



## Mark Simpson • Prom 4

BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, 2012–14

‘That piece really packs a punch!’ Clarinettist and composer Mark Simpson is talking about the 2002 Clarinet Concerto by Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg, which he performs with the BBC Philharmonic in Prom 4. ‘It’s one of the best contemporary clarinet concertos around, if not *the* best.’

What’s so great about it? Simpson doesn’t know where to start. ‘It has a real lyrical quality and very rich harmonies. It’s always vibrant, full of life, energetic, moving forward.’ And fearsomely demanding on its soloist, too. ‘I’ve played it three or four times over the past decade. It’s fiendishly difficult, but I feel very comfortable playing it now.’ Part of the work’s difficulty lies in the unusual demands Lindberg places on his soloist, including multiphonics – playing whole chords rather than single notes. ‘It almost sounds like a distorted guitar. It’s a crunchy, dirty sound with a dark, metallic colour – not the kind of thing you’d expect from a clarinet.’

In 2006 Simpson earned the unique distinction of winning both the BBC’s Young Musician competition as a clarinettist and the BBC Proms/*Guardian* Young Composers Competition. How have those awards helped his career? ‘They gave me enormous exposure,’ he says. ‘I was so grateful but I also felt a sense of naivety, so I stepped back from the limelight and went to university. I never really let it define me.’

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