

Anneke Scott



Photo: John Croft

Richard Steggall met up with Anneke to discuss her new recording, historic horns and fighting Brexit.

Tell us a little about your latest recording.

The background to *Beyond Beethoven* came from a gripe of mine which is that we've got so much excellent early 19th-century repertoire yet it feels that if horn players only learn one piece from that era, it's the Beethoven *Sonata for piano and horn*. It's a great piece in many ways but it hides the fact that we've got lots of repertoire from this era and I think it's just a shame that the rest of the repertoire is so seldom explored. Given that it was a Beethoven anniversary last year I decided to look at some of the other pieces that are knocking around – we have such wonderful repertoire, so why is it that we're playing such a small proportion of it? I wanted to give some examples of pieces that should be heard more.

Did you know these pieces before you started researching the CD?

The Ries *Grande Sonate in F major*, Op. 34 is one that most natural horn players know, I feel that's the sonata that Beethoven should have written; it's a more thought-out piece, it's a big piece.

But it's harder, particularly the last movement?

Yes, I mean the Beethoven sonata is quite accessible – I'll give you that. I went through various ideas for the disc, I had a shortlist of about twelve pieces and then whittled them down to what I felt had a nice thread through them. For example, the Steup *Sonate in E-flat major*, a Dutch piece, starts with a direct quote from the Beethoven sonata and then goes off and does its

own thing – it's so cheeky. It was nice to have that as a reference back to the Beethoven.

When did you record the *Beyond Beethoven* disc?

In November 2019, pre-COVID. It was supposed to come out in the Beethoven 250th anniversary year (2020) but then everything just got shifted. In a funny way one of the things I've quite enjoyed about this year is that we've all cut ourselves a bit of slack over some of those things that used to feel really pressing. I felt that this disc **had** to come out in the Beethoven anniversary year – it's called "Beyond Beethoven" – but, you know, it can come out a year afterwards; it doesn't really matter.

How does it sit amongst your other recordings? How long ago was your first one?

The first solo disc was ten years ago which I recorded with the pianist Kathryn Cok. We recorded the Beethoven, the Krufft and the Leidesdorf/Bellonci sonatas and a little Haydn transcription.

So the complete Beethoven sonata is on your very first disc?

Yes.

So you're partially to blame for this Beethoven thing. You're as culpable as the next person?

Ha! I always think back to the wonderful Dennis Brain video (with Denis Matthews on the piano) so I blame him – he started

it! And the other thing is, it's a mixture of it being by such a major composer and in our home key. That makes it accessible.

This latest disc has allowed me to return to that Austro-German early 19th-century repertoire because a lot of the stuff that I've been doing in the last few years has been French (Gallay and Gounod and things like that) – but I like to flit about a bit.

You've got a great range of different instruments that you play. What do you call yourself, a period-instrument performer, or just a horn player?

I've used the term "historic horns" a lot. We officially start in the early 18th century but there's certainly traces of use from the end of the 17th century. We've got such a wonderful repertoire in terms of solo, chamber, all the orchestral stuff and there're so many different designs of horn. I think I like the term "historic horns" because it's not just about the hardware – that piece of kit that you've got in your hand. It can tell you an awful lot and inform what you're doing, but there're so many other sources that we can be looking at and exploring.

What percentage of your work is research and what percentage is practice?

I think every time you sit down to practise, you're exploring things. One of the things I've enjoyed doing in lockdown is trying to copy old recordings of singers. Listening to recordings from the 1910s and 1920s and just thinking "can I do that on the horn?". There are a lot of different sources I'm raiding but I don't know where the research stops and practice starts.

Let's cast our minds back to pre-COVID times. What was your work schedule like?

Very varied. The work can cover anything we do from early 18th-century baroque oratorios and operas, through to historically-informed early 20th-century repertoire, so there's a lot of time travelling in terms of that, and a lot of juggling with the actual instruments. I spend a lot of time trying to get from A to B in terms of geography for gigs, but also working out how am I going to have the right piece of gear in the right country. I think I could make a really good travel agent!

Much of my work is with French ensembles, I go off to Australia quite a lot, and so you're constantly having to juggle schedules to make sure that they all see you relatively regularly.

You obviously travel in Europe a lot and are well known for fighting against the damage that Brexit has caused for all British touring musicians. Has COVID conveniently bought the government time?

In a bizarre way, the pandemic is hiding the magnitude of the

Name: Anneke Scott

Age started horn: 11

First instrument: Can't remember! It was something loaned to me by the Birmingham Music Service

Teachers: Mike Bates, Richard Duckett, Andrew Sandham, Derek Taylor, Pip Eastop, Andrew Clark, Claude Maury, Teunis van der Zwart

Current instrument: Far too many to mention! My favourites probably include my M. A. Raoux cor d'orchestre (natural horn), Raoux piston horn, Uhlmann rotary horn and Kruspe rotary horn. My "modern" is a rather vintage Alex 103.

Favourite composer for horn: Brahms

Favourite composer to listen to: I'm going through a big Janáček phase at the moment

Horn hero: Claude Maury

Favourite piece to play: Beethoven Symphony No. 3 "Eroica"

Piece you never want to play again: Possibly controversial but Beethoven Symphony No. 6

Hobbies: Making stained-glass windows

problem that we're facing, which I'm hoping is going to give the government the opportunity to put things in place. I'm travelling to Prague next week. Given the current climate, they've had to get intervention from the Czech government to allow us in, so it's miraculous that I'm able to do it. It's a very difficult situation that we find ourselves in.

The good news is that the situation with travelling with instruments that you can carry as hand luggage looks to be generally OK. If you are travelling with an orchestra that's carrying cellos and basses, like when I tour with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, you run into problems with the cabotage because you can only go to two countries and then you have to come back.

I'm viable because I have actually got an EU passport.

So in an interview for the BRITISH Horn Society, we can reveal that you're not British at all!

I'm not, although I have lived here most of my life. My dad's Australian and my mother's family were Dutch. I'm a proud Brummie but my ancestry actually goes back to Portugal. My Dutch grandmother was a refugee to the UK in the second world war – she was a Sephardic Jew which means our roots come from the Iberian Peninsula; my grandmother always used to say we were Portuguese. We knew that the family had fled from that part of the world to Holland in the 15th century and we had the family tree back to the 1400s. When Brexit happened I couldn't become Dutch because of the Dutch regulations, so I started putting things in place and became Portuguese – I'm really, really lucky.

I guess your experience in historical research helped! Although you are personally lucky, you are still fighting the fight for other musicians.

Very much so. The backstory is: post-referendum, pre-Brexit, I took to sending postcards to my MP and to various cross-party

MPs (people working in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, or in the Foreign office). I basically had an app on my phone and wherever I was in the world, I would take a photo from my seat in the pit/concert stage and send a “postcard” via this app. “Hi, today I’m in Paris. I’m playing Beethoven symphonies and I’m here with an Italian orchestra.” Next day, “I’m back in the UK but sitting next to a German flautist”, etc. I started doing it because very few people outside of our professional world see the fluidity of the travel patterns and things like that, so it was a very tangible way of showing how mobile we need to be.

Various people picked up on it, there was some coverage in the press, which meant that I started to get called in by the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Musicians’ Union to talk to MPs. They like to have case studies and people who are willing to speak to MPs to explain the reality of our careers and lifestyle.

You seem to be one of the few musicians to break out of the echo chamber of social media.

Yes. I look at my early career, which was very much jumping in last-minute to do gigs in Germany, France, those sorts of places,



Prague 2021: Collegium 1704 Left to right: Joseph Walters, Jana Švadlenková, Gijs Laceulle, Anneke Scott, Patrick Broderick, Jörg Schultess



Prague 1996: London Classical Players Left to right: Robin Cain, Sue Dent, Beth Randell, Martin Lawrence, Chris Larkin

and now that won’t be an option. I have my passport, but I’m 20 years into my career, people know who I am. Someone who’s just graduated from one of our music colleges, who’s unknown, isn’t currently going to get the same opportunities because of the extra hoops to jump through and red tape. That’s why I’m not shutting up about this, because I can’t just get the passport and then pull up the ladder behind me.

Would it be rude to describe your personality as “forth-right”? And it’s that kind of determination, whether it be fighting Brexit, or making CDs or recording every single day during a pandemic, that’s been a hallmark of your career.

Well, I’m not very good at sitting still. I just find there are so many interesting things out there. If we just think about what we have in our repertoire as horn players, we are never going to exhaust it are we? It’s such a magnificent repertoire. You could decide that you’re going to just focus on 20 years of horn playing in one particular geographical area and you would have enough to keep you happy forever. And that’s the thing – there are too many things out there that I look at and think, “that’s interesting. I wonder what happens if I follow that thread?”

So it’s your excitement in music that’s kept your enthusiasm?

Yes, I’d say so, and the political lobbying is really to keep this going. What we do involves such a delicate ecosystem and I just want to ensure that we can stay mobile and relevant to allow us to collaborate with musicians all around the globe. I fear that if it becomes harder for our young musicians to study and have the opportunities that I had, then surely British music is going to stagnate.

And you say you’re off to Prague next week.

Yes, next week is the opening concert of the Prague Spring International Music Festival. I cannot believe I’m going – I’m going to play with an orchestra with an audience – it’s just totally crazy. I’m particularly pleased because me and Joe Walters are going to be playing on a pair of Chris Larkin’s horns. Chris had often lent us a pair of Kruspes from the 1880s and when we knew he was sick and had spoken about selling the instruments, we asked to have first refusal so this pair can stay together. He knew about this concert and he knew that his horns were going to get played – he actually bought them in Prague.

The last time they had a period instrument orchestra for the opening concert was in 1996 – the London Classical Players with Roger Norrington. Chris himself played in that concert, and this concert’s on the day of his funeral. We’ll be in Prague, playing two of his instruments in a concert that he knew about, and it feels like a nice tribute to him, playing the sort of thing that he loved on his instruments.

And if the tradition of Britain developing world-class period performers continues, then I’m sure Anneke will have played her part in helping that to happen. RS