

Alexander Baillie - Cello



Alexander Baillie began playing the cello at the age of twelve, inspired to do so by the example of Jacqueline du Pré. He studied with Joan Dickson and Anna Shuttleworth at London's Royal College of Music from 1972, before going to the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna for lessons with André Navarra. Pedagogic influence also came from Pierre Fournier, William Pleeth and Mstislav Rostropovich. International recognition came when Baillie won prizes at the ARD Competition in Munich in 1978 (the year of his Wigmore Hall début) and the Casals Competition in Budapest in 1982.

Baillie is an active cello teacher, having worked regularly at the Royal College of Music with further appointments at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Bremen Hochschule für Künste. He has also founded Gathering of the Clans, a summer school project for young cellists.

Performing Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain* at his orchestral début with the BBC Symphony Orchestra resulted in Baillie's name being associated with contemporary music. He has been the recipient of many work dedications, including those by Colin Matthews (Cello Concerto No. 1 and *Three Enigmas*), Gordon Crosse (*Wavesongs*), Mark-Anthony Turnage (*Sleep On*) and Richard Rodney Bennett (Sonata). Premières he has given include Takemitsu's *Orion and Pleiades*, Schnittke's Cello Sonata and Lutosławski's *Grave*. For several years he was a member of Fires of London, a chamber group dedicated to performing new music, and his solo discography strongly reflects this interest in modern repertoire, with a slant towards British composers. This includes finely balanced and thoughtful performances of Alan Rawsthorne's Cello Concerto (première recording, 1999) and Michael Tippett's Triple Concerto (1991), the latter with a charismatic line-up of violinist Ernst Kovacic, violist Gérard Caussé and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of the composer. Some of his most significant work is perhaps in the Britten Cello Suites and Sonata, recorded in 1985; like other items in his discography they reveal a rather spare, even austere sound-world (within the usual parameters of mainstream late-twentieth-century performance style). Baillie's playing is also characterised by energy and a strong-toned, unsentimental approach which works to great effect in the Britten and Tippett items here. This said, some impassioned playing in Thomas Schmidt-Kowalski's Cello Sonata No. 1 (2009) evidences a fiery musical personality when demanded.