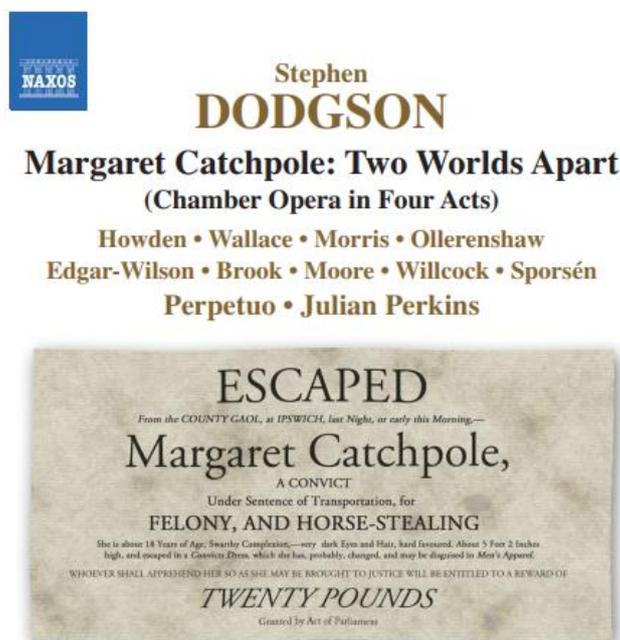


World premiere recording of Stephen Dodgson's chamber opera *Margaret Catchpole: Two Worlds Apart* released on Naxos 29 January 2021



Release date: 29 January 2021

[Audio and CD Booklet](#)

The world premiere recording of Stephen Dodgson's chamber opera *Margaret Catchpole: Two Worlds Apart* is due to be released by Naxos on 29 January 2021, nearly eight years after the composer's death.

Margaret Catchpole is a four-act chamber opera which was premiered over 40 years ago in 1979. The day before he died in 2013, Dodgson told his wife, Jane Clark Dodgson, "*we must do something about Margaret Catchpole*". Jane went on to set up the Stephen Dodgson Charitable Trust to encourage performances and recordings of Stephen's work.

This recording was made during a performance of the work and in subsequent recording sessions at the Britten Studios, Snape Maltings in 2019, fulfilling the composer's wish to revisit the work. Conductor Julian Perkins frequently collaborated with Stephen on his music and conducts Perpetuo, a collective of musicians founded by oboist James Turnbull, in this recording. Alongside the likes of Matthew Brook and Richard Edgar-Wilson, the cast includes a number of young singers in leading roles, reflecting Stephen's love of working with and supporting young up-and-coming artists throughout his career, with Australian mezzo-soprano Kate Howden in the title role. Kate Howden studied with the late mezzo-soprano Ameral Gunson, who was the original Margaret Catchpole in 1979.

Julian Perkins, conductor on this recording, said, "*This project has been one of the highlights*

of my musical career to date. The opera's roller-coaster of human emotions, as evinced in the febrile nervousness of Will Laud and the heart-breaking vulnerability of Margaret Catchpole's love for him, magnify our own life experiences and attest to the uplifting qualities of Stephen's wondrous music."

Richard Edgar-Wilson, who plays the role of Crusoe in this recording, explains that *"Stephen's music is tonal, though it can be ambiguously so – unusually, he uses no key signatures at all to anchor the music but lets it flow organically. Much of Dodgson's vocal writing is narrative with one note to each word, the more lyrical outpourings reserved for phrases that contain words carrying the greatest emotional weight. Yet each role is blessed with music that subtly fleshes out the character."*

Stephen Dodgson (1924-2013) was a prolific British composer who had over 250 works to his name ranging from songs and solo instrumental pieces to large-scale orchestral works and operas. Stephen loved literature and would often use poetry as the inspiration for his music. In a thesis about *The Guitar works of Stephen Dodgson*, John Mackenzie wrote that *"everything arises from the words [...] the music clothes the words according to their place on a graph of emotional tension"*. When commissioned in the late 1970s to write an opera he chose to tell the real-life story of Suffolk heroine, criminal and chronicler Margaret Catchpole, inspired by his wife's early edition copy of Richard Cobbold's *The History of Margaret Catchpole*.

Written by well-known East Anglian writer and local historian Ronald Fletcher (1921-1992), the libretto is inspired by Cobbold's best-selling novel. It tells the embellished story of Margaret Catchpole, who was employed by Cobbold's mother as an under-nurse and cook in 1793. The opera follows Margaret, who has fallen for sailor and smuggler William Laud and subsequently steals a horse from the Cobbold family to ride to him in London. Despite pleas from Mrs Cobbold attesting to her excellent character in court, Margaret is convicted for what was then a capital crime. She manages to escape from Ipswich jail before being re-captured and transported to the penal colony in Australia.

Future plans from the Stephen Dodgson Charitable Trust include a performance (1 February 2021, St Gabriel's Pimlico) and recording of solo voice songs by Dodgson with Ailish Tynan, James Gilchrist, Roderick Williams, Chris Glynn and Mark Eden in addition to performances of Dodgson's chamber opera *Cadilly* and a solo guitar recital by Michael Butten at the Barnes Music Festival (12 and 18 March respectively).

- Ends -

For more information please contact Rebecca Johns at Premier
Rebecca.johns@premiercomms.com | +44 (0)7715 205 196

Notes to Editors

Libretto

[Click here to download the libretto](#)

Audio and booklet notes

[Click here to download the audio and booklet notes](#)

Introductory video

<https://youtu.be/eg8n009-hR4>

Cast and musicians

Julian Perkins *conductor*

Margaret Catchpole Kate Howden *soprano*

Will Laud William Wallace *tenor*

John Luff Nicholas Morris *bass*

John Barry Alistair Ollerenshaw *baritone*

Crusoe Richard Edgar-Wilson *tenor*

Mrs Cobbold Diana Moore *mezzo-soprano*

Dr Stebbing Peter Willcock *bass*

Judge Matthew Brook *bass*

Mrs Palmer Julia Sporsén *soprano*

Guard Jon Stainsby *baritone*

Alice/Lucy Robyn Allegra Parton *soprano*

Farmer Denton Michael Bundy *bass*

Mrs Denton Leonora Dawson-Bowling *mezzo-soprano*

First labourer Jonathan Hanley *tenor*

Second labourer Mark Saberton *baritone*

[Perpetuo ensemble](#)

Lindsey Ellis *flute*

James Turnbull *oboe*

John Slack *clarinet*

Éanna Monaghan *bassoon*

David Horwich *horn*

Anneke Hodnett *harp*

Fenella Humphreys *violin 1*

Agata Daraskaite *violin 2*

Rebecca Jones *viola*

Jessica Burroughs *cello*

Ben Griffiths *double bass*

Stephen Dodgson

Stephen Dodgson was born in London in 1924 and was educated at Stowe and served in the Royal Navy during World War II. He received his musical training at the Royal College of Music, and was subsequently for many years a member of its teaching staff in theory and composition.

From 1957 he was often employed by the BBC as provider of incidental music for major drama productions, as well as a frequent broadcaster of reviews and other musical topics.

His compositions cover almost every genre, including opera (*Margaret Catchpole*, 1979), seven piano sonatas, nine string quartets and chamber music. There is also a substantial body of music for symphony orchestra, and many concertos and vocal music. In his many years as Chairman of The National Youth Wind Orchestra, he wrote music for them and other wind orchestras. He is, however, probably best known worldwide for his numerous works for guitar, his interest in this instrument prompted by Julian Bream.

Much of his music has now been recorded, including six orchestral Essays, all the String Quartets, a String Sextet, Quintets for Clarinet, Flute and Guitar, all the Piano Sonatas, Bagatelles and Piano Trios, other chamber and vocal music and most of the guitar music.

<http://www.stephendodgson.com/>

Perpetuo

Perpetuo is a dynamic and versatile collective of musicians who perform a wide variety of traditional and contemporary chamber music in new settings, regularly taking music to venues including museums, cafes, found spaces and other unexpected locations. Through collaborations with everything from dancers to photographers to chefs, the ensemble seeks out audiences who have never engaged with classical chamber music.

Perpetuo was founded in 2013 by English Oboist, James Turnbull and has since appeared in numerous festivals such as St. Magnus (Orkney), Rye, Totally Thames and Little Venice. Perpetuo's projects have been generously supported by organisations such as the Arts Council England and PRS Foundation in order to bring new music and exciting collaborations to a new audience. In recent years, Perpetuo has commissioned composers such as David Fennessy, Donald Grant, Alasdair Nicolson, Aidan O'Rourke and Ailie Robertson as well as working with composers such as Thomas Hewitt Jones, Cecilia McDowall and Roxanna Panufnik on their music.

Perpetuo have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 as well as broadcasting live streams on YouTube in collaboration with Dorico Notation software. Perpetuo has also recorded chamber music for Champs Hill Records and will be returning to the recording studio several times in 2019 as well as Aldeburgh.

www.ensembleperpetuo.com

Julian Perkins

Described as 'exuberantly stylish' by the *Sunday Times*, Julian Perkins enjoys a demanding career as a conductor and keyboard player. He loves bringing his many experiences as a leading performer on period instruments to his work with singers, period instrument ensembles and modern orchestras, and is Artistic Director of Cambridge Handel Opera and Founder Director of Sounds Baroque.

Julian Perkins has performed at the Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms. He has gained a wealth of experience performing with many prominent period instrument ensembles and modern orchestras including concerto appearances with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Florilegium and Orchestra of The Sixteen. In addition to appearing as solo harpsichordist for productions at the Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera and Northern Ireland Opera, he has featured on the BBC Early Music Show and played at venues such as London's Wigmore Hall, New York's Lincoln Center and Sydney Opera House. An avid recitalist, Julian has broken new ground at over a dozen international festivals in giving solo concerts on the clavichord with programmes that have included complete performances of J. S. Bach's two books of *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*, and he has given numerous duo recitals for organizations such as the Mozart Society of America, Oxford Lieder Festival and the Royal Opera House. His various

recordings have been described as 'monumental' (American Record Guide), 'a virtuoso showcase' (The Guardian) and 'exemplary' (MusicWeb International).

Julian read music at King's College, Cambridge, before pursuing advanced studies at the Schola Cantorum, Basle and the Royal Academy of Music, London. Research is an essential element in Julian's performing career, and he has written articles published by Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Rhinegold Publishing. Historically informed musicianship inspires his work as a visiting coach at the Royal Opera House, and the masterclasses that he gives for the National Opera Studio, music colleges and universities both in the UK and abroad.

<http://julianperkins.com/>