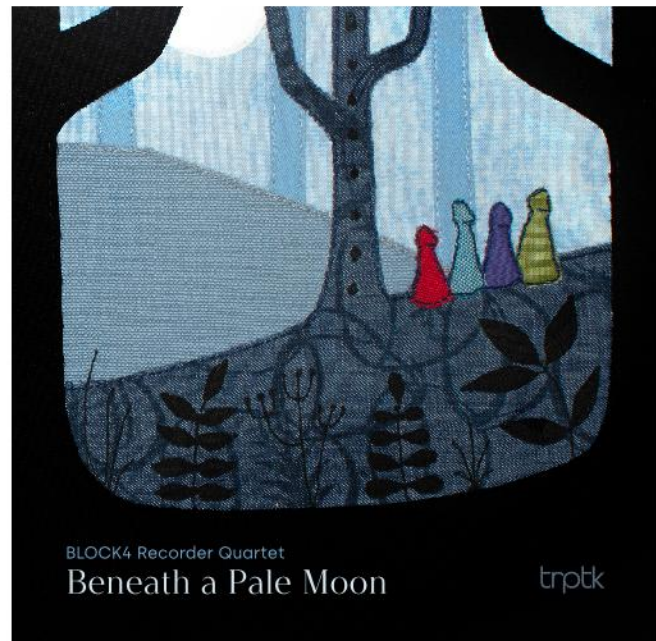


Recording Project: BLOCK4 - Beneath a Pale Moon

About the album

Anon. - Watkin's Ale
Anon. - Lumps of Pudding
Anon. - Stella Splendens in Monte
Palestrina - Deh hor fossio
Olyver - My Last Breath
Guerrero - O Domine, Jesu Christe
Anon. - Stella Splendens in Monte
Praetorius - Bransle de le Royne,
Courante de M.M Wüstrow, Volte
Crossley - Bardo No. 1
Merula - La Lusignuola
Mensingh - Wicked
Anon. - Stella Splendens in Monte
Blecharz - Airlines
Guerrero - Alma Redemptoris Mater



Emily Bannister, Verena Barié, Rosie Land, Daniel Scott - *Recorders*

Beneath a Pale Moon is BLOCK4 Recorder Quartet's debut album, which came about through a wish to document ten years of the ensemble working together and to explore the narrative qualities of the music we play. The Quartet's programming normally includes a mixture of both early and contemporary music; this gives us the chance to showcase the full technical and musical range of our instruments and to create unique and captivating stories for our audiences by juxtaposing the two genres. In order to transfer this experience onto a CD, we decided to work with a storyteller, Elisabeth Flett, who wrote an original story inspired by English folklore and the pieces on the album. Listeners can read the story, which is printed in the booklet, while listening to the CD and can even choose in which order to follow the tale.

The programme comprises a 50/50 split of early and new music, with early works that for the most part had not already been released by a recorder consort. The anonymous works were all arranged by BLOCK4, including *Stella Splendens in Monte*, which recurs throughout the CD in different arrangements, utilising all of the recorders in our renaissance consort (soprano to contra-bass). This piece, one of our long time favourites, provides the backdrop for the 'travelling' sections of Elisabeth's story; we felt this appropriately reflected the piece's origins narrating an epic 14th century pilgrimage and tied together the other elements of the very diverse programme.

Process

Throughout the end of 2022 we finalised the programme and created or revised all the arrangements that would appear on the CD. We also ran a successful CrowdFunder campaign to fund the remainder of the recording project. In April 2023 we began an intensive rehearsal process, before recording the album over three days from 20th-22nd April. During the recording days and the lead-up, we worked in close collaboration with the recording label, TRPTK, who are based in Utrecht, Netherlands. This label focuses particularly on capturing a very natural sound in incredibly high quality, so that the listener can feel that they are almost in the room with the ensemble. With this in mind, we chose to work in the Luthersekerk, Haarlem, a small church with a natural ambient acoustic; the recording engineer, Brendon Heinst, did a fantastic job of capturing the essence and the quirks of all the different recorders, and creating an intimate, natural sound for each instrumentation.



In July-August we went through the process of editing and mixing the album, and BLOCK4's Emily was able to visit the TRPTK studio to review and approve the final edits. Hearing the completed album on the studio's surround sound system was an impressive and moving experience after the hard work we had put into creating it.

We initially planned a launch for November 2023, but due to illness-related absence on the label's team and then on our own, this was eventually pushed back to Spring 2024. *Beneath a Pale Moon* was released on 3rd May, and is currently available on SACD, high-resolution download, and streaming services.

We are really proud of the final product at the end of this recording project; holding our very own debut album in our hands after 10 years of playing together has been a very rewarding experience, and one that wouldn't have been possible without the support of Angel Early Music - thank you!

LIFE

Recorder quartet BLOCK4 releases debut album

Group won 2016 chamber music contest in Easton

JOHN MALIN

In 2016, BLOCK4, a British-European quartet won the prestigious first prize at the Chesapeake Music Chamber Music competition in Easton.

The win was a true reflection of the

virtuoso skills of the four young musicians and the originality of their music played on recorders.

The image of a recorder to most of us is a wooden flute, about 18 inches long, but Block4 plays a consort of 11 Renaissance-style instruments made popular in Italy in the 16th century.

The contrabass recorder is over eight feet tall. Block4's new debut album also includes pieces played on 20th century

square section paetzold instruments that resemble organ pipes and have been adopted by modern composers for their wide range of extended techniques and percussive voicings.

This album is truly eclectic, with 15 tracks covering a wide chronological and stylistic musical range from the "haunting O Domine, Jesu Christe" by Francisco Guerrero to the amazing "Bando No 1" by Andrew Crossley, which for me conjures

images of Humpback whales hunting fish in far-off waters.

The fabulous symphonic range of the instruments is demonstrated so beautifully in "Stella Splenens in Monte No 2," an anonymous piece arranged by the quartet.

This album is innovative and refreshing with a musical surprise around every corner. It is so satisfying that the musical community of Talbot County was a big stepping stone for these very talented musicians.