

DEREK BELL

THREE TRANCENDENTAL  
CONCERT STUDIES

I

*Ballade pastorale*

Oboe and Piano



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ASI 024

# Derek Bell

(1935-2002)

Derek Bell was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1935. He studied composition, piano and oboe at the Royal College of Music (London) and was awarded the Manns Prize. Amongst the positions he held during his career were those of principal cor anglais with the City of Belfast Orchestra, principal harp and principal oboe (concurrently) with the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra, and professor of harp at the Belfast Academy of Music.

In 1976 Derek Bell joined The Chieftains playing harp, *tiompán* (a small cimbalom-styled hammered dulcimer, which he introduced and named after the mediaeval Irish instrument), oboe and keyboards. He participated in well over 35 CDs with this legendary Irish ensemble.

His compositions include *Pastoral Overture*, Symphony ('The Tragic') in E flat, Symphony No. 2 in D ('The Violet Flame-Comte de St. Germain', performances of which have included the prestigious Edinburgh Festival 1991), piano works and chamber music. The scores of some of his research into Irish music were published. These include *Immortal Carolan Melodies for Irish Folk Instruments*. ♦

Derek Bell recorded *Toccata Burlesca* (one of his *Three Transcendental Studies* ♦) on the album 'Derek Bell Plays With Himself' ♦. This double tracking of various oboes with assorted accompaniments (he performed upon eight instruments) is one of his eight solo albums. Six, with harp, feature the compositions of Turlough O' Carolan (a.k.a. Terence Carolan or [Irish Gaelic] *Toirdhealbhach Ó Cearbhalláin*, 1670 - 1738). A further album features Derek Bell as pianist and many incorporate his beloved traditional Irish music.

This remarkably versatile musician also played bass oboe with The Amoris Consort.

George Derek Fleetwood Bell was awarded the MBE (Member of The Most Excellent Order of The British Empire) in 2000 by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to Irish Music. He died just two years later in Phoenix, Arizona, USA.

♦ Lyra Music Company, NY (1985)

♦ Amoris International (1997)

♦ Claddagh Records (1980)

# THREE TRANSCENDENTAL CONCERT STUDIES

## *I Ballade pastorale*

Oboe and Piano

A SI 024

In 1958, Dr. Boucher, Head of the Music Department of B.B.C. Northern Ireland, commissioned me to write three oboe pieces for a radio programme of new music by Ulster composers. The result was *Three Transcendental Concert Studies*, which are of equal virtuosity for both players. The *Ballade pastorale* and *Toccata burlesca* are for oboe and piano. *Légende* is for cor anglais and piano.

*Ballade pastorale* and *Légende* are both pure nature music. *Ballade pastorale* depicts deep lakes, rivers and birdsong in the woodlands. *Légende* portrays both the underwater life of the lakes and that of their banks where trees grow on the mountainsides.

The *Toccata burlesca* first occurred to me as I watched my Uncle, Robert Bell, leaving my house and walking down Cranmore Gardens in Belfast with such energy and unbelievably happy cheerfulness, yet he never ever touched a drop of the *poteen*\*!

He was an erudite, humble, persuasive and quiet man and, rather paradoxically, a very remarkable leader. He founded several troops of Boy Scouts as well as cricket, tennis and badminton clubs. He also demonstrated and introduced the Royal Ulster (Police) Constabulary to the amazing Japanese defence art of Ju-Jitsu in the late 1920s!

*Toccata burlesca* is a portrait of all these more energetic sides of his nature, but the player and listeners may imagine that it is a late Saturday night and every oboe and every piano player have been out all over the town for quite a lot to drink! Eventually they all roll home, falling suddenly unconscious to the floor - dead drunk!

The work is dedicated to the memory of Robert B. Bell, as well as to the illustrious Bulgarian oboist Professor Petro Kristov Totev and the distinguished Pennsylvanian oboist Rheta Smith. They have both recorded this piece, as has the composer!

Derek Bell  
2000

\* Unlawfully distilled Irish whiskey