

PRESS RELEASE

World Première Recording of Piano Music by British composer Roger Sacheverell Coke (1912-1972) with the pianist Simon Callaghan on SOMM Recordings.

On **5 May 2015 SOMM Recordings** will release the **World Première recording** of Piano Music by British composer **Roger Sacheverell Coke** (1912-1972) with the pianist **Simon Callaghan**.

Little is known about Derbyshire pianist and composer Roger Sacheverell Coke though he was clearly valued during his lifetime both as a pianist and composer and there is an entry about him in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Artists who admired his work include Eugene Goossens who conducted Coke's opera "The Cenci", Sir Henry Wood who conducted the composer's first symphony (broadcast on the BBC) and the Brosa Quartet who performed his chamber music. He was a friend of both Moiseiwitsch and Rachmaninov and dedicated his 2nd Symphony to Rachmaninov with his permission.

Although Callaghan knew of Roger Sacheverell Coke, he had never seen or heard any of his music until a friend and colleague gave him the score of the Preludes Opp. 33 & 34 in 2013. Callaghan was immediately intrigued by the complexity of the music on the page, the attention to detail and the quality of the works.

To quote Callaghan:

"...the more I explored this music and became familiar with the composer's unique musical language, the more I became keen to present these lost treasures to the world. I approached Siva Oke of SOMM Recordings, with whom I had recorded four discs previously and, sharing my enthusiasm for uncovering gems, she agreed to collaborate with me on this project and we made our recording in August 2014."

Most information about Coke and his music is housed in **Chesterfield Library** (Derbyshire) and the **British Library**, where pianist Callaghan spent a lot of time researching Coke's life and work, keen to assemble a clearer picture of the man and his music. A highlight of Callaghan's research was unexpectedly discovering a recording in the British Library of Coke himself talking about his music and playing.

Callaghan's research also brought him into contact with Griselda Brook (Coke's niece) who said:

I am so delighted that Simon is championing my uncle's music, and especially his piano music. This was probably the first music I heard in my life. I know Simon will "do him proud".

Roger was a loving, generous and gentle man, a complete innocent and not of this world. The intense passion and dark perception to be found in his music was not apparent on meeting him. His tragedy was his illness, which left him lonely and isolated from other musicians, as well as friends and family. Only at the end of his life, when he began to benefit from new treatment, did he begin to live and work more easily. I remember seeing him sitting at his piano, in a haze of cigarette smoke and well dusted with ash, endlessly working. His death came suddenly, only a week after his sixtieth birthday.

Although a large amount of Coke's work remains in manuscript, none of the piano music on this CD has ever been recorded until now. There is, however, a live archive recording by Maura Lympny playing two of the Preludes from Op. 33.

Callaghan discovered that Coke was educated at Eton and privately learnt piano with Mabel Lander (piano tutor to the young Princess Elizabeth, our current monarch). He came from a wealthy family and was Squire of Brookhill Hall, Pinxton, Derbyshire, a large and handsome Elizabethan residence that was once the property of King James I. His father had died when Roger was only 2, and being a homosexual, schizophrenic musician left Roger in an uncomfortable position with many pressures and expectations from those around him. Early performances of his music (such as those at the Bath Pump Room and on the BBC with the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra) received rave reviews.

However, after the London performance of his opera in November 1959 he suffered continual mental problems and retired from the public gaze. Brookhill Hall began to decay as he lived a hermit-like existence. Coke spent most of his time from then on in his studio at Brookhill which was originally stables and very expensively renovated by his mother (it could accommodate an audience of several hundred, and had a balcony and acoustic conditioning by the BBC). He died in 1972 just a week after his 60th birthday, while cycling into the village to buy cigarettes (he smoked 100 a day).

Callaghan said:

"Coke was a remarkable musician, and clearly a gifted composer from a very early age...Given the composer's background as a successful concert pianist, it is unsurprising that the music is very pianistic and is truly late Romantic in style. The harmonic language in particular is incredibly unique (several people were quickly reminded of Scriabin's late works on hearing Coke's preludes) and it is a mystery to me (and very sad) that this music is not better known. I am looking forward to exploring as much of Coke's music as I can get my hands on!"

Simon Callaghan will give a pre-concert lecture-recital on Coke at Conway Hall for **5.30pm on Sunday May 10th 2015**. He will also perform a solo recital of works by Rachmaninov and Sacheverell Coke at Steinway Hall on **June 18th 2015 at 6pm**.

For more information, interviews and CD review copies please contact: Jo Carpenter PR Consultancy. E: jo@jocarpenter.com Tel: 07771 538868

Notes for Editors

SOMM Recordings
SOMMCD 0147
CD Release, 5 May 2015:
Roger Sacheverell Coke Piano Music
World Premiere Recording
Simon Callaghan (pianist)

Track Listing

1. 24 Preludes, Op.33 & 34 (1938/1941)
 2. 15 Variations and Finale in C minor Op.37 (1939)
- Recorded at the Old Granary Studios, August 26th and 27th
Producer: Siva Oke
Engineer: Ben Connellan
Piano: Steinway Model 'D'



Web links:

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxLJp9XUY1k>

Full listing of works added on a separate sheet (attached to email)

Bullet points on composer on a separate sheet (attached to email)

Simon Callaghan

Steinway Artist Simon Callaghan has performed throughout the UK, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Austria, France and Belgium and has broadcast on BBC TV and radio. Engagements have included Royal Festival Hall, Wigmore Hall, Fairfield Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, St David's Hall Cardiff and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (RLPO).

Other highlights include a gala concert with ENO principals, a residency at the Banff Centre (Canada) a highly acclaimed recording of English piano music and the first UK performance since 1946 of Medtner's Third Piano Concerto. Recent recordings include a two-disc recording of Delius orchestral works in arrangements for two pianos (SOMM) and a two-volume set of Brahms (also on SOMM).

Simon is Head of Piano at the Ingenium Summer Academy (Winchester) and Artistic Director of the renowned Conway Hall Sunday Concerts, the longest-running chamber music series in Europe.

www.simoncallaghan.com