
A Conversation with Christopher Ball

BY ROBERT MARKOW

In *Fanfare* 33:3, I reviewed a program of works by Englishman Christopher Ball, a composer I'd never heard of before but whose music proved to be instantly appealing. As indicated in my review, this multi-talented Englishman has worn at least six musical hats in his 73 years. He began as a clarinetist and played often as a freelancer with Barbirolli's Hallé Orchestra. Next came conducting, including a stint as one of the Royal Ballet's conductors both in London and on tour. In the early 1970s, he became fascinated with the nascent early music revival and learned the recorder. The 1980s were spent largely as an orchestral arranger. Finally he turned his attention to serious composition. By now he has produced eight concertos for various instruments. Ball is also a publisher, a renowned photographer, and a teacher of clarinet and recorder at the Royal Academy of Music.

Ball has obviously been around for some time. So has this critic, writing music journalism for more than 30 years. Yet Ball was a new name to me when our editor sent me his CD to review. How was it, I wondered, that I had missed him entirely in the course of my career? I posed this question to Ball and got this response:

CB: There are various reasons you had not heard of me. One is that I simply started composing so late, in the mid 1990s. Also, composers in England who choose not to compose in a so-called cutting-edge, way-out avant-garde style are not encouraged by the Establishment. This goes back to the 1960s when William Glock of the BBC was in charge of policy toward new music. He was totally