

RM: Are you going to tell me that ideas for this concerto also came to you upon awakening?

CB: Not quite! I remember cleaning my teeth one night before going to bed. It was past midnight and I was very tired. Suddenly there was a tune in my head. I asked myself what instrument it would best be suited for, and the answer seemed to be the clarinet. Tired as I was, I knew I had to write it down or it would be gone forever. Two hours later, at about 3 a.m., a good chunk of the slow movement of my Clarinet Concerto was done. Fortunately, the other two movements came into my head *after* sleep! Further motivation to compose this concerto came from Leslie Craven, a world-class clarinetist I had taught years before at the Royal Academy.

RM: Your next concerto was for flute, but there seems to have been no particular reason for composing it.

CB: The flute has always been one of my favorite instruments. I began writing the Flute Concerto purely out of love for the instrument. When it was finished I had no idea whom to ask to play it. I listened to recordings of famous flutists but it was difficult to find in a single player the combination of qualities I was looking for: tone production, imaginative use of vibrato, interpretive gifts, technique, etc. Then the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition was broadcast on national TV. An outstanding young flutist played the demanding Nielsen concerto and I was bowled over by the way he could make the hall resound with his masterly tone projection and sheer beauty of sound wedded to a brilliant technique. This was 16-year-old Adam Walker, who has gone on to great success. He was the youngest winner ever of the British Flute Society competition at the age of 14. Last year, when he was 21, he was chosen Outstanding Young Classical Artist of the Year at the world-famous MIDEM festival in Cannes. Later that year, he was appointed principal flute of the London Philharmonic, and is now principal flute of the London Symphony. He is probably the youngest-ever principal flute in both orchestras! His recording of my Flute Concerto led me to dedicate it to him. In fact, all my concertos have been dedicated to the outstanding performers who premiered and recorded them.

RM: And for violin?

CB: My all-round favorite violinist is Joshua Bell, and he was indirectly my inspiration for the Violin Concerto. But artists like him are commonly booked three years in advance and are under exclusive contract to some recording company. So I had to find an outstanding, new, up-and-coming violinist who could be ready to record it in a few months' time. I remembered an amazing young violinist from the junior department of the Royal Academy, Thomas Gould. I also remembered that a critic on the London *Evening Standard* had voted him "Rising Star of Classical Music." I heard Gould play the Barber concerto in London, and shortly after that a new concerto for electric violin. His playing has great character, warmth, passion, and sensitivity, and I knew he would be a perfect choice to record my concerto. And so he has proven to be.

My next concerto was for cello. Although I had a great young cellist in mind who had won international competitions, I had reached the point where I could no longer finance a recording. Then I received a letter and a CD from a young Croatian cellist called Stjepan Hauser, who had heard the CD of my Violin Concerto. He wrote to say he found my music "astonishingly beautiful" and that "it would be a dream come true" if I ever wrote any cello music for him. When I heard his CD I was bowled over by the enormous emotional and expressive power of his playing. It was so beautiful it brought tears to my eyes; nobody else had done this since I first heard Jacqueline du Pré. I wondered how a 23-year-old cellist could play with such maturity and humanity. I had never even heard of him, so I Googled his name and up came his Web site, which included raves from world-famous musicians including Rostropovich (Stjepan had been his last pupil). Further proof of his emotional impact came in some 15 video clips of him performing. As one journalist put it, "His charisma comes pouring off the screen."

A wealthy Croatian fan who wishes to remain anonymous then offered to finance the recording as long as Stjepan was the soloist. It was an offer I couldn't refuse. I was so inspired by Stjepan's playing that I wrote a second concerto especially for him. But don't take my word for it; go to his Web site or to YouTube and listen to his performance of Popper's *Hungarian Rhapsody*. There you will hear his great virtuosity as well as his expressive gifts and star quality. I want to stand and cheer at the end. To