



# Dutch colours

British flautist Emily Beynon is well into her second decade at the Concertgebouw. She talks to Toby Deller about her latest recording, orchestral playing and how she came to play her current instrument

**B**eing principal flute with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra makes you pretty much the best flautist in the world. So I ask pretty much the best flautist in the world – ‘No no, maybe the luckiest!’ she corrects – whether, growing up, she ever imagined she would reach such lofty heights. ‘Not in a million years!’

Emily Beynon was bitten by the orchestral bug as a 12-year-old in Surrey County Youth Orchestra. ‘I knew from the first moment, the first rehearsal I did after my audition. It was Tchaikovsky Four. I don’t think I was even that aware that you could be a full-time orchestral musician, I just knew I really loved it.’

Beynon has been with the Concertgebouw since 1995, following studies at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, a stint with the European Union Youth Orchestra and work with the BBCNOW and Glyndebourne Touring Opera, among others. Not to mention six months studying in Paris. ‘I was sharing a flat with Jonathan Kelly, now principal oboe with the Berlin Philharmonic. We really moti-

vated one another – I spent the morning playing boring scales and long notes while he made reeds and we both spent the afternoons practising. In the evening, we used to go to art galleries and share a pizza because we didn’t have much money. An absolutely wonderful time.’

There is more than a little French influence in *British Flute Concertos*, her latest recording and her first for Chandos. ‘The whole idea started with the Alwyn concerto, reorchestrated for the flute with wind octet by John McCabe. It’s a lovely concerto with four quite compact movements, very imaginative, creative writing for the instrument. And that was the starting point. I was very keen to record Jonathan Dove’s *Magic Flute Dances* that he wrote for me. And the next piece which obviously came to mind was the Poulenc sonata, which Lennox Berkeley orchestrated so beautifully. And in researching that, I discovered that Berkeley had written a concerto as well, which I’d never heard. So it’s a recording of four concertos that are all connected in some ways, but which have very much their own identity.’

Future recording plans include a second concerto by the Norwegian Fred Jonny Berg that will reunite her with the Philharmonia and Ashkenazy (the first also included her harpist sister and frequent recital partner, Catherine Beynon). In the meantime, it is back to Amsterdam and her wind section. Not that she is complaining: 'It's such a colourful world, the colours are such a joy to play with. That's the bit that I love the most in a way, creating all sorts of new colours. A flute and an oboe together, becoming a "fobo". Having the four different colours of the woodwinds – and we're not even talking about the combinations with horns or brass.'

Not that she is recommending self-indulgence in this technical-our landscape, however. 'I think people can tell if you really mean what you're saying through your instrument – in a very practical sense, I was amazed when I first started playing in professional orchestras at the huge dynamic range that was expected of me, and always of course with impeccable intonation. But I think probably the thing that is very difficult to teach in an orchestral repertoire class is how to really understand your function. Not only your note but your line, and not only your line but what the function is in the whole picture. It's quite easy to play your orchestral part as if every note is the most important, and that's far from the truth.' **GM**

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For information about Emily Beynon's flute academy, visit:

*www.neflac.nl*

### **EMILY BEYNON AND HER INSTRUMENT**

'I used to play on an old Louis Lot, which is seen a bit as being the Stradivarius of the flute world, and my favourite instrument is a Louis Lot which was built probably around 1903.

'Obviously being a slightly elderly gentleman, as he is I think, I was getting a little bit worried whether the mechanism would stand the test of time. He was coming up to his 100th birthday and I was thinking maybe I should be looking out for a good reserve flute. I couldn't find anything that really came close to the same sort of sound until I was on tour in Japan and I tried an Altus. And I thought, gosh, this really seems like a modern version of my Louis Lot.

'Then it arrived and I thought, I'd better play it in a bit. And it was really really nice. So I took it into the orchestra one day and said to the section, "Hey guys, would you mind having a listen to these two flutes?" And they were all completely against the Altus – they were sitting next to me and said the Louis Lot sounded so much better. "Could you go into the hall and listen to how it sounds?" I played them both and they said, "Yes it's absolutely clear to us that the Louis Lot is so much better." So I said, "Did I play the Louis Lot first or second? And they said, first, absolutely. So much better." And I said that the Altus was the one I played first. I repeated the same experiment a week or so later with my sister. And she said exactly the same thing: at a distance the Altus sounded much much better. Since then I've played the Altus and left the poor Louis Lot in a box, neglected! I bring it out once a year to see he's still working'