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PRESS RELEASE

Composer John Casken announces exciting plans for 2014

Composer John Casken celebrates his 65th birthday in 2014 with a number of major projects including:

- World première of Casken's oboe concerto *Apollinaire's Bird* with the Hallé and Stéphane Rancourt, conducted by Sir Mark Elder in April 2014
- A new recording on NMC featuring three of Casken's orchestral works
- World premiere of *That Subtle Knot* (Double Concerto) with Royal Northern Sinfonia, Thomas Zehetmair and Ruth Killius in Gateshead and London in June 2014.
- European Premiere of *That Subtle Knot* with Thomas Zehetmair, Ruth Killius & the Camerata Salzburg in August 2014
- Performances of *The Dream of the Rood* with Royal Northern Sinfonia, ASKO Ensemble and the Hilliard Ensemble in July and October 2014
- Six performances of Casken's works at Sage Gateshead between February and August including a new work for the National Youth Choir of Great Britain

2014 is an exciting year for composer **John Casken** with several world premieres, a new CD of orchestral works, and performances of *The Dream of the Rood* at the Brinkburn Music Festival and in the Netherlands.

Casken's work is often inspired by literature and legend, landscape and painting and particularly by the Northumberland countryside where he lives. Casken has a long association with Royal Northern Sinfonia, as well as with The Lindsays and more recently with Quatuor Danel. His compositions have won a Gramophone award, the First Britten Prize for Composition, the Prince Pierre de Monaco Prize and a British Composer Award for Vocal Music.

On **10 April 2014** the **Hallé** and **Sir Mark Elder** will give the world premiere of Casken's new oboe concerto *Apollinaire's Bird* with the orchestra's Principal Oboe player Stéphane Rancourt at The Bridgewater Hall. John Casken commented, 'The emotional background to this new work stems from Guillaume Apollinaire's poem *Un oiseau chante*. The bird's song casts a spell on the young man and reminds him of a lost love and a life far removed from the dark reality of the place where he now finds himself – the trenches of the First World War'. A live recording of the premiere performance of Casken's *Apollinaire's Bird* by oboist Stephané Rancourt, the Hallé and Sir Mark Elder will be speedily turned around and released a few days later as a free download by NMC Recordings for a limited time only. Details will be available via the Hallé and NMC websites and at the concert on the 10 April.

10 April also marks the launch of Casken's new disc on **NMC Recordings**, featuring three major orchestral works including one from each of the last three decades: *Orion Over Farne* (1984-86); *Violin Concerto* (1994-95) and *Concerto for Orchestra* (2007). *Orion over Farne* reflects aspects of the landscape and literature of Northumberland. The *Violin Concerto* received its premiere at the BBC Proms in 1995 and is performed by the young German violinist Sophia Jaffé. *Concerto for Orchestra* is Casken's most recent orchestral work which was written for the Nationaltheater-Orchesters Mannheim and is still awaiting a UK premiere. All the works on the disc are performed by the Hallé under the baton of **Markus Stenz**.

In 2014 there will be five concerts at Sage Gateshead featuring John Casken's music including *The Knight's Stone* for choir and solo flute (15 Feb); *Shadowed Pieces* and *Winter Reels* (8 Apr); *Maharal Dreaming* (25 Apr) and the world premiere of a new work setting sea poems by Katrina Porteous (title tbc) by the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain (30 Aug). On 11 & 13 June 2014 **Royal Northern Sinfonia** and **Thomas Zehetmair** give the world premiere of *That Subtle Knot*, a double concerto for violin and viola which was jointly commissioned by Zehetmair and Sage Gateshead. It will be performed by Thomas Zehetmair, who will play and direct, and his partner, violist **Ruth Killius**. The world premiere will take place at Sage Gateshead with a second performance in London at the Guildhall School's new Milton Court Concert Hall. It will receive its European premiere at the Salzburg Festival on 6 August 2014 with Zehetmair, Killius and the Camerata Salzburg. Royal Northern Sinfonia's concerts also mark the last performances of Zehetmair as its Music Director. *That Subtle Knot* paints a picture of human love and togetherness. The title comes from a poem by John Donne entitled *The Ecstasy* in which two lovers sit on the banks of a river, their hands entwined and 'did thread/Our Eyes, upon one double string.'

In July 2014 **The Hilliard Ensemble** with **Royal Northern Sinfonia** and **Clark Rundell** perform John Casken's work *The Dream of the Rood* at the Brinkburn Music Festival, followed by a tour in October 2014 in the Netherlands with the ASKO Ensemble. Premiered in 2008 *The Dream of the Rood* was co-commissioned by Liverpool Capital of Culture, and the Hilliard Ensemble, who gave the world premiere in Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral with Ensemble 10/10 conducted by Clark Rundell. In 2009 the work won the British Composer Award for Vocal Music.

Alongside these activities as a composer John Casken is also Chairman and Artistic Director of Alwinton Church Summer Concerts which runs between May and July in Alwinton, Upper Coquetdale, Northumberland. In 2014 the series will welcome the Quatuor Danel with Petr Prause, Psappha, Durham Cathedral Consort, and the Alistair Anderson Band. John Casken is also Music Director of the Upper Coquetdale Chamber Choir.

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Notes to Editors

Casken on NMC

John Casken Golem cat# NMC D113

GRAMOPHONE AWARD 1991 (originally issued on Virgin Classics)

Winner of the first Britten Award for Composition

John Casken Cello Concerto/Darting the Skiff cat# NMC D086

'With Schiff's cool, mellifluous account of the Cello Concerto at its centre, this Casken retrospective is a must for any new music devotee'

The Independent

Listings

15 Feb 2014, Sage Gateshead, Hall Two
Royal Northern Sinfonia Chorus/Alan Fearon/Juliette Bausor
 Bach and Bruckner motets
 Casken *The Knight's Stone* for choir and solo flute

8 Apr 2014, Sage Gateshead, Hall Two
Royal Northern Sinfonia/John Casken
 Casken *Shadowed Pieces*
 Takemitsu *Entre-temps*
 Lutoslawski *Partita*
 Casken *Winter Reels*

10 Apr 2014, Bridgewater Hall
Hallé/Sir Mark Elder/Stéphane Rancourt
 Shostakovich *Suite from 'The Golden Age'*
 Casken *Apollinaire's Bird* (world premiere)
 Weill *The Seven Deadly Sins*

25 Apr 2014, Sage Gateshead, Hall One
Royal Northern Sinfonia/ Mario Venzago/Alexej Gorlatch
 Weber Overture, *Der Freischütz*
 Chopin Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor
 Casken *Maharal Dreaming*
 Sibelius Symphony No. 7

4 May 2014, Alwinton Church, Northumberland
Quatuor Danel and Petr Prause (cello)
 Debussy String Quartet
 Casken *Inevitable Rifts* for string quintet
 Schubert String Quintet in C D. 956

31 May 2014, Alwinton Church, Northumberland
Psappha/John Casken
 Stravinsky *Soldier's Tale Suite* (arr. Stravinsky)
 Casken *Winter Reels*
 Maxwell Davies *Eight Sings for a Mad King*

11 June 2014, Sage Gateshead

13 June 2014, Milton Court Concert Hall, London
Royal Northern Sinfonia/Thomas Zehetmair/Ruth Killius
 Mozart Overture, *Don Giovanni*
 Bartók Viola Concerto
 Casken *That Subtle Knot* (world premiere on 11 June 2014)
 Beethoven Symphony No 5

21 June 2014, Alwinton Church, Northumberland
 Durham Cathedral Consort/James Lancelot
 Casken *Sunrising*
 Victoria *Magnificat primi toni*
 Vaughan Williams *Mass in G minor*

6 July 2014, Brinkburn Festival
Royal Northern Sinfonia/Clark Rundell/Hilliard Ensemble
 Medieval Motets
 Kancheli *Magnum Ignotum*
 Perotinus *Viderunt omnes* (arr. Casken)
 Casken *The Dream of the Rood*

2 Aug 2014, Alwinton Church, Northumberland
Coquetdale Chamber Choir/John Casken
 Bach Motet (tbc)
 Casken *Names of the fallen* – a Requiem in commemoration of 1914-18 (title tbc) (world premiere)
 Fauré *Requiem*

6 Aug 2014, Salzburg Festival
Camerata Salzburg/Thomas Zehetmair/Ruth Killius
 Mendelssohn *Schöne Melusine*
 Casken *That Subtle Knot*
 Mozart *Haffner Serenade*

30 Aug 2014, Sage Gateshead, Hall One
National Youth Choir of Great Britain
 Programme to include world premiere of new work by John Casken
 setting sea poems by Katrina Porteous (title tbc)

7-15 Oct 2014
ASKO Ensemble/Clark Rundell/Hilliard Ensemble
The Hague (11 Oct)
Amsterdam (date tbc)
 to include
 Medieval Motets
 Perotinus *Viderunt omnes* (arr. Casken)
 Casken *The Dream of the Rood*

