



Michael Collins

Clarinet / Conductor

“Brilliant playing in every sense.” Classic FM

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Michael Collins is one of the most complete musicians of his generation. With a continuing, distinguished career as a soloist, he has in recent years also become highly regarded as a conductor. From 2010 – 2018 was the Principal Conductor of the City of London Sinfonia and has recently been Artistic Director of London Mozart Players. Recent guest conducting and play-directing highlights have included engagements with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

Recent highlights include a return to the Philharmonia Orchestra, performances worldwide with orchestras including Minnesota Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, the Rheinische Philharmonie, Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra and Kuopio Symphony Orchestra and tours in South Africa, Australia (with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), Japan and Mexico (with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional).

Michael celebrated his 60th Birthday in 2022 and gave commemorative concerts at Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall with the London Mozart Players. He was also interviewed for a double page spread in Gramophone Magazine. In January 2021 Michael gave the debut performance of new ensemble Wigmore Soloists, a new Associate Ensemble funded by the Wigmore Hall and led by Michael Collins and violinist Isabelle van Keulen. Wigmore Soloists sees leading international instrumentalists coming together to perform a wide range of chamber music repertoire, from duets to works for up to 13 musicians. The ensemble released the Schubert Octet on disc in 2021 to great acclaim (BIS Records). More recently, they have released a trios disc and recordings of Beethoven and Berwald septets.

Michael Collins has been committed to expanding the repertoire of the clarinet for many years. He has given premières of works such as John Adams’ Gnarly Buttons, Elliott Carter’s Clarinet Concerto – for which he won a Gramophone award for his recording on Deutsche Grammophon – and Brett Dean’s Ariel’s Music and Turnage’s Riffs and Refrains, which was commissioned by the Hallé Orchestra. Collins has gone on to perform Turnage’s work with the Residentie Orkest, Royal Flanders and Helsinki Philharmonics, as well as the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Collins has received the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Instrumentalist of the Year Award in 2007 in recognition of his pivotal role in premiering repertoire by some of today’s most highly regarded composers.

In great demand as a chamber musician, Collins performs regularly with the Borodin, Heath and Belcea quartets, András Schiff, Martha Argerich, Stephen Hough, Mikhail Pletnev, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. His ensemble, London Winds, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2018 and the group maintains a busy diary with high calibre engagements such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival, Edinburgh Festival, City of London Festival, Cheltenham International Festival and Bath Mozartfest. During the 2019-20 season he was an Artist in Residence at the Wigmore Hall which included concerts with Stephen Hough, the Vienna Piano Trio, Leonard Elschenbroich, Michael McHale and the Borodin Quartet.

Michael Collins records for BIS, and in his prolific recording career he has covered an extraordinarily wide range of solo repertoire, which also includes releases on Chandos, Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, EMI and Sony. He is one of the world’s most recorded clarinetists, having made no fewer than twenty discs for Chandos alone. His most recent release is of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet and Concerto and Birchall Clarinet Concerto, performed with Philharmonia Orchestra and Wigmore Soloists, which received a five star review from BBC Music Magazine. Prior to this, he released a disc of Brahms Sonatas with Stephen Hough, and in July 2020, released a disc featuring Vaughan Williams’ Symphony No. 5 and Finzi’s Concerto for Clarinet and Strings with Philharmonia Orchestra, directed by Michael. This disc received multiple five star reviews in Gramophone and BBC Music Magazine (“This rather unusual coupling owes its existence to a world-class clarinetist”) alongside rave reviews on BBC Radio 3 and an exclusive interview in Presto Magazine. Other recent releases include a disc of Crusell Clarinet Concertos with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, which was Gramophone Magazine’s ‘Recording of the Month’ in June 2018 and was nominated for BBC Music Magazine Award; and a disc of British Clarinet Concertos with the BBC Symphony Orchestra which features Collins as soloist and conductor. In 2017 he was awarded a Grammy for his disc ‘Shakespeare Songs’ with Ian Bostridge and Antonio Pappano (‘Best Classical Solo Vocal Album’).

In the Queen’s Birthday Honours of 2015, Michael Collins was awarded an MBE for his services to music. He plays on Yamaha clarinets.

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