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# Embracing The Unknown

John Kenny (alto, tenor & bass trombones)

Catrina McKay (harp) • The Edinburgh String Quartet

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**Peter Swan**

1 Prelude & Fandango 11.49

**Andrian Pervazov**

2 /dev/jam 8.27

**John Kenny**

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**Total time: 59.39**

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Inlay picture: "Embracing the Unknown" by Mary Kenny

Recorded at Crichton Collegiate Chapel, Patthead, Scotland, June 10 to 12 2008.

Recording & mixing engineer: Jim Brook

Mastering: Mike Skeet

Produced by John Kenny

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Project realised through Camyx & Co



**Glenfiddich logo???**

## Foreword

This CD documents an entirely new repertoire for a combination of instruments never heard together before. I am greatly indebted to the Scottish Arts Council, Northern Junior Philharmonic Trust, Hope Scott Trust, Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust and the Britten Pears Trust for their financial support towards the costs of commissioning, touring, and recording this project, and also to the Glenfiddich Artists in Residence scheme which gave me the time, space, and inspiration to compose my own piece during 2007. Finally, special thanks to Ivaylo Hristov of Edition ELM, Bulgaria, who has taken the courageous decision to publish the entire program.

All the music presented on this CD can be purchased for study and performance from Edition Elm: [www.EditionElm.eu](http://www.EditionElm.eu) to order direct:

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**John Kenny**

## I Peter Swan *Prelude and Fandango* (For Trombone, Harp and String Quartet) 11.49 For Trombone, Harp and String Quartet

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I began work on *Prelude & Fandango* during the glorious summer of 2003 and finished it in January 2004. Initially I was aware of, I guess an almost programmatic idea? To begin at dawn in a type of landscape I love and have found in Provence. then to move 'through', as it were, to the brilliant Mediterranean 'blue' of Italy as one might see in the paintings of Titian.

The **Prelude** is melodically and in part harmonically derived from the medieval plainsong *Lux Fulgebit* which is part of the Latin Mass at Dawn. These are the first notes played by the Trombone. As the music moves forward the tempo begins to fluctuate and the string quartet and harp energise together. An accompanied **cadenza** leads directly into the **Fandango** - the 'innocent ear' listener should be almost immediately aware of the change of mood because the obsessive triple feel of the Spanish dance is established in the first bars with repeated patterns in the harp and strings.

The *Fandango for Orchestra* by Hans Werner Henze has always been a piece that fascinates me, principally as an example of how rhythmic variety could be achieved without the tendency found in much contemporary music where the time signatures are in a continuous state of flux. In my *Fandango*, apart from the two 'Freeze' sections the music is in a continuous triple time. Unlike Henze I also use a structural point which is found in the original dance-form and this is in fact what I call a 'Freeze'. In the original dance this involved a sudden stop where the dancers (always two) remained motionless until the music resumes. The listener should recognise these two sections because the music literally does freeze in an almost obsessive, hypnotic state. Again, as in the cadenza, there are elements of 'freedom' involved in the freezes where the six musicians must be very aware of what is happening around them.

Writers such as Casanova used the most fiery words to give a picture of the *fandango* which he saw in Madrid in 1767. Overall the courtship dance rushes on deliriously and although I have tried to create this sensation my ending is slightly more enigmatic, perhaps involving a sideways glance and a wink?

Peter Swan

**Peter Swan** studied music at Newcastle University gaining a Master's Degree in Contemporary Music and Composition. During this period he began the **King's Hall Series** of concerts which focused on contemporary music and involved groups such as the London Sinfonietta, the Fires of London and the Nash Ensemble.

It was at this time that he met and worked with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, then simply Peter (or Max), for the first time. He shared concerts with him devoted to the music Max had written for young performers and, significantly, the music of Sir Michael Tippett appeared in the same programmes. Teaching and education in general then occupied a significant part of his life during which, for eighteen years, he combined a dual role including the organisation and artistic planning of the Northern Junior Philharmonic Orchestra. Composing and private teaching are now important aspects of Peter Swan's life. Recently completed pieces include a brass quintet, and *Japanese Lyrics for Soprano & Guitar*, **Excito Quod Evenit** for solo trombone, and **Sea of Clouds and a Black Dragon** for bass trombone, percussion and organ.

## 2 Andrian Pervazov /dev/jam duo for trombone & harp

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8.27

I have had the pleasure of working frequently in Bulgaria over the past five years, and have developed a deep admiration for both the nation and its musical culture – so when planning this project I asked my friend the trombonist and publisher Ivaylo Hristov to recommend a Bulgarian composer to contribute to this new repertoire. Without hesitation he suggested Andrian Pervazov, who's response was to write a duo exploring the unusual relationship of trombone and harp. It is a single movement with four discernable sections - the harmonic language of the first section is at once familiar and disconcerting: jazz harmonies that don't feel quite "right" apparently simple rhythmic structures which unsettle the listener by moving from straight to swing feel across almost pedantic bass line for the harp, and contrasted muted trombone. The 2nd section of the piece shifts to an airy folk dance, full of delicate textures and singing lines, whilst the third is a mysterious and brooding exchange of dramatic gestures and comments, as if the two players are characters engaged in a dramatic debate. The finale moves back to a jazz feel, the harp stuck on a stomping bass with the trombone and isolated member of a big band section. When I asked Andrian for a program note his response was to send me a short story, in which he suggests that the piece is the result of the activities of two hackers generating strange communications in cyber space. The full story can be read on the Carnyx & Co. website: [www.carnyxscotland.co.uk](http://www.carnyxscotland.co.uk)

John Kenny

**Andrian Pervazov** (born 1963 in Sofia, Bulgaria) is a graduate of the Bulgarian Academy of Music where he studied composition with Alexander Tanev and musicology with Dimiter Hristov. He received his Ph.D. in music composition from the University of Pennsylvania, where his principal teachers included George Crumb, Richard Wernick and Jay Reise. He has been active as musicologist at the Institute for Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, independent composer scoring music for film, theatre and advertising, and as web, multimedia and software developer. Since 1998 Pervazov has been living in Saint Petersburg, Florida, where he is partner and Chief Technical Officer of TrueFire, Inc. – an interactive media company and music-centric video broadcasting network. Among his works are *Bardo* for seven players after the Tibetan Book of the Dead, *Ziggurat – Sumerian Temple Music from the Age before the Flood* for three amplified flutes and tape, *Zed* for orchestra, *Dreamscapes* for chamber orchestra, *On Fractals and Mirrors* for clarinet, contrabass and sound processor and the electro-acoustic cycles *Mother of All Nights* and *[Post]modern Night Music*.

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|--|-------|
| <b>3-5 John Kenny Aerial Cartography</b>   | 13.63 |
| <b>trombone, harp &amp; string quartet</b> |       |
| <b>3 Tomnamuidh Widd</b>                   | 2.43  |
| <b>4 Rant</b>                              | 7.02  |
| <b>5 The Angels' Share</b>                 | 4.18  |

Aerial Cartography was composed during the summer of 2007, when I was Glenfiddich Composer in residence, and is a response to the landscape, history and mythology of Speyside and the Morray coast. I stayed in a cottage on the side of a hill next to the ruined 12th Century Balvenie Castle. From my back garden a green track lead up into an ancient plantation called Tomnamuidh Widd, and at night owls hunted around the castle, and foxes stalked the hundreds of rabbits dug into their warren beneath the castle vaults; the 1st movement reflects on that twilight atmosphere.

Mvt. 2 is inspired by the true story of a local "Robin Hood" character called James Macpherson, the bastard son of the Laird of Invereshie and his gypsy lover: Jamie was also a renowned fiddler, but after many colourful escapades he was finally caught in flagrante with the niece of Alexander Duff, Lord Braco, who had him condemned to be hung beneath the clock tower of Banff at noon. As Macpherson marched to the scaffold playing his fiddle, lookouts reported that a horseman was racing towards the town to deliver a King's pardon – but Braco

was set on his revenge, and had the clock's hands moved forward in to chime noon before the pardon arrived. Realising all was lost, Jamie finished his tune, snapped the neck of his fiddle, and threw it to the crowd. He was swinging dead when the messenger rode into town. After this act of cruel injustice Lord Braco found himself shunned in Banff. He moved inland and built a new town, Dufftown, and the fateful clock tower was dismantled and now stands in the middle of Duff's new town! The last tune James McPherson played has come down to us as "Macpherson's Rant" and this is the basis of the movement.

Mvt. 3 is both as an epilogue and a reflection on the abiding spirit of this magical area of Scotland, so soaked in history and myth: the Angel's share is a term for the portion (share) of a distilled spirit's volume that is lost to evaporation during aging in oak barrels. The air around Glenfiddich is perfumed with this heavenly spirit – one is tempted to imagine a slow, silent comingling with the spirits of all the folk who have lived and died in this landscape, leaving us their stories, their marks on the landscape, and the wonderful art of making fine malt whisky! This track is recorded in mono, to emphasise the pale, ethereal quality of the string harmonics and trombone harmon mute.

**John Kenny** has performed and broadcast as a recitalist and concerto soloist in over 50 nations. He also plays jazz and early music, and works as an actor. As a composer, he is particularly active in collaborations with dance and theatre, and this love of theatre is often an important feature of his recital output. Past commissions have included the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the International Trombone Association, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Edinburgh Contemporary Arts Trust, Chamber Group of Scotland, Dance Umbrella, St. Magnus Festival, BBC Proms in The Park, American Drama Group Europe, The New Haven International Festival of Arts and Ideas (USA) and the Festival d' Angers, France, Vokal Nord (Norway), CCMIX Institut (France).

John Kenny is currently a professor at both the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he specialises in the interpretation of contemporary music and The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, where he concentrates on sackbut and the interpretation of early music. In 1993 he became the first person for 2000 years to play the carnyx, a Celtic war horn discovered in Deskford, Scotland, and has since lectured and performed and recorded on the instrument internationally. There are now numerous compositions for the carnyx, featured on seven CD's, and two film sound track. In 2003 he performed solo to an audience of 65,000 in the Stade De France, Paris.

To find out more about John Kenny and the work of Carnyx & Co, please visit: [www.carnyxscotland.co.uk](http://www.carnyxscotland.co.uk) John Kenny is a Conn/Selmer Affiliate Artist, and performs on Conn 36h alto, 88h tenor, and 112h bass trombones.

## 6-10 Etienne Rolin *Embracing the Unknown*

13.45

for alto, tenor & bass trombone with harp and string quartet

This title, which at first appears to be an enigma, simply came to me as I composed whilst stepping into a new phase of my life. As an existential declaration, these words also welcome a new experience: it is a way of saying "yes" to the challenges of life.

The instrumental combination proposed for the commission if not unknown is certainly quite original and as such unheard before. My known factor was of course my improvising sparring partner and friend John Kenny. How to deploy his brass aura midst the string quartet and harp while achieving formal and acoustic balance? This became the musical task. I chose to offer three short intense movements for tenor, alto tenor and bass trombone and the ensemble, with two brief interludes for the string quartet alone. Although the language is atonal there are many harmonic "hit points" that allow the listener to identify moving textures with intricate timbral exchanges between the performers. The poetic of the piece is asking a question: how can through composed material transform itself into emotional sonic exploration.

Etienne Rolin, Bordeaux march 2007

**Etienne Rolin** was born in 1952 in California where he studied music and philosophy. Rolin is a multitalented artist who has established himself in France. For the last thirty years his constant experimentation in composition has ranged from chamber music to opera while scoring many jazz arrangements. Author of nearly one thousand works performed throughout the world, his compositional style is a result of the combination of contemporary and jazz idioms plus his personal experience as a performer of avant-garde and free jazz music. His apprenticeship years with Olivier Messiaen, Iannis Xenakis and Nadia Boulanger point to a wide aesthetic spectrum. As a performer he has developed a personal style of improvisation on woodwind instruments (flutes, clarinets and saxophones) through the methodical exploration of extended techniques. He has recorded frequently and documents his production via *Erol Records* and the publishing house *Question de Tempéraments* in Bordeaux. Rolin is frequently invited to conferences and

seminars internationally to lecture both on his own music and on analysis of music from all periods, and is the author of a book on improvisation and how this practice creates links between many musical genres. At present he teaches improvisation and chamber music at the Bordeaux Conservatoire.

## 11 Edward Mc Guire *Guest Sextet*

10.53

for trombone, harp & string quartet

This work was commissioned by the Edinburgh Quartet with funding from the Bank of Scotland to mark its 300th anniversary in 1995. The members of the Quartet felt the need for a piece of music in which they could be joined by a fifth person to make up a quintet. In 2002 I added a "guest" harp part for the harpist Catriona MacKay, and have now re-designed the original guest part for trombonist John Kenny, and premiered by them with the Edinburgh Quartet at the Musica Nova Festival, Glasgow, in June 2007.

The honouring of the guest of "Highland Hospitality" was an age old tradition in Scotland. The civility of musicians welcoming guest instrumentalists into their ranks will symbolise this well, as the Quartet have proven on their travels. This subject takes us back to the year of the founding of the Bank of Scotland in 1695 when the memory of a betrayal of this fine tradition would have been fresh.

Later in the piece, the music opens out into a clear reference to a song of that time about this subject *The Lament for the Massacre of Glencoe* (1692). Earlier in the piece, musical references to the years around 1695 include a bagpipe or piobaireachd – like theme; the transformation of my own theme into a reference to the Allegro from John Clerk of Penicuik's soprano canto "Dic Mihi Saevae Pier" which I discovered, surprisingly for a piece written in 1698, has the same notes and rhythm as the opening phrase of Bach's *Double Violin Concerto* of 1723!

Chromatic descending notes are a variation on a phrase from Abell's rather fawning "Birthday Cantata" (published 1703) and the lilting 6/8 from Clerk's *Odo di Mesto Intorno* (1698) and the falling intervals from his "O Dira Venus" (1698) are also varied. A phrase from the Abell "Birthday Cantata" is the impulse behind the fast semiquavers that follow and transform to become an accompaniment to the Glencoe lament.

The romance of the music captures something of the conflict and the spirit that ushered in the industrial revolution. Elements like scale passages are a bit of the past – in fact the piece ends amid a wild profusion of interlocking scales! The work is in one continuous movement.

**Edward McGuire** was born in Glasgow and studied with James Iliff at the Royal Academy of Music in London and with Ingvar Lidholm in Stockholm. His large-scale works include a three act ballet, *Peter Pan*, a chamber opera, *The Loving of Etain*; *A Glasgow Symphony*, and concertos for guitar, trombone (for John Kenny) viola, violin, and double bass. He received a British Composer Award in 2003, and in 2004 a Creative Scotland Award enabled him to create his ballet *Defying Fate* combining Scottish and Chinese folk ensembles. His *Ring of Strings* had its world premier in the closing concert of the 2006 St. Magnus Festival. A CD of his music has recently been released by Delphian Records, receiving an "Editors Choice" in Gramophone Magazine. He also plays flute in and writes for the Scottish folk group the Whistlebinkies.

## Artist Biographies



**Catriona McKay** is a Scottish musician, composer and award winning harpist who performs worldwide. Catriona is a fearless contemporary explorer of the harp, having collaborated with folk, jazz, classical and experimental artists, as well as co-designing the new Starfish McKay harp, featuring an alternative tuning pattern, as heard on her recent solo album STARFISH "extraordinarily beautiful" *The Irish Times* Dec. 07

Catriona is a member of the leading Shetland band Fiddlers' Bid and the Chris Stout Quintet. She has a harp and fiddle duo with Chris Stout, plays World/Jazz music with Phil Alexander (piano/box) and harp and nyckelharpa duo with Olov Johansson from Sweden. As part of 'Strange Rainbow' Catriona continues to be at the cutting edge of harp music in a live electroacoustic improvising duo with guru

Alistair MacDonald combining harp and electronic music.

Accolades include filming for 'Transatlantic Sessions 3', BBC 2 'Scotland's Music with Phil Cunningham', winning 'Instrumentalist of the Year' at the Scots Trad Music Awards 07 and her harp CD Starfish was nominated as album of the year in 2008.

To find out more about Catriona McKay: [www.catrionamckay.co.uk](http://www.catrionamckay.co.uk)

Catriona plays a Camac Atlantide Prestige pedal harp



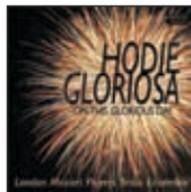
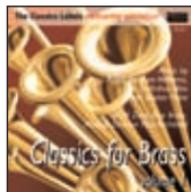
The **Edinburgh Quartet** was founded in 1959 and quickly became established as one of Britain's foremost chamber ensembles, appearing regularly at prestigious venues across the country including London's Wigmore Hall and The South Bank Centre. It achieved international recognition after winning the Contemporary Prize at the Evian-les-Bains String Quartet Competition and has since toured extensively across Europe, the Far East, North and South America and the Middle East. The Quartet have made numerous BBC TV and BBC Radio 3 broadcasts and can also be heard on Classic FM. 2009 marks the Quartet's fiftieth anniversary and it is now one of the longest running chamber ensembles in the UK with a busier performing schedule than ever before.

The Quartet is resident at Glasgow University and Napier University and also collaborates with Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities. In addition to a regular classical concert series at each of these institutions, the Quartet is committed to nurturing talent and championing new music. The ensemble has worked with many important and prolific composers of our age, including the Quartet's patron, James MacMillan and Michael Tippett, who selected the Edinburgh Quartet's recording of his First Quartet for re-release on EMI shortly before his death.

This recording is representative of the Edinburgh Quartet's extensive discography available on various labels such as Delphian, Linn, Meridian and RCA. Recent recordings include the complete Hans Gal String Quartets ('Editor's Choice' Gramophone Magazine, 2007), the complete Kenneth Leighton String Quartets ('The unanimity of their ensemble, even at the densest polyphonic moments in flying scherzo tempo, is very impressive' BBC Music Magazine), as well as discs of Bartok, Robert Crawford, Haydn, Schubert and Thomas Wilson. Future releases include the complete Matyas Seiber Quartets on Delphian Records, which were featured on a live broadcast by the Edinburgh Quartet on BBC Radio 3.

To find out more about the Edinburgh Quartet: [www.edinburghquartet.com](http://www.edinburghquartet.com)

**John Kenny**



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