

Mihailo Trandafilovski



Polychromy



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music by Mihailo Trandafilovski (b.1974)

1	Chaconne <i>Peter Sheppard Skærved (violin)</i>	13:19
2	Sandglass <i>Roger Heaton (clarinet)</i>	12:37
	Šarenilo	8:43
3	I. Mozaik	4:27
4	II. Nitki <i>Peter Sheppard Skærved & Mihailo Trandafilovski (violins)</i>	4:15
5	Weaxan <i>Linda Merrick (clarinet); Peter Sheppard Skærved (violin); Roderick Chadwick (piano)</i>	10:46
6	Polychromy <i>Neil Heyde (cello)</i>	9:02
7	String Dune(s) <i>Miyabi Guitar Duo (Saki Kato & Hugh Millington)</i>	9:15
	Grain – Song	9:24
8	I. Grain	4:21
9	II. Song <i>Peter Sheppard Skærved (violin)</i>	5:03
	Total playing time	70:08

The Music

notes by the composer

The title of this album, and one of the pieces in it (from Greek: “poly” – many and “chroma” – colour) relates to an aspect of music that has been of interest since my first steps as a composer; but has perhaps become more of a specific focus in the last ten years or so. I have approached it in different ways: within individual pieces, within albums (as is the case here), and on different levels, such as sonority, harmonic language, technique etc. At the same time, I have been equally preoccupied with some underlying principles which have remained constant regardless of the surface language: for example, a hierarchical organisation of the harmonic language and the material in general, or the interaction of tension and release (I have talked about such features in more detail in the liner notes for my previous recordings, e.g. *Diptych – Métier* MSV 28582, 2018). These principles may be manifested in various environments: in terms of harmony, they can be equally fundamental to chromatically dense, completely diatonic, or spectral material; structure, expression and other aspects can be approached along similar lines. The balance between these two sides – the constant elements, and their manifestations / colours – is explored in the individual pieces, and this album as a whole.

Chaconne (solo violin) was written for Peter Sheppard Skærved. In February 2022, I heard Peter’s recital at Goldsmiths, University of London, entitled “Chaconne” – exploring this archetypal form through works spanning 17th – 21st centuries. One piece in particular, Isang Yun’s *Königliches Thema* (1976), was an exciting discovery for me: I found the intensity of the music and the control and flow of energy in Peter’s performance very engaging. In a conversation at the tube station after the concert, he suggested I try writing a chaconne. I think I found the idea thrilling immediately; perhaps because I felt that writing within the boundaries of a chaconne might open new doors (working within similar boundaries has proved liberating in the past). The theme is 7 bars long, and the relatively simple opening embarks on a journey, through

various stages, colours, techniques, and expressive possibilities — arriving, finally, where it had started: the theme appears again but modified, augmented and in retrograde form.

Sandglass was written for the clarinetist Roger Heaton. It is the second piece I have written for Roger (the first one was a clarinet quintet), and my first attempt at writing a solo clarinet work. Roger is a clarinet maverick — amongst other pieces, he premiered Radulescu's *The Inner Time*, written for him — in which the material travels from high, to low, to high, in terms of the frequency spectrum, and modules / events gradually transform from long, to compressed / shorter, and back to long. I was inspired to try something similar in terms of how the music unfolds in time, and how time and energy are experienced on this path; although the sound world, techniques, and the material in general are very different to the Rădulescu. The beginning of *Sandglass* is relatively sparse, allowing space between sound / phrases — gradually, the material becomes more concentrated / compressed — and on the other side of a central point, the intensity gradually subsides and becomes fragmented again, individual sounds being taken over by increasing intervals of silence. I love the clarinet, with its extremely wide range of technical and expressive possibilities, and writing for this instrument in a solo setting felt like exploring a unique (clarinet) universe — in the shape of a sandglass.

Šarenilo (pronounced “Sharenilo” — Macedonian for “colourfulness”) is a violin duo I wrote for Peter and myself for an event he curated at the British Museum in 2016. I used a particular object (a “Large Plate of Mosaic Glass”, eastern Mediterranean, ca.225-200 BC) exhibited in the museum as the starting point. The overall structure and various strands of material in the piece reflect this beautiful object. I look at the two movements (*1.Mosaic, 2.Nitki* — Macedonian for “threads”) as complementary: the first is more active, displaying a variety of colours and ideas (of very different nature, e.g. “traditionally virtuosic” ways of playing combined with more contemporary techniques), but gradually revealing a calmer structure; the second is more peaceful, but glitters with various strands, gradually unfolding — as if one is looking at the same object (the same plate of glass) from another perspective / angle.

Weaxan was written for the clarinetist Linda Merrick, pianist Roderick Chadwick, and Peter Sheppard Skærved. In this unique chamber music setting, I was excited to explore sonorities and techniques that felt idiomatic for each of the three instruments — up to an extent, treating them as if they are in separate worlds. There are of course shared elements, for example the harmonic framework (which, as in other recent pieces, is a network combining equal temperament, quarter tones, just intervals, and harmonic series). But, each instrument develops its own soundworld, arising from the nature of sound production and other technical and expressive characteristics, along an individual path; the three paths overlap throughout the piece and the cyclical, wavelike phrases gain intensity, leading to an overall “rise” (hence the title: “weaxan”, from Old English – to wax, grow). I deliberately tried to explore this direction / movement, as I have often, in my pieces, completed a circle by calming the material down (as is the case with several of the works here). Nevertheless, an inevitable “wane” is still felt, or at least implied, by the extreme intensity of the ending — the three instruments, one by one and finishing with the clarinet, carry the material to such severe limits that no further growth / rise is possible.

Polychromy (solo cello), written for Neil Heyde, is possibly the most “extreme” of all the pieces here: most of the colours and techniques explored would be called “extended” — but I find this term less than ideal: extension implies a norm, whereas I like to think of these techniques as part of a continuum, and as idiomatic to the instrument, rather than going against its nature, or expanding what some would call a “normal” sound. In a sense, I approached cello technique, and sound itself, from “scratch” — and starting with a “single scratch” pulse, a kaleidoscopic world of many colours gradually emerges, by using various subtle gradations of both left- and right-hand techniques: bow pressure, position and speed / sound density / vibrato / tremolo / microtones / harmonics etc. Integrating these elements in such a way that a natural momentum develops throughout the piece requires tremendous control and virtuosity by the player.

String Dune(s) was written for Hugh Millington and Saki Kato (guitar duo). Whenever I write for instruments I don’t play (such as the guitar and clarinet on this recording),

the period of research and preparation, before writing any notes down, is quite extensive; it ranges from reading about the instrument's construction and sonic characteristics, to listening / watching many different approaches to playing (in this case, not just classical, but spanning from renaissance lute music to blues and flamenco approaches etc.). *String Dune(s)* was written during the pandemic lockdowns and as a result I wasn't able to meet and work with Saki and Hugh in person until quite late into the compositional process. Nevertheless, the collaboration grew organically: we initially met via Zoom, tried various techniques and sounds I had imagined, talked about possibilities, and so on. The end result is a piece that pushes the limits of what is playable on the instrument, but Hugh and Saki inserted life and energy even into the most extreme gestures. Again, writing for two guitars was a totally new universe for me: the sound of plucked (rather than bowed) strings, the specific tuning etc. allowed for a unique world in terms of the harmonic language, sonority, and technique. The title of the piece refers to the overall shape (a "dune"), within which there are smaller dunes, developing throughout the composition — and reflecting the waves / vibration of strings.

Grain – Song is another piece (or two interrelated pieces) written during the pandemic, for Peter Sheppard Skærved. Here, the required virtuosity is of a very different kind to the one in, for example, *Šarenilo*. In *Grain*, I looked at some "elementary" sounds and associated techniques; sparse modules are gradually organised into a coherent structure. The physicality of playing the instrument is perhaps an aspect one becomes very conscious of when performing this kind of music — in a way, even the silences are performed: there is a natural, spontaneous physical movement during the silent intervals, leading from one module to the next (obviously, this visual aspect of the performance is not present in an audio recording, but can possibly be imagined). *Song* is, perhaps, more "human": flowing and lyrical, and using more traditional expressive and technical tools. But there is also a plane of shared fabric, sometimes hinted at, sometimes more explicitly shown, which ties the two pieces into one.

All of the compositions on this album were written for specific players — friends I have collaborated with over a number of years. I have known Peter and Neil since joining

the Kreutzer Quartet, 16 years ago; and have also closely worked, many times and both as a player and composer, with Roderick, Roger and Linda. The collaborative relationship with Saki and Hugh is more recent, but equally inspiring for me. I cannot overstate the importance of these relationships: they have allowed me to grow as a composer and musician, and to explore music / possibilities that would have simply stayed behind closed doors otherwise. Knowing the virtuosity, openness and dedication of these musicians has meant I can be free and push boundaries if necessary — not for the sake of being extreme, but to let the material develop without compromise, when this is its natural progression. I am aware that many of the techniques and expressive aspects explored by the pieces on this album are very difficult, especially if they are to be “integrated”, so they sound organic. But the latter is, in fact, essential to me — and brings this music to life. I am grateful to the wonderful artists on this album for making this happen.

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Mihailo Trandafilovski



The Composer

Mihailo Trandafilovski is a Macedonian-born, London-based composer, violinist and educator who has previously had albums of his music issued by Neuma (2021), Métier (2018), Innova (2015), Clarinet Classics (2013) and Lorelt (2011), featuring close collaborators Peter Sheppard Skærved, Neil Heyde, Roger Heaton, Roderick Chadwick, Linda Merrick, Saki Kato, Hugh Millington, Odaline de la Martinez, Lontano, Kreutzer Quartet and the New London Chamber Choir. These enduring creative relationships have been at the centre of his work as a composer and have allowed him to explore and stretch instrumental techniques in idiomatic and often uncompromising ways.

His music has been performed by leading contemporary music groups such as Quatuor Diotima (France), Reconsil Ensemble (Austria), Ensemble Horizonte (Germany), Icarus Ensemble (Italy), Ensemble Fractales (Belgium), Meitar Ensemble (Israel), Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble (Russia), the European Contemporary Composers Orchestra; and has been broadcast throughout Europe, America and Asia.

As a violinist, Mihailo has recorded and performed extensively, both as a member of the Kreutzer Quartet and in solo/duo settings; most recently, he released his solo album *Step(pe)s* (violin/computer) in 2021. He has an avid interest in the application of new music to pedagogy, and has led a number of shared projects among the arts promoting contemporary artistic creativity to a wider audience.

Mihailo's music is published by United Music Publishing.

The Performers

Peter Sheppard Skærved is known for his pioneering approach to the music of our own time and the past. Over 400 works have been written for him, by composers Laurie Bamon, Judith Bingham, Nigel Clarke, Robert Saxton, Edward Cowie, Jeremy Dale Roberts, Peter Dickinson, Michael Finnissy, Elena Firsova, David Gorton, Naji Hakim, Sadie Harrison, Hans Werner Henze, Sidika Özdil, Rosalind Page, George Rochberg, Michael Alec Rose, Poul Ruders, Volodmyr Runchak, Evis Sammoutis, Elliott Schwartz, Peter Sculthorpe, Howard Skempton, Dmitri Smirnov, Jeremy Thurlow, Mihailo Trandafilovski, Judith Weir, Jörg Widmann, Ian Wilson, John Woolrich and Douglas Young.

Peter's pioneering work on music for violin alone has resulted in research, performances and recordings of cycles by Bach, de Bériot, Tartini, Telemann, and, most recently, his project, 'Preludes and Vollereries', which brings together 200 unknown works from the seventeenth century, from composers including Colombi, Lonati, Marini and Matteis, with the Wren and Hawksmoor churches in London's Square Mile.

His work with museums has resulted in long-term projects at institutions including the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, the Metropolitan Museum, New York City, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, Galeria Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, and the exhibition 'Only Connect', which he curated at the National Portrait Gallery, London. Most recently his 'Tegner' commissioned by the Bergen International Festival, is a close collaboration with the major Norwegian abstract artist, Jan Groth, resulting in a set of solo Caprices, premiering at Kunsthallen, Bergen, and travelling to galleries in Denmark, the UK and even Svalbard/Spitzbergen. Peter is the only living violinist to have performed on the violins of Ole Bull, Joachim, Paganini and Viotti. As a writer, Peter has published a monograph on the Victorian artist/musician John Orlando Parry, many articles in journals worldwide, and most recently, *Practice: Walk*, for Routledge.

Peter is the founder and leader of the Kreutzer Quartet and the artistic director of the ensemble Longbow. Viotti Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music, he was elected Fellow there in 2013. He is married to the Danish writer Malene Skærved and they live in Wapping.

www.peter-sheppard-skaerved.com

Roger Heaton has performed with such groups as the Kreutzer and Smith String Quartets and the Fidelio Trio and has played with the Gavin Bryars Ensemble since the early 1980s. He was a member of the London Sinfonietta, and has played with leading performers of new music including the Arditti Quartet and Ensemble Modern: concerto performances have included Boulez's *Domaines* with Sinfonietta and Henze's *Le Miracle de la Rose* with the composer conducting. He was Music Director of Rambert Dance Company during the 1990s and Clarinet Professor at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (1982-94).

Recordings include the chamber music of Hugh Wood (Toccatà), solo works by Tom Johnson (Ants/Silenzio), clarinet quintets by Morton Feldman and Christopher Fox (Métier), a clarinet quintet by Trandafilovski and a solo disc with works by Rădulescu, Boulez and Scelsi, both for Clarinet Classics. Writings include an edited book *The Versatile Clarinet* (Routledge), contributions to the *Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, *Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, and *Perspectives on the Music of Christopher Fox* (Routledge). He is Emeritus Professor of Music at Bath Spa University.

Professor **Linda Merrick** is Principal of the RNCM and an internationally-renowned clarinet soloist, recording artist and pedagogue.

Her catalogue of over 40 solo recordings features new concertos she has commissioned by Gary Carpenter, Nigel Clarke, Martin Ellerby, John McLeod, Stephen McNeff, Edwin Roxburgh, Philip Sparke, Philip Spratley, Kit Turnbull and Guy Woolfenden for labels such as Naxos, Chandos, NMC, Guild and Métier. She has also released premiere recordings of clarinet quintets with the Navarra and Kreutzer Quartets by composers including Simon Bainbridge, Nigel Clarke, Robert Crawford, Michael Finnissy, Wilfred Josephs, John McCabe and Edwin Roxburgh, with recordings of works by Edward Cowie, David Horne, Paul Patterson and Paul Pellay due to be released in 2022. In addition, Linda has commissioned and recorded over 20 works for clarinet and electronics, and released two CDs featuring works with clarinet and harpsichord by Robert Keeley.

Linda has performed as a concerto soloist across America, Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, the UAE and the UK, and broadcast for BBC Radio 3, Radio France, DRS1 Switzerland, CKWR Canada and Arte TV South Korea. A founder member of the contemporary ensemble 'Sounds Positive', she has premiered over 80 chamber works for winds and piano by British composers, and released a further three CDs.

In addition to her position as Principal at the RNCM, Linda is Chair of Conservatoires UK and the UK representative for Howarth Clarinets.

As a soloist and chamber musician **Neil Heyde** has appeared throughout Europe, and in the USA, China and Australia, broadcasting for the BBC, WDR, ORF, Radio France, RAI, NRK, DR, Netherlands Radio and many other networks. Since the mid 90s he has been the cellist of the Kreutzer Quartet and he is also Head of Postgraduate Programmes and Professor of Music at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where his work focuses on relationships between performers and composers – past and present. His discography extends to more than 40 commercial recordings of music ranging from the 17th to the 21st centuries, expanding the repertoire for both quartet and cello through exploratory collaborations with composers, and by championing music from outside the mainstream.

Roderick Chadwick is a pianist, teacher and writer on music. He has performed some of the most challenging works for the instrument, including Lachenmann's *Serynade* at the inaugural London Contemporary Music Festival, Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, Stockhausen's *Mantra* with Mark Knop and Newton Armstrong (including a highly-regarded recording on the Hathut label), and John McGuire's *48 Variations*, also with Knop. Other recordings include works by Gloria Coates, Maurice Duruflé, Sadie Harrison, Hans Werner Henze and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – several of these with violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved.

Roderick is a member of ensembles Chroma and Plus-Minus, performing with them at festivals such as Huddersfield, Ultima (Oslo) and the 2019 Warsaw Autumn Festival. His first performance on BBC Radio 3 was at the age of 14 (the Britten *Gemini Variations*

live from the Aldeburgh Festival), and broadcasts since have included solo works by Laurence Crane, Richard Barrett and Will Gregory.

In 2018 Roderick published *Messiaen's 'Catalogue d'oiseaux', From Conception to Performance* (CUP), co-authored with Peter Hill. In 2008 he was artistic advisor to the Royal Academy of Music for their Messiaen centenary celebrations. He is currently recording the *Catalogue* book by book for the Divine Art label, alongside thematically-linked repertoire.

He attended Chetham's School in Manchester in the 1980s, studying with Heather Slade-Lipkin, and later with Hamish Milne. He lives in South London and is Associate Professor at the Royal Academy of Music.

Hugh Millington and **Saki Kato** perform together as the Miyabi Duo, performing a variety of music for two guitars, ranging from new compositions to their own arrangements using both the classical guitar and the Shamisen, a traditional Japanese string instrument. The duo is currently a fellowship ensemble on the Open Academy/Wigmore Hall Learning programme at the Wigmore Hall in London, and in 2020 the duo was recognised through the Waldmann Music Award at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge, in acknowledgement of their work both within the concert hall and the wider community.

Saki graduated from the Royal Academy of Music in 2020, having been awarded the Dove Award, the John McAslan Prize, the Timothy Gilson Guitar Prize, and the LRAM diploma. She specialises in the areas of new music performance and community music-making. In 2019 she gave her debut recital at the Wigmore Hall for the Julian Bream Trust, which included the world premiere of Edward Cowie's *Stream and Variations*. As a Julian Bream Trust scholar, Saki studied privately with Julian Bream from 2017–20.

Hugh holds a master's degree from the University of Cambridge, where he was awarded the Waldmann Music Award at Sidney Sussex College. Prior to this, he graduated from the Royal Academy of Music with the John McAslan Prize, the Timothy Gilson Guitar Prize, and the LRAM diploma.

Polychromy

Recorded at Hastoe Village Hall on April 21, 2022 (tracks 1, 2, 6, 7),
St. John the Baptist, Aldbury on May 23, 2016 (tracks 3-4) & November 12, 2021 (tracks 8-9),
and the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester on December 21, 2020 (track 5)

Produced by Mihailo Trandafilovski

Engineers: Adaq Khan (tracks 1, 2, 6-9) & Jonathan Haskell (tracks 3-5)

Mastered by Adaq Khan

Photos of Mihailo by Louisa Trandafilovski

Cover / back images:

Front: Joanna Jones *I am bringing something with me #9* 160 cm X 120 cm

Back: Joanna Jones *I am bringing something with me #4* 160 cm X 140 cm
(both works are Egg Tempera on canvas, 2020, from a series of 10 works)

More detailed biographies can be found on the artists' websites.

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'DIPTYCH'

Music by Mihailo Trandafilovski
Peter Sheppard Skærved (violin)
Roderick Chadwick (piano)
Longbow / Kreutzer Quartet

Métier MSV 28582

"This is music that is toweringly confident in the avant-garde trails it lays... like Vivaldi but piled to the ceiling with volatility, scorch-marks and danger. The recording is staggeringly complicit in what Trandafilovski has to say and the musicians (who include the composer) seem completely in touch with the music." - *Rob Barnett (MusicWeb)*



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