

me he is the Dudamel of the cello world. The CD of my two cello concertos is due out soon.

RM: *Was this your last concerto?*

CB: No, there was one more, for horn. This one I wrote at the suggestion of James Diack, professor at the academy and teacher of some of the most outstanding young horn players occupying principal horn positions in leading world orchestras. We are still planning and negotiating who will record the horn concerto, but it has already been published by Emerson Edition.

RM: *Aside from your impressive run of concertos, what else have you written?*

CB: I've composed several works for small wind ensembles: the Five Bagatelles for wind trio, Four Dances also for wind trio, and *Scenes from a Comedy* for woodwind quintet. There is also an entire CD of virtuoso clarinet music called *Expressions*, performed with great artistry and brilliance by Leslie Craven, whose singing tone, wide dynamic range, and expressivity make his playing so distinctive and memorable. One work, *Three Invocations of Pan* for unaccompanied clarinet, evokes both serene and exuberant aspects of the famous woodland god. Then there is a suite for two clarinets I called *Music for Youth*, arrangements of favorite folk tunes (some with harp accompaniment) and various other pieces. What makes this disc special, I believe, is that it contains 80 minutes of previously unrecorded clarinet repertoire of a kind that generates enthusiastic audience response.

RM: *Nowadays we often find experimental composers making impossible demands on players' techniques. Have you encountered cases of this yourself?*

CB: I certainly have. A clarinet student of mine once brought a four-page piece of new music to me for a lesson. At least 80 percent of it was written at the screaming top end of the instrument and required very complex fingering that needed hours of practice. Very little time could be spent on this because the lip muscles required to play these extreme high notes collapsed early on. It sounded both farcical and hideous. Cutting-edge it certainly was—literally. It cut the lower lip of the clarinetist to the bleeding point. Then there was a cellist in one of England's leading orchestras who was so enraged at the ridiculous demands made by a composer conducting his own avant-garde music that he stood up—in front of the composer and the orchestra—and smashed his cello to smithereens. It made headlines in all the newspapers. I'm sure it wasn't his best instrument, but it certainly showed the depth of resentment seething inside many orchestral players who are asked to play music that simply goes against the grain of their instruments.

RM: *Going back a bit in your multifaceted career, tell me something about your experience as a conductor.*

CB: I began to study conducting while I was at the academy. I won a Gulbenkian scholarship for the advanced conducting course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. There I won the Ricordi conducting prize and participated in master classes with giants in the field like Solti, Mackerras, Silvestri, and Monteux. I went on to hold posts briefly at the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra and the Vancouver Symphony. In 1968, I was appointed as one of the conductors of the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, which suited me just fine as I had long held a deep interest in ballet.

RM: *Do any memorable performances come to mind?*

CB: In 1970, I remember conducting *Swan Lake* in Cairo. I stayed at a hotel used by Winston Churchill in the war; in fact, I was in the very room he had. It was old-fashioned with a huge, cranky fan dangling from the ceiling. The temperature outside was 126 degrees! The heat was so intense that performances were given at one in the morning. It was an outdoor setup, so the audience had the additional huge backdrop of the pyramids and the illuminated Sphinx! Arabs on camels sat outside the enclosed area viewing the performance for free. I often wondered what they made of it all—ballet dancers performing a great Russian ballet to highly charged emotional music by Tchaikovsky ... the mind boggles!

RM: *Getting back to your own music, a Celtic element seems to run through much of it. Where does this come from?*

CB: That's a mystery to me! I just take the tunes as they come into my head. I have no known Irish or Scottish ancestry, although, I agree, a large portion of my music does *sound* Celtic. My latest CD, the one with the Violin Concerto, contains two examples: *Celtic Twilight* and the five-movement suite *From the Hebrides*.