



Michael Collins – clarinet

“...Collins dazzles like a bel canto diva in the pyrotechnic leaps, trills and runs, while he lavishes his rich tone, phenomenal breath control and deeply satisfying expressive insights on the E minor (Spohr)...” (Sunday Times)

Michael Collins' dazzling virtuosity and sensitive musicianship have made him one of today's most sought-after soloists. At 16 he won the woodwind prize in the first BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition and at 22 made his American début at Carnegie Hall, New York. Since then he has performed as a soloist with many of the world's major orchestras, including the Philadelphia, NHK Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, City of Birmingham Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, BBC Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestra. Since his first performance at the BBC Proms, Collins has returned to the festival more often than any other wind soloist, including several appearances at the renowned Last Night of the Proms. As a chamber musician, he has a long standing relationship with Wigmore Hall and this season sees him enjoy a further residency there.

Indisputably one of the leading clarinetists of his generation, Collins has formed close alliances with conductors such as Charles Dutoit, Carlo Maria Giulini, Neeme Järvi, Tadaaki Otaka, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Leonard Slatkin and Mikhail Pletnev.

In recent seasons Collins has become increasingly highly regarded as a conductor and from September 2010 assumed the role of Principal Conductor of the City of London Sinfonia. His successes as a conductor with both the City of London Sinfonia and other orchestras with whom he works as a guest conductor, including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, London Mozart Players, City of London Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony and Johannesburg Philharmonic are testament to the persuasive musicianship and galvanising leadership that is evident in both his playing and conducting.

Collins is a recent recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society's Instrumentalist of the Year Award, placing him amongst past recipients of the award who include Itzhak Perlman, Mitsuko Uchida, Murray Perahia and Andras Schiff. The award was made in recognition of the pivotal role that Collins has played in expanding the clarinet repertoire, commissioning and premiering repertoire by some of today's most highly regarded composers. He has given world and local premieres of works such as John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons* (world premiere with the London Sinfonietta), Elliott Carter's Clarinet Concerto (UK and Dutch premier), Brett Dean's *Ariel's Music* (German premiere with Deutsche Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the UK premiere with the BBC Symphony Orchestra) and Turnage's *Riffs and Refrains*. In 2009 he appeared at New York's Mostly Mozart festival, as part of an Adams focus to perform the concerto *Gnarly Buttons* with the composer conducting. Commissioned for him by the Hallé Orchestra, Collins has also given further performances of the Turnage with the Residentie Orkest, Royal Flanders Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, Malmo Symphony and London Philharmonic. He recently gave the world premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's clarinet concerto *Ornamental Air* with the North Carolina Symphony and, subsequently, with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia and Tasmanian Symphony. This season he premieres a new chamber concerto by Thea Musgrave at Wigmore Hall.

Collins' current diary includes engagements with the Bergen Philharmonic, Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Kymi Sinfonietta, Auckland Philharmonia, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, West Australian Symphony, and a number of performances with the City of London Sinfonia.

Also in great demand as a chamber musician, Collins regularly performs in recital with Leon McCawley and Steven Osborne, and in chamber ensembles with artists such as the Belcea and Takacs quartets, Martha Argerich, Stephen Hough, Mikhail Pletnev, Lars Vogt, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. His residency at Wigmore Hall this season sees him performing recitals with artists such as Andás Schiff, Piers Lane and the Endellion String Quartet. His ensemble, London Winds, celebrated its twentieth anniversary recently and,

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with entirely unchanged membership over those two decades, continues to enjoy a busy diary with recent high calibre engagements such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival, City of London Festival, Cheltenham International Festival and Bath Mozartfest. Recent engagements include performances at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Cheltenham Festival and Wigmore Hall. In a recent development in London Winds' diary, the quintet has started to established collaborations with the Scottish Ensemble and the young professional orchestra, Southbank Sinfonia.

Recently signed to the Chandos label, Collins' current recording plans include concerto discs with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Bergen Philharmonic, in addition to recital discs with Piers Lane. His many past recordings include John Adams' Gnarly Buttons with the London Sinfonietta, conducted by the composer, a London Winds' Ligeti disc for Sony Classical (nominated for a Grammy award in 1999), a disc of Brahms, Schumann and Frühling clarinet trios with Steven Isserlis and Stephen Hough for BMG and a Gramophone Award winning recording of Elliott Carter's Clarinet concerto, with the London Sinfonietta and Oliver Knussen for Deutsche Grammophon. His recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto (arranged for clarinet by Mikhail Pletnev) coupled with Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Russian National Orchestra and Pletnev was released by Deutsche Grammophon to great critical acclaim. London Winds most recent release is the first recording in a new partnership with the label Onyx, in which they marked the 2006 Mozart anniversary year with a disc of Mozart wind serenades.

"...A class act. A classy disc..." Editor's Choice, Gramophone Magazine

This biography is valid for use until Feb 11. We update our biographies regularly and ask that they are not altered without permission. For updated versions, please e-mail: sarah.trelawny@hazardchase.co.uk