

**NEW RELEASE** NMC D120

## Martin Butler American Rounds

(b1960)



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Artists: William Howard *piano*  
The Schubert Ensemble  
Cat No.: NMC D120  
RRP: Full-price (1CD)  
Total Duration: 72'03  
Barcode: 5023363012027  
Release Date: 14 May 2007

- 1-4 **American Rounds for piano quintet** 5 **Siward's River Song for cello**  
6 **Suzanne's River Song for violin and piano** 7 **Nathaniel's Mobile for piano**  
8 **Funerailles for piano** 9-10 **Two Scarlatti Sonatas for piano quintet (arr. by Butler)**  
11 **Sequenza Notturna for piano quartet** 12 **Walden Snow for viola and piano**

One of the significant emerging voices in British composition, Martin Butler was born in 1960 and studied in the UK, at Princeton University (USA) where he received the Master of Fine Arts, and at Tempo Reale, Berio's studio in Florence. Butler's work is vibrant with strong echoes of Copland—he describes himself as a harmonic composer and says that his rhythm owes much to Stravinsky. This disc brings together works written for the instruments of the piano quintet, either together or separately, performed by artists with whom he has been closely associated for many years.

*American Rounds*, written for the Schubert Ensemble, explores the qualities and characteristics of different types of American folk music, with each of its four movements concentrating on a different source. *Sequenza Notturna*—nocturnal in character, as the title implies—introduces a series of episodes which gradually expose a central melody, heard in its full, climactic version at the end of the piece.

Also included on the disc is *Funerailles*—a substantial new work for piano with echoes of Liszt and Debussy—which was premiered in 2006 by William Howard.

'[Butler's] virtuoso skill at placing and displacing, nudging and manipulating rhythms creates a brilliant pattern of light and movement.' THE TIMES

Other recordings on NMC featuring works by Martin Butler ...

Songs and Dances from a Haunted Place (Bingham String Quartet) NMC D006

O Rio, Fixed Doubles (BBCSO/Brabbins, Tamayo) NMC D047M

Spring Rounds (The Schubert Ensemble) NMC D080

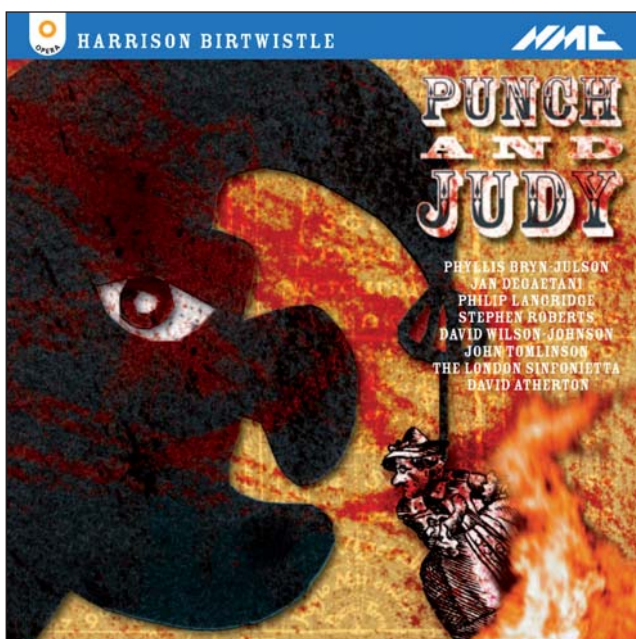
**NEW RELEASE** NMC D138 (Ancora)

## Harrison Birtwistle *Punch and Judy*

(b1934)



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**Artists:** Phyllis Bryn-Julson *Pretty Polly/ Witch*  
Jan DeGaetani *Judy/ Fortune-teller*  
Philip Langridge *Lawyer*  
Stephen Roberts *Punch*  
David Wilson-Johnson *Choregos/ Jack Ketch*  
John Tomlinson *Doctor*  
London Sinfonietta/ David Atherton

**Cat No.:** NMC D138

**RRP:** Mid-price (Ancora 2CDs)

**Total Duration:** 99'24

**Barcode:** 5023363013826

**Release Date:** 14 May 2007

**Punch and Judy**—A tragical comedy or a comical tragedy  
Opera in one act · Scenario and libretto by Stephen Pruslin

CD 1 [1]-10 CD 2 [1]-10

In 1965 Birtwistle decided to turn his back on a potential career as a professional performer, sold his clarinets and decided to devote all his efforts to composition. He travelled to Princeton as a Harkness Fellow where he completed the opera *Punch and Judy*. This work, together with *Verses for Ensembles* and *The Triumph of Time*, firmly established Birtwistle as a leading voice in British music: its premiere at the 1968 Aldeburgh festival was a *succès de scandale*, causing Benjamin Britten to walk out in protest.

*Punch and Judy* elaborates the traditional puppet-play into an opera of stylised violence and ritual. While the simplicity of the children's entertainment is retained in the opera by the characters—familiar and puppet-like—by the invented 'nursery-rhymes' of the libretto, and by the waltzes, lullabies and serenades of the music, the tragi-comic actions of a homicidal puppet are raised almost to the status of myth as Punch murders Judy over and over again.

This re-release on NMC's mid-price *Ancora* label makes available once more the original recording of this truly ground-breaking work, previously available on Decca Headline and Etcetera and was voted by BBC Radio 3 and *The Guardian* as one of the vital 50 operas on CD.

*'As a whole the opera loses none of its powerful and sustained impact when compared with Birtwistle's own more mature compositions. If anything, its startling primitivisms stand out more vividly, while its not inconsiderable moments of reflection and lyricism acquire an enhanced poignancy. The performance (a 1980 Gramophone Award winner) gains immeasurably from the alert control of David Atherton and the superlative musicianship of the London Sinfonietta.'* GRAMOPHONE

Supported by Arts Council England

Other recordings on NMC by Harrison Birtwistle ...

The Triumph of Time (Philharmonia Orchestra/ Howarth) NMC D088

The Mask of Orpheus (Soloists/ BBC Symphony Orchestra/ BBC Singers/ Davis, Brabbins) NMC D050

Pulse Sampler (Melinda Maxwell, oboe/ Richard Benjafield, percussion) NMC D042S

Ritual Fragment (Antony Pay, clarinet/ London Sinfonietta/ Knussen) NMC D009