

Armand Angster
Solo Clarinet
Label : Triton



1. **Christophe Bertrand** *Dikha* 09'01
for clarinet (and bass clarinet) and electronics (2001)

2. **Brian Ferneyhough** *Time and Motion study I* 9'05
for bass clarinet (1971-77)

3. **Alberto Posadas** *Sinolon* 11'22
for solo clarinet (2000)

4. **Ivan Fedele** *High* 7'22
for bass clarinet (2005)

5. **Helmut Lachenmann** *Dal Niente (Intérieur III)* 11'20
for solo clarinet (1970)

6. **Yann Robin** *Art of Metal II* 09'49
for contrabass clarinet
and live electronic sound processing (2007)

A twenty-first century voice

Many twentieth century composers thought the main significance of music lied in its organisation, therefore they paid little heed to the relatively limited range of timbres in string quartet instruments for instance. For many of them, among whom Ravel, Szymanowski, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich... the conception of music is – at least to a certain degree – disconnected from its ultimate sound rendition. The same discrepancy – although in a different register – can be found in the works of Schönberg or Berg. Indeed, they believed that the musical colour of the piece does not depend on the variety of instruments but rather on the way they are used. Conversely, other composers such as Debussy, Bartok, Kodaly in his earliest works, Varèse, Webern – before he turned to serialism – or more recently Messiaen, Lutoslawski, Carter, Ligeti ou Berio fully take into account the unique sonorities and technical specificities of instruments. They paved the way for the musical avant-gardes of the second half of the twentieth century for whom the sound characteristics and the versatile expressiveness of the instrument played a key part. These singularities form dramatic identities which are central to the musical argument. “Invented” in the eighteenth century, the clarinet was actually really discovered by Mozart and later the Romantic movement (Weber, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms) and took on a new dimension, a more passionate and more profound quality over the centuries. Throughout the twentieth century and at the dawn of the twenty-first century, beside the existing concerto and orchestra repertoire – ranging from Debussy, Nielsen, Copland to Barraqué, Carter or Lindberg – numerous pieces of chamber music in which the clarinet plays a crucial part were composed (Schönberg, Berg, Stravinsky, Janacek, Bartok, Hindemith, Messiaen among others...), not even to mention the major works in which the instrument is used on its own and sometimes stretched to the limits of its technical potentialities (from Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces* to Boulez’s *Dialogue de l’ombre double*). In 1924, in *Style and Idea*, Schönberg praised the clarinet, an instrument as perfect as violin or cello in his eyes, and the most promising of all the wood instruments.

Clarinetist Armand Angster created the ensemble Accroche Note together with soprano Françoise Kubler in 1981 and has been working closely with contemporary composers ever since. In addition to many original creations for his ensemble, he inspired several outstanding scores for solo clarinet (including works by Pascal Dusapin, James Dillon and Ahmed Essyad). However, Armand Angster has neither commissioned nor created the six pieces collected here, which all venture into uncharted territory, transcend the experimental gesture and that Armand Angster performs with remarkable virtuosity. *Dikha* (2000-2001), for clarinet (and bass clarinet) and electronics was composed at age twenty by the late French composer Christophe Bertrand (1981-2010). In this promising piece, virtuosity, far from being a mere technical feat, awakens new possibilities for both composition and expression. *High* (2005), by Italian composer Ivan Fedele may seem less distinctly originitive in its approach insofar as it does not engage as much with the history of the instrument. Indeed, it is an adaptation for clarinet of a piece first written in 1996 for trumpet in B-flat as a tribute to jazz legend Miles Davis. In his already iconic piece *Dal Niente* (1970), German composer Helmut Lachenmann (born in 1935) takes us into another realm and confronts us with his uncompromising rejection of appearances, of “pleasant music”, of preconceptions or references to any kind of predetermined formal design. The listener is baffled by the exacting sense of purity prevailing in a music that questions instead of asserting and seeks to capture the birth of sound in its flimsiness. Embedding the musical gesture within the framework of composition writing may lead to virtual dramatization, as for instance in Berio’s *Sequenzas*. The same principle is at work with the aesthetics of saturation propounded by French composer Yann Robin (born in 1974). *Art of Metal II* (2007), composed for contrabass clarinet and live electronic sound processing, is a long outburst strewn with pangs of stridency. The piece strongly impacts our senses, it is not merely subservient to its potential visual or stage transposition – bound to be limited – but rather requires us to listen closely to the dissociation of the wholeness of sound as well its recomposing into a different order.

The approach of the British composer Brian Ferneyhough (born in 1943) stems from a deep-rooted assimilation of serialism. He shapes this legacy to fit his own violently expressionistic disposition, and takes us to a totally new level. He develops an aesthetic framework based on complexity and effort in which the instruments are constantly striving to outstretch their own boundaries. His music is challenging because of its extreme density of information: it rests on a polyphony which is at the same time concerned with reality (several actual voices are involved), with virtuality (there is a play on distanced repetition through monody) and with action (several layers of musical actions are

overlapping). From the onset of *Time and Motion Study I* (1997) written for bass clarinet, the musical idea contains its own variations and developments. Articulation, phrasing, accents, dynamics or rhythmic patterns are changing continuously and simultaneously. Thus, the piece reaches an unforeseen level of sophistication that becomes particularly perilous for the performer. Intertwined musical lines emerge from the elemental power and outstanding density of this organized chaos, a feature that is also to be found in the equally fantastic *Sinolon* (2000) for B-flat clarinet written by Spanish composer Alberto Posadas (born in 1967). The ornate quality of the lavish embellishments is contained within a strict organic structure, revealing a deliberate architectural design. As he did in *Liturgia fractal* (2003-2007), the ample work for string quartet that established his international reputation, Posadas opens the listener's perception to a world of sounds and expressive contents based on wide-ranging techniques. With consummate skill, Posada combines different modes of playing (microtones, multiphonic sounds, ever-evolving tonal variations, trills and glissandi meant to be played as evenly as possible). Through waves and swirls, contemplative passages fraught with self-contained tension, sequences of climactic complexity (less frequently pointillist), the paradoxically pared down profusion of the composition goes beyond the minute changes in sound texture or colour, so that the listener can keep up with the processes of derivation and development that define the structure of the piece.

Patrick Szersnovicz

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Armand Angster Clarinetist

Armand Angster's repertoire as a soloist ranges from Mozart to the most recent contemporary pieces, 20th century music and musical improvisation. Several composers have dedicated works to him (including Brian Ferneyhough, Pascal Dusapin, Georges Aperghis, Franco Donatoni, Marc Monnet, Philippe Manoury, James Dillon, François-Bernard Mâche, Ivan Fedele, Stefano Gervasoni, Mauro Lanza, Philippe Leroux...).

He created the Ensemble Accroche Note together with Françoise Kubler (soprano), an ensemble that regularly performs in the greatest festivals and music events all over the world: Paris (Ircam, Présences Festival), Venice (Biennal), Berlin, London, Huddersfield, Strasbourg (Musica), Madrid, Oslo, Sao Paulo, Brussels, Saint Petersburg, Chicago, Stockholm, Parma (Traiettorie), Rome (Controtempo).

As a soloist, he regularly plays with the following ensembles and orchestras: Music Project (London), Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France (Paris), New Ensemble (Amsterdam), Ensemble Recherche (Freiburg), Carme Di Milano, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the SWF Baden Baden, Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia.

He also takes part in mixed jazz and improvised music projects which combine composition writing and improvisation.

Armand Angster also teaches masterclasses at the HEAR art school in Strasbourg.

He conducts the Contemporary Ensemble of the Regional Conservatory of Strasbourg.

He recorded pieces with several music publishers: Accord, Etcetera, FMP Berlin, ENJA, Universal, L'empreinte Digitale, Nocturne, Naïve, Triton.

Partners

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