

# GORDON, Geoffrey (b. 1968)

## Concerto for Cello and Orchestra

00'00

after Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (commissioned by Copenhagen Phil)

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | Prologue  | 00'00 |
| 2 | I. ♩ = c. 90  | 00'00 |
| 3 | II. ♩ = c. 104  | 00'00 |
| 4 | III. ♪ = c. 68. <i>Dürer's 'Melancholia' – Magic Square</i> | 00'00 |
| 5 | Cadenza I   | 00'00 |
| 6 | IV. ♩ = c. 78   | 00'00 |
| 7 | Cadenza II  | 00'00 |
| 8 | V. ♩ = c. 63  | 00'00 |
| 9 | Epilogue  | 00'00 |

**Toke Møldrup** *cello*

**Copenhagen Phil** · **Lan Shui** *conductor*

## Fathoms for cello and piano

00'00

Five Impressions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with Prelude

- |    |                                |       |
|----|--------------------------------|-------|
| 10 | Prelude and Storm              | 00'00 |
| 11 | I. Ferdinand and Miranda       | 00'00 |
| 12 | II. Ariel and all his quality  | 00'00 |
| 13 | III. Caliban (and Sycorax)     | 00'00 |
| 14 | IV. The Isle is Full of Noises | 00'00 |
| 15 | V. Prospero Drowns His Book    | 00'00 |

**Toke Møldrup** *cello* · **Steven Beck** *piano*

<b>Ode to a Nightingale</b> for mixed choir and solo cello after the poem by John Keats	00'00
<b>16</b> My heart aches...	00'00
<b>17</b> O for a draught of vintage!...	00'00
<b>18</b> Fade far away, dissolve...	00'00
<b>19</b> Away! away! for I will fly to thee...	00'00
<b>20</b> I cannot see...	00'00
<b>21</b> Darkling I listen...	00'00
<b>22</b> Thou wast not born for death...	00'00
<b>23</b> Forlorn...	00'00

**Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir** · **Mogens Dahl** *conductor*  
**Toke Møldrup** *cello*

TT: 00'00

All works written for Toke Møldrup  
Music publisher: Spencersongs Music

The US/UK composer **Geoffrey Gordon** has been described as a ‘rising star in contemporary music’ (*Le Monde*). His contribution to the contemporary repertoire has been and continues to prove exceptional, with music that has been called ‘darkly seductive’ (*New York Times*), ‘richly satisfying’ (*BBC Music Magazine*) and ‘iridescent and fierce’ (*The Chicago Tribune*). Gordon’s compositions display an exceptional quality of musical invention which compels the listener to absorb and respond to his remarkable handling of musical materials, including instrumental colour, powerful, often luxuriant harmony and strong, passionate melody. He indulges fully the tonal and technical possibilities of each instrument in a way which for the listener results in a particularly subjective experience, without compromise to his own unique sound world.



In January 2019, the Philharmonia Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins premièred Gordon’s bass clarinet concerto *Prometheus*, followed by US and Nordic premières by the Minnesota Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä and the Malmö Symphony Orchestra under Marc Soustrot. In 2017, the Munich Philharmonic under James Gaffigan premièred the trumpet concerto *Chase*, after the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti. Geoffrey Gordon’s chamber music is performed worldwide, including at Carnegie Hall in New York, the Schönberg Center in Vienna, Hakuju Hall in Tokyo, and St John’s Smith Square and Conway Hall in London. His chamber work *Cosmic Inflation and the End of the Dark Ages*, based on research into the first vibrations of the universe, was commissioned by the Institut Curie and premièred in Paris in

2019 by members of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. The recipient of a number of international accolades, Geoffrey Gordon has twice served as composer-in-residence at the Aaron Copland House and is the winner of the 2017–18 Mario Merz Prize for Music Composition. He is also a finalist in the 2019 Krzysztof Penderecki International Composers Competition Award.

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

### **Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (after Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*)**

The Concerto for Cello and Orchestra began with a conversation between the composer and Copenhagen Phil's principal cellist, Toke Møldrup, in the summer of 2013. Both artists realized they shared an interest in Thomas Mann's 1943 novel *Doktor Faustus*. This startling retelling of the Faust legend, set in the first part of the twentieth century (and reflecting the turmoil in Germany during that time), is shot through with musical references, from Bach and Beethoven to Schoenberg (not to mention literary references from Shakespeare to Dante, Blake, and Verlaine) – a kind of Apollonian/Dionysian struggle (reason versus passion) for the soul of the fictitious composer Adrian Leverkühn, as told by his friend, Serenus Zeitblom. The twenty-four years of genius granted the composer through a Faustian bargain with a devil (real or imagined) are directly reflected in the 24 minutes of Gordon's score.

The rich narrative and deeply textured allusive and symbolic elements of the Mann novel provide the inspiration for the work, but it is not intended as a literal, blow by blow retelling of the story. Rather, the spirit of the novel, and the general arc of the storyline – from innocence to madness – provide the creative blueprint. Organized into a Prologue and Seven Episodes, the concerto traces Leverkühn's journey in in broad as well as specific terms, with the cello both embodying and (occasionally) commenting on the proceedings. Commissioned by the Copenhagen

Phil for Toke Møldrup, this work was premièred on 31st January 2014 in Copenhagen, conducted by Rory Macdonald.

### **Fathoms – Five Impressions of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (with Prelude)**

The cello sonata *Fathoms* was commissioned for cellist Toke Møldrup and was composed in 2015. Lasting approximately 30 minutes, it comprises six contrasting movements which present a musical consideration of the magic and drama of the fascinating and well-loved tale of Prospero, Miranda and Ferdinand, Ariel and Caliban, as told in William Shakespeare's final play, *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare’s play sees the King of Naples and his entourage shipwrecked by a violent storm on a strange island inhabited by the magician Prospero, who conjured the storm but whose good magic at the end of the play prevails; his daughter Miranda, with whom the King’s son, young prince Ferdinand falls in love; Ariel, a sprite who carries out the bidding of Prospero; and Caliban, the monster-like half-human son of the witch, Sycorax. Each movement in the score is headed with a quotation from the play which, together with the title, sets the scene for the musical impression that follows.

Prelude and Storm: ‘A most auspicious star’

I. Ferdinand and Miranda: ‘Miranda: Do you love me? Ferdinand: O heaven! O earth! Bear witness to this sound...’

II. Ariel and all his quality: ‘To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride / On the curl’d clouds...’

III. Caliban (and Sycorax): ‘You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse ...’

IV. The Isle is Full of Noises: ‘Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments / Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices / That, if I then had wak’d after long sleep, / Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming, / The clouds methought would open and show riches / Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak’d / I cried to dream again.’

V. Prospero Drowns His Book: 'But this rough magic / I here abjure, and when I have required / Some heavenly music, which even now I do, / To work mine end upon their senses that / This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book.'

*Fathoms* was premièred by the cellist Tøke Møldrup and pianist Steven Beck at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City, on 17th December 2015.

### **Ode to a Nightingale (after Keats, for mixed choir and solo cello)**

Gordon's setting for choir and solo cello of *Ode to a Nightingale*, by English Romantic poet John Keats (1795–1821), captures Keats' intense and exquisite meditation, in eight ten-line stanzas, on the contrast between the painful mortality that defines human existence and the immortal beauty of the nightingale's sweet song. The work vocalises a rapt, suspended state between the reality of death and Arcadian bliss and is rich in harmonic and melodic line, with haunting intervals and cello obbligato. Gordon gives palpable and incandescent sonority to Keats' unique language and the imagery conjured by the poet's imagination, a striking embodiment of the duality of experience, of nature, transience and mortality. The drowsy melancholy of the opening, 'My heart aches', is illuminated by the nightingale's alluring melody, from the whispered 'shadows numberless' to the consummate warmth and colour of 'Singest of summer in full throated ease' and the sun-drenched landscape of 'Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!' – as wine gives temporary release from the realities of age, illness and inevitable death. The exhilaration of the fourth stanza ('Away! away! for I will fly to thee'), as the poet's imagination lifts him to soar beyond the bounds of earth, provides a glorious escape, richly impassioned but fleeting. Haunting murmurs in the fifth stanza suggest a magical arbour, before the climax of imagined consummation as the poet seeks to be with the nightingale and expire while listening to the bird's ecstatic song ('While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad / In

such an ecstasy!') reaches exhilarating heights, as both choir and solo cello erupt. But the sudden 'Forlorn!' as the poet bids bittersweet 'Adieu', sees the nightingale fly away amid the poet's sacred whispers. Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

This work was commissioned by the Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir and received its première performance, with soloist Toke Møldrup, in Copenhagen on 16th May 2018; this was broadcast worldwide by Danish Radio.

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The Danish cellist **Toke Møldrup** has performed across Europe and in the United States, South America, Japan and the Middle East, at venues including the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Vienna's Musikverein and Konzerthaus Berlin. He has appeared as a soloist with Danish and international symphony orchestras under conductors such as Lan Shui, Santtu-Matias Rouvali and Joshua Weilerstein, and at festivals including the Bergen International Festival, Lincoln International Chamber Music Festival, Monte-Carlo Spring Arts Festival and Oberstdorf Music Summer. With a keen interest in developing the cello repertoire he has premièred many works by contemporary composers, among them Geoffrey Gordon's Cello Concerto and Christian Winther Christensen's Concerto for Cello and Accordion. In 2016 he gave the European première of John Williams' Cello Concerto.

Toke Møldrup teaches cello at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and he is principal cellist of the Copenhagen Phil. He is a prizewinner at international competitions and recipient of many grants and awards including Queen Ingrid's Honorary Award and the Anniversary Grant of the Augustinus Foundation. He plays a David Tecchler cello (Rome, 1697), courtesy of the Augustinus Foundation.

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

Clocking in at on average 350 performances annually, ranging from full scale concerts and opera and ballet productions to ensemble appearances and outreach activities, **Copenhagen Phil** is one of the busiest and most versatile Danish orchestras. With roots back to 1843, Copenhagen Phil has developed into one of Denmark's most innovative orchestras. It has developed award-winning concert formats such as '60 minutes of...' , designed to attract new audiences by collaborating with artists from other musical genres; 'Open Orchestra', where the audience is invited to move around among the musicians while they are playing; and '6 Crucial Moments', performances during which the orchestra and an actor present works with bearing on world history, the history of music or the composer's personal life.

Whether performing in concert halls, classrooms, orchestra pits, outdoors or wherever else their audience may be, Copenhagen Phil's primary aim is to perform on the highest level and inspire those listening to venture further into the world of classical music.

*[www.copenhagenphil.dk](http://www.copenhagenphil.dk)*

**Lan Shui** is renowned for his abilities as an orchestral builder and for his passion in commissioning, premièring and recording new works by leading composers. Currently principal guest conductor of the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, Shui served as the music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra from 1997 to 2019, when he was appointed the orchestra's conductor laureate. From 2007 to 2015 he was also the chief conductor of the Copenhagen Phil, currently holding the post of the orchestra's honorary conductor.

As a guest conductor, Lan Shui has worked with many eminent orchestras worldwide such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre National de France and Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. His many BIS recordings include the first complete cycle



of Alexander Tcherepnin's symphonies. He is the recipient of several international awards including the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest accolade in the arts.

Pianist **Steven Beck** continues to gather acclaim for his performances and recordings. He is an experienced performer of new music, having worked with Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, George Perle and Fred Lerdahl, and performed with ensembles such as Speculum Musicae and the New York New Music Ensemble. He is a member of the Da Capo Chamber Players, the Knights and the Talea Ensemble. He is also a member of Quattro Mani, a piano duo specializing in contemporary music. As an orchestral musician he has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Orpheus, the Mariinsky Orchestra and many others. Steven Beck is a Steinway Artist.

**Mogens Dahl** graduated in 1983 as a conductor, and has taught at the Conservatory in Aarhus and Aalborg University. Between 1991 and 2003 he was choirmaster at the Danish National Opera, and he has also directed TV and radio productions, as well as stage productions at the Aarhus Theatre, Staatstheater Kassel, Funen Opera and the Royal Swedish Opera among others. In 2005, Mogens Dahl opened his own concert hall in central Copenhagen, and the same year he founded the **Mogens Dahl Chamber Choir**. The professional choir is rooted in a Nordic tradition, but from the outset its aim has been to transcend the traditional limits of classical choral music. The choir's artistic range and international approach is indicated by a list of collaborators which includes the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Brooklyn Rider and the Athelas Sinfonietta. The ensemble's repertoire ranges from baroque oratorios, via Romantic *a cappella* works to contemporary music by composers including Sven-David Sandström, whose *Passion of St John* it premiered at Konzerthaus Berlin in 2015.

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

**Instrumentarium:**

Cello: David Tecchler, Rome 1697, courtesy of the Augustinus Foundation

Piano: Steinway D

**Recording Data**

Recording: May 2018 at the Concert Hall of the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen  
Producer and sound engineer: Viggo Mangor  
Piano technician: Claus Schimmel

Equipment: DPA, Neumann and Sennheiser microphones; Prism Sound Atlas pre-amplifiers and high-resolution A/D converters; SADIÉ digital audio workstation; Genelec loudspeakers; Sennheiser headphones  
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Executive producers: Robert Suff

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