



FABER *ff* MUSIC

# Martin Suckling

*"... a young composer whose star is resolutely in the ascendant."*

The Times, 16 October 2011



# BIOGRAPHY

Martin Suckling was born in Glasgow in 1981. After spending his teenage years as a violinist in the National Youth Orchestra and in ceilidh bands around Scotland, Martin studied music at Clare College Cambridge and King's College London. He was a Paul Mellon Fellow at Yale University from 2003-5, undertook doctoral research at the Royal Academy of Music, and subsequently became a Stipendiary Lecturer in Music at Somerville College, Oxford. His teachers include George Benjamin, Robin Holloway, Paul Patterson, Martin Bresnick, Ezra Laderman, and Simon Bainbridge. Martin has benefited from residencies at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldeburgh, Aspen, and IRCAM, and has won numerous awards including the 2008 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize. He lives in Manchester and is currently Lecturer in Composition at the University of York.

Martin Suckling been commissioned by many leading orchestras and ensembles including the London Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, Hebrides Ensemble, the BBC Scottish SSO and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Notable conductors of his works include Ilan Volkov, Francois-Xavier Roth, Robin Ticciati, Nicholas Collon, Pierre Andre Valade and George Benjamin. His music has also featured in festivals such as Cheltenham, Ultraschall, Chacombe, Deal, ISCM World Music Days 2007 (Hong Kong), and Oxford Lieder.

2011 was an important year for Suckling, with several major premieres of new works. This included the critically acclaimed *Candlebird*, a substantial new piece for baritone and ensemble based on texts by Don Paterson, which was premiered by the London Sinfonietta under Nicholas Collon in May at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. In the same year *storm, rose, tiger* was premiered by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Robin Ticciati at Edinburgh's Usher Hall in October. The impact of this piece is leading to further collaborations with the orchestra. Finally, December saw the premiere of a new violin concerto, *de sol y grana*, for Agata Szymczewska and the London Contemporary Orchestra. Suckling's fascination with micro-tonality is evident in some of his recent works, as is his skill in handling this aspect of his sound-world; but freshness, poetic directness and melodic exuberance are the characteristics of his music which will most strike the listener. Martin Suckling has an exclusive publishing agreement with Faber Music.

*"luxuriously imaginative"*

Geoff Brown, The Times

*"staggeringly assured"*

Paul Driver, The Sunday Times

*"an exhilarating, gleaming little masterpiece from Martin Suckling, The Moon, The Moon!, whose dazzling orchestration was a breathtaking wonder"*

Michael Tumelty, The Glasgow Herald

## Abbreviations

### WOODWIND

|      |                      |
|------|----------------------|
| picc | piccolo              |
| fl   | flute                |
| afl  | alto flute           |
| bfl  | bass flute           |
| ob   | oboe                 |
| bob  | bass oboe            |
| ca   | cor anglais          |
| acl  | alto clarinet        |
| Ebcl | clarinet (Eb)        |
| cl   | clarinet             |
| bcl  | bass clarinet        |
| cbcl | contra bass clarinet |
| bsn  | bassoon              |
| cbsn | contra bassoon       |
| ssax | soprano saxophone    |
| asax | alto saxophone       |
| tsax | tenor saxophone      |
| bsax | baritone saxophone   |

### BRASS

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| hn    | horn                 |
| fl.hn | flugel horn          |
| ptpt  | piccolo trumpet (Bb) |
| tpt   | trumpet              |
| trbn  | trombone             |
| btrbn | bass trombone        |
| scrt  | soprano cornet       |
| crt   | cornets              |
| rcrt  | repiano cornet       |
| btuba | bass tuba            |
| euph  | euphonium            |
| bar   | baritone             |

### PERCUSSION

|          |                       |
|----------|-----------------------|
| ant.cym  | antique cymbals       |
| BD       | bass drum             |
| c.bell   | cow bell              |
| cast     | castanets             |
| ch.bl    | chinese block         |
| chic.cym | chic cymbal           |
| ch.dr    | chinese drum          |
| chtpl.bl | chinese temple block  |
| chimes   | wooden chimes         |
| chi.ba   | chime bars            |
| crot     | crotales              |
| cym      | pair of cymbals       |
| glsp     | glockenspiel          |
| mcas     | maracas               |
| mar      | marimba               |
| met.bl   | metal block           |
| mil.glsp | military glockenspiel |
| riv.cym  | rivit cymbal          |
| SD       | side drum             |
| siz.cym  | sizzle cymbal         |
| susp.cym | suspended cymbal      |
| t.bells  | tubular bells         |
| t.mil    | tambour militaire     |
| tab      | tabor                 |
| tam t    | tam tam               |
| tamb     | tambourine            |
| TD       | tenor drum            |
| tgl      | triangle              |
| timb     | timbales              |
| tpl.bl   | temple blocks         |
| vib      | vibraphone            |
| wdbl     | wood block            |
| xyl      | xylophone             |
| xylrim   | xylorimba             |

### STRINGS

|     |        |
|-----|--------|
| vln | violin |
| vla | viola  |
| vlc | cello  |
| db  | bass   |

### KEYBOARDS

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| pno   | piano       |
| cel   | celesta     |
| synth | synthesizer |

### OTHERS

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| gtr  | guitar      |
| bgtr | bass guitar |

All other instrument names are given in full.

# ORCHESTRA

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## **storm, rose, tiger** (2011)

chamber orchestra

Duration 14 minutes

2(I=picc, II=picc detuned by  $\frac{1}{4}$  tone).2.2(I+II=Bb + in A detuned by  $\frac{1}{4}$  tone).2 - 2200 - timp - strings (86442)

Commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra

FP: 13.10.11, Usher Hall, Edinburgh, UK:  
Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Robin Ticciati  
*score and parts on hire*

## **The Moon, The Moon!** (2007)

orchestra

Duration 7 minutes

3(II=picc 1; III=picc 2).3.2.bcl.3(III=cbsn) - 4.3.2.btrbn.1 - timp - perc(2): glsp/vib/crot/BD/tam-t/4 tom/2 wdbl/ whip - cel - harp - strings

Commissioned by the LSO in partnership with UBS as part of the Sound Adventures scheme

FP: 18.12.2007, Barbican Hall, London, UK:  
London Symphony Orchestra/Michael Francis  
*score and parts for hire*

# CHAMBER

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## **Candlebird** (2011)

baritone and eighteen players

Duration 26 minutes

Text: Don Paterson (Eng)

solo baritone - 2(I=picc, II=picc+af).1.2(I in A= cl in Eb, II in Bb=bcl + cl in A tuned down  $\frac{1}{4}$  tone).1 - 1110 - perc(1): mar/mcas/bongos/whip/susp.cym/tam-t/ crot - harp - 11221

Commissioned by the London Sinfonietta  
FP: 29.5.2011, QEH, London, UK: Leigh Melrose/London Sinfonietta/Nicholas Collon  
*score and parts for hire*

## **De sol y grana** (2011)

solo violin and 14 players

Duration 15 minutes

2(I=picc, II=bfl + picc).1.1 in A (= bcl in Bb).0 - 1.1 in Bb(= in D).1.0 - perc(1): vib/mar/cabasa/susp.cym (bowed) - pno (=cabasa) - solo vln - 00221

Commissioned by London Music Masters  
FP: 12.12.2011, Spitalfields Winter Festival, Shoreditch Church, London, UK: Agata Szymczewska/London Contemporary Orchestra/Hugh Brunt  
*score and parts on hire*

## **storm, rose, tiger**

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*'Hebridean psalm singing and chaos theory, Jorge Luis Borges and the harmonic overtone series. Unlikely bedfellows, but Martin Suckling fuses these influences and more into his engrossing, haunting and self-assured storm, rose, tiger. The Glasgow-born composer has been earmarked as an emerging talent; this latest work, written for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, confirms the distinctness of his voice. It couples fierce intellect with the musical sensibility of a fine violinist, and offers a generous hand to listeners by keeping earthy hooks at the core of its clever tricks.'*  
The Guardian (Kate Molleson), 16 October 2011

*'Martin Suckling's storm, rose, tiger, which takes its title from Jorge Luis Borges's short story The Circular Ruins. Suckling seizes on Borges's allegory of the creative process - a wizard dreaming of creating another human being - and translates it into abstract musical terms. There's a palpable sense of exploration throughout this delicate score, whose intricate web of textures come and go like fleeting thoughts, yet are ingeniously threaded together with rich lyrical seams, some of them very British in a Brittenesque way.'*  
The Scotsman (Kenneth Walton), 15 October 2011

*'Martin Suckling is a young composer from Glasgow whose star is resolutely in the ascendant...  
...striking, innovative and affecting sound world.'*  
The Times (Sarah Urwin Jones), 16 October 2011

*'For all the bewildering complexities of Martin Suckling's new work, entitled storm, rose, tiger, Ticciati and the SCO delivered the brilliantly-orchestrated piece with the lucidity required to make its individual sections clear: from its breathtaking start, opening one window allowing the light to stream in, and a second, permitting a creeping darkness to filter into the music, to passages of great animation and sections of relative calm and stillness.'*  
The Herald (Michael Tumelty), 17 October 2011

*'...its arresting sounds and strong sense of forward propulsion indeed gave it an appealing logic and sense of inevitability.'*  
Edinburgh Reporter (David Kettle), 14 October 2011

## **The Moon, The Moon**

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*'Expertly written and bracingly distinctive sound world... Martin Suckling's The Moon, the Moon is a surreal dance full of unexpected corners.'*  
The Telegraph (Ivan Hewett), 4 March 2009

## **Candlebird**

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*'Martin Suckling's Candlebird... finding unsuspected subtleties in both Scottish vernacular music and quarter-tonal tuning, was simply staggeringly assured.'*  
The Sunday Times (Paul Driver), 5 June 2011

*'Poems by Don Paterson, sharp and tender, sparked a circus of scorched lyric phrases, dancing globules, odd folksy twirls, dips into speech and abundant panache. Echoes of Britten could be heard; but Suckling stayed his own man, especially in magnificent The Wind, a whirling jewel of multiple layers. Barring the speech, Leigh Melrose's enthusiastic baritone made every note and phrase expressive; and Nicholas Collon... revelled in music well worth conducting.'*  
The Times (Geoff Brown), 1 June 2011

*'Each song is immediately characterised with a new musical idea; the writing is tangibly evocative. The third song, Motive, centres around a storm conjured in buffeting knocks on the instruments; in the title song, sliding, indistinct string melodies sound like a Brahms sextet melting in extreme heat.'*  
The Guardian (Erica Jeal), 1 June 2011

## To See the Dark Between (2010)

piano and strings

Duration 10 minutes

pno - 2 vln.2 vla.2 vcl

Martin Suckling was one of the winners of the 2008 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize and was consequently commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Wigmore Hall to write this work for the Aronowitz Ensemble.

FP: 9.5.10. Wigmore Hall, London, UK:

Aronowitz Ensemble

*score and parts for hire*

## INSTRUMENTAL

### Three Venus Haiku (2009)

piano and vln (fl, cl, vla and vlc versions available)

Duration 5 minutes

Commissioned by Oliver Coates

FP: 9.1.2011, LSO St. Luke's, London, UK:

Martin Suckling/Hilary Suckling

*score on special sale*

### Lieder ohne Worte (2010)

piano

Duration 10 minutes

Commissioned by John Reid with funding from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust

FP: 19.9.10, Chelsea Schubert Festival,

Holy Trinity Church, Chelsea, UK: John Reid

*score on special sale from the hire library*

*Other info: These pieces can be performed as part of the song cycle Die Schöne Mullerin, or independently.*

## De sol y grana

*'De sol y grana takes its title from a line by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado that translates, roughly, as "of sun(light) and scarlet". ...it leaves an impression of vibrant colours and wide-ranging thematic material brought together with considerable technical skill. The solo part ... keeps the player busy, often floating high over the forces beneath, or darting, bird-like, around the top of the texture. Suckling compares the shape of the piece to a series of bubbles in which the solo line and ensemble form one kind of relationship before the moment dissolves and shifts into something new. The score's sheeny surface glistened with ideas attractively set in their overall context, yet all making their mark on their own.'*

The Guardian (George Hall), 14 December 2011

*'Its opening section was tautly controlled and powerful, soloist Agata Szymczewska dispatching volleys of notes with concentrated virtuosity against a feverish orchestral backdrop. The technique and imagination on show throughout Suckling's score was enormously impressive... An elegiac strings-only passage, played in heavy, long bows, made way for a brief, unexpectedly moving duet, Szymczewska's trills flitting playfully above a melancholy bass flute line. A tense build-up, with the violin increasingly insistently, led to the work's throwaway conclusion – a final bubble gently popping, one imagined.'*

The Telegraph (Hugo Shirley), 13 December 2011

*'Rather than being the dominant force, the soloist is first among equals, fizzing in and out of weirdly imagined string and wind textures that are sometimes soured by quarter-tones... under trills or quivering oscillations from the soloist, the strands are finally gathered into a superb finish: a bird-song like crescendo of ecstasy.'*

The Times (Richard Morrison), 14 December 2011

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