsichord. This reversion to a venerable chamber music ensemble reveals the motivation behind the revision, that the rather traditional texture and aesthetic of the piece seemed ill-suited to the original instrumentation. The revision process also afforded the opportunity for trimming dimensions and finessing transitions between the three divertimenti that constitute the form of the piece, for example there is now a pronounced

dovetailing between the first two of these during which angular rhythmic music gradually yields to more lyrical material.

Of all the pieces on this recording, **Diversions 3** (2015) for electric guitar with optional additions (here, cello), probably travels the greatest distance from its source – the electric guitar and harpsichord version of *Divertissements*. Unlike the piano trio, *Diversions 3* is a complete re-working that substitutes a new set of structural and aesthetic priorities: in place of organic growth, wholeness and seamlessness are found a list-like structure in which the diverse material of the piece is presented on single pages that are never returned to and between which performers need to devise their own approach to continuity. The form is open to a degree; performers can begin on any page and include as many or as few of the ensuing pages as they like.

**Dance Maze**, like *Morning Music*, is a collection but on a much larger scale encompassing revision and re-working. **Variations for Piano** constitutes the original and has been subject to two phases of revision – in 2008 during which the many changes of meter were rationalised and the piano textures

thinned slightly, and in 2017 when the dynamic profile of several sections was altered in order to diffuse the unrelenting intensity of the earlier version. The variations are based on a row of twenty notes that is often presented in a fragmented form; a good example of this is the opening in which the first six notes of the theme gradually unfold in the left hand alternating with short bursts of busier material. The theme is finally heard in full after about two minutes, played in widely separated octaves punctuated by staccato chords. **Duos for Trumpet and Piano** re-works *Variations for Piano* in two ways: firstly, the continuous sequence of variations is broken into discreet sections which can be re-connected in any order by the performers; secondly, the trumpet part grafts on material derived from a completely different source – melodic techniques and patterns from the book, *Self-Similar Melodies*, by Tom Johnson (a composer I had not heard of when I wrote *Variations for Piano*). Such a procedure is far from unprecedented in Western art music and may be traced back at least as far as the Medieval motet with its superimposition of secular texts (often French) over Latin chants. An example of this approach associated with the revision process is furnished by Karlheinz Stockhausen's



Darragh Morgan  
Photography: Frances Marshall



Mary Dullea  
Photography: Sophie Dennehy



Robin Michael  
Photography: Resonus Limited



Jakob Fichert  
Photography: Tomasz Kwiatkowski

*Klavierstück V* in which the revised version of the piece became a background on which new material was superimposed – grace note groups derived from an unrelated twelve-tone row. By means of a similar ‘alien’ source the trumpet part in *Duos* assumes a level of autonomy emphasised by the possibility of extracting the part to form the self-contained piece, *Solos for Trumpet*. This re-working of *Duos* challenges its spatial integrity by prising apart the two instrumental components. In turn, both re-workings challenge the temporal integrity of *Variations* through ‘exploding’ its fixed form. These re-workings share with *Diversions 3* a critical attitude to their predecessors whereby rather than conventional notions of musical form and structure – organicism, seamless, tension and release – are confronted with the openness, fragmentation and stasis that characterise experimental/avant-garde methods of construction.

*Akin* (2008) is, in some respects, an outlier on this recording. Revisions have been minimal and represent no challenge to the original version. However, if revision and re-working are seen as forms of (self-)borrowing then the piece does have connections with the preceding music because its form and proportions are based on those of a pre-existing piece –

*Fracture* from the album *Starless and Bible Black* by King Crimson. *Akin* is a homage to the experience of first hearing *Fracture*, in particular its opening passage of whole tone music, and to the excitement of discovering King Crimson’s particular strain of progressive rock with its connections to twentieth-century classical music. In re-working the original its proportions are retained but within smaller dimensions. Although the harmonic materials are new the music of the original is clearly alluded to throughout, from the whole tone beginning, to the central interlude in tenths, to the frenetic rising sequences that dominate the closing minutes of the track. It is only the very ending that contradicts the source; whereas *Fracture* ends with a passage of typical rock grandiosity, *Akin* simply evaporates.

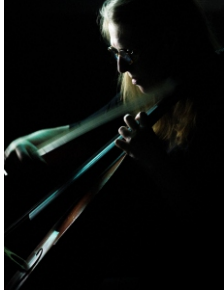
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1. Bruce Ellis Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

2. Leta Miller, “Lou Harrison and the Aesthetics of Revision, Alteration and Self-Borrowing,” *twentieth-century music* 2, no. 1 (2005)

3. Pierre Boulez, “... ‘ouvert’, encore...,” *Contemporary Music Review* 26, nos 3–4 (2007)



Audrey Riley  
Photography: Laura Evans

### **Simon Desbruslais (trumpet)**

Simon Desbruslais is a trumpet soloist, whose performances have been critically acclaimed as 'steel-lipped' and possessing 'supreme confidence and flair'. Equally active in Baroque and contemporary music, Simon has recorded extensively for Signum Classics including, most recently, *The Art of Dancing and Psalm: British Trumpet Concertos*.

Simon has given concerto performances in China and Brazil, and has appeared as a soloist with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, English Symphony Orchestra, BBC National



James Woodrow  
Photography: Katja Kulenkampff

Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of the Swan, Charivari Agréable, Brook Street Band, and Ensemble Diderot. He is a Lecturer in Music at the University of Hull, where he is also Director of Performance.

[www.simondesbruslais.com](http://www.simondesbruslais.com)

### **Mary Dullea (piano)**

As soloist and chamber musician, Irish pianist Mary Dullea has built an impressive reputation as a performer and commissioner of new music, performing internationally. She broadcasts regularly for BBC Radio 3 and RTÉ Lyric FM. She appears on recordings

for NMC, Delphian, Altarus, Divine Art, Naxos, Orange Mountain, Resonus and MN Records. Concerto appearances

include RTÉ Concert Orchestra, KZN Philharmonic Orchestra and a BBC commission with Lontano. From 2008 to 2016 Mary curated 'Soundings' in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Forum, London. She is the pianist in The Fidelio Trio and is the founder and Artistic Director of 'Chamber Music on Valentia', an annual Festival held in August. Mary has been Director of Performance at Royal Holloway, University of London since 2015.

[www.marydullea.com](http://www.marydullea.com)

### **Jakob Fichert (piano)**

Jakob Fichert is a pianist with an international profile. He regularly performs in prestigious venues and festivals and has recorded for Naxos and Toccata Classics to great critical acclaim both as a soloist and collaborating artist. His concerts have taken him all over the world. On numerous occasions he has played in China, most recently in Tianjin, Beijing and Jilin.

Much in demand as a pedagogue, Jakob has

given numerous master classes for music specialist schools, conservatoires and universities in the UK, China and Mexico. He works as an examiner for the ABRSM, teaches the piano at the Universities of York and Hull and holds the position of Principal Lecturer in Piano at Leeds College of Music.

[www.jakobfichert.com](http://www.jakobfichert.com)

### **Nicola Meecham (piano)**

With her playing described as 'sensational' (*Gramophone*), British pianist Nicola Meecham has performed internationally, throughout the UK and at major venues, including the Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. A

prizewinner at the Royal Academy of Music, Nicola has given broadcast recitals for BBC Radio 3 and Dutch Radio and has given premieres by internationally renowned composers, including Henryk Górecki and Heinz Karl Gruber. Her recordings for SOMM include albums of piano sonatas by Tchaikovsky and a recital of music by Enescu, Janáček and Kodály, both of which received outstanding reviews in the international press.

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

**Robin Michael (cello)**

Robin Michael studied at the Royal Academy of Music with David Strange and Colin Carr and later with Ferenc Rados. He is principal cellist in Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, Solo cellist with Orchestre Les Siècles (Paris) as well as regular guest principal cellist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Irish Chamber Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, English Baroque Soloists, English National Opera and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Robin was the cellist in the Fidelio trio for over 10 years with whom he toured Europe, North America, Asia and South Africa. He has also appeared in collaboration with the Dante and Eroica quartets.

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

**Darragh Morgan (violin)**

Irish violinist Darragh Morgan has collaborated closely with renowned composers Arvo Pärt, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Michael Nyman, Michael Finnissy and Kevin Volans. He is a founder member of The Fidelio Trio and has often appeared as Leader of the London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Musik Fabrik and

Les Siècles and performed chamber music with Bang On a Can All Stars, Smith Quartet, Thomas Adès, Emmanuel Pahud and John Tilbury. Solo appearances include Vienna Konzerthaus, the Wigmore Hall, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Seoul Arts Center, and he has recorded over fifty albums including Donnacha Dennehy's Violin Concerto Elastic Harmonic with RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and recently Gerald Barry Chamber Music for Mode Records. Darragh plays an 1848 Giuseppe Rocca violin, generously on loan from the Morgan-Rocca Instrument Trust which is administered by The Royal Society of Musicians and a bow by Joseph Alfred Lamy.

[www.darraghmorgan.com](http://www.darraghmorgan.com)

**Audrey Riley (cello)**

Audrey Riley studied at the Guildhall School Of Music with Leonard Stehn. As an arranger and improvising cellist she has contributed to many rock and pop recordings.

Between 2001 and 2011 she toured with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and continues to perform *BIPED*. She is investigating the performance practices of the composer/musicians of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company,



Simon Desbruslais  
Photography: Rob Lonsdale



Nicola Meecham  
Photography: Fritz Curzon

*Acknowledgements:*

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University of Surrey, for use of  
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*This recording is dedicated to the memory  
of Michael Armstrong (1934–2016);  
his musical curiosity, taste, erudition  
and embrace of the modern in music  
provoked my interest in, and nourished  
my commitment to, the art  
of musical composition.*

with a special emphasis on the works of John Cage, as part of a PhD at De Montfort University.

She has been a member of contemporary music group Icebreaker since 1989, and it's Music Director since 2009, and teaches Composition & Arranging, and Advanced Ensemble Skills (BMus and MMus) at ICMP, and cello at Goldsmiths.

[www.audreyriley.com](http://www.audreyriley.com)

#### **James Woodrow (electric guitar)**

James Woodrow gives regular performances as soloist and ensemble player with the London Chamber Symphony, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, London Sinfonietta, BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Singers and The New London Chamber Choir, and is a member of the Gavin Bryars Ensemble and Icebreaker.

He has worked with a number of contemporary dance companies, including Richard Alston, London Contemporary Dance, Rambert, Phoenix Dance Company, Siobhan Davies, Shobana Jeyasingh, Royal Ballet and Scottish Ballet and, from 1999 until its close in December 2011, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

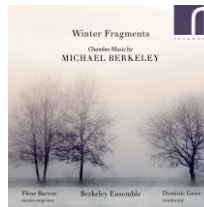
James also plays with a number of jazz ensembles, including his own quartet CandyTime with whom he has recorded two albums.

#### **Tom Armstrong**

Tom Armstrong studied composition with George Nicholson and Roger Marsh. He read music at York University, completing a PhD in composition in 1994. He has also studied at Dartington Summer School, the Britten-Pears School and on the renowned International Course for Professional Choreographers and Composers. Tom has received commissions for orchestral, chamber and vocal music, amateur musicians and dance. In addition to the artists on this disc his music has been performed by Notes Inégales, Gemini, the New Music Players, Psappha, the Delta Saxophone Quartet, the BBC Philharmonic and the Feinstein Ensemble. His music has been heard across the UK in venues such as Kings Place, the Wigmore Hall, the Southbank Centre and the Lowry and performed in Europe and China. Tom is a Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Surrey.

[www.tomarmstrongcomposer.com](http://www.tomarmstrongcomposer.com)

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Producers: Matt Buchanan & Tom Armstrong

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Assistant: Craig Jenkins (2011 sessions)

Executive producer: Adam Binks

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