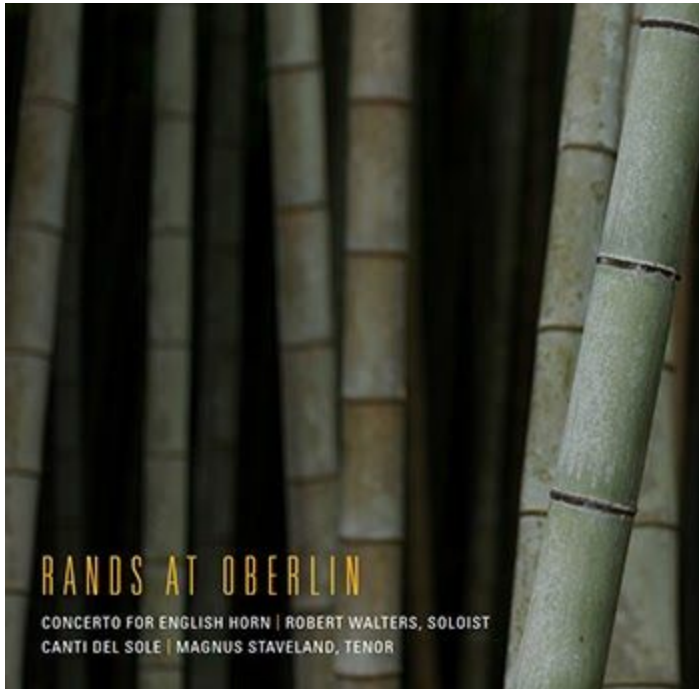


**CD Review:**  
*Rands at Oberlin*

by Mike Telin



To say that the music of Bernard Rands is tinged with Ravel and Debussy doesn't tell the whole story. In reality, his music extends beyond that into a post-modern, impressionistic world. On the recently-released CD, *Rands at Oberlin*, the composer's engaging musical voice is brought to life in stellar performances by Robert Walters of the *Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra* (2015) and by tenor Magnus Staveland of the Pulitzer prize-winning *Canti del Sole* (1983).

The concerto was commissioned by Oberlin Conservatory to mark its 150th anniversary, and written for Walters, its oboe professor and the longtime solo English horn of The Cleveland Orchestra.

The work received its world premiere by Walters and the Orchestra at Severance Hall in November, 2015, when Nicholas Jones wrote in a [review](#) for this publication,

*The soloistic opportunities for English horn virtuosos are few and far between, and an addition to that instrument's solo repertoire from the distinguished British-born composer is no small matter. Even more significant is the high quality of the writing in this concerto: accessible and challenging at the same time, it has a melodiousness as well as an energetic, even throbbing intensity.*

This premiere recording features Walters with the Oberlin Orchestra, under the direction of Raphael Jiménez.



The concerto's three movements explore different aspects of the personality of the solo instrument. In "Fantasia," it converses with other low-register members of the orchestra. In "Aubade" or dawn-song, the horn reminds us of its history as a pastoral instrument. And in "Homage à C-D," Rands connects it to the playful, erotic world of Claude Debussy.

Rands' skillful orchestration supports the soloist with a rich instrumental accompaniment, and coaxed by Jiménez, the Oberlin Orchestra play their jocular, often complex lines with élan.

*Canti del Sole*, the third in a triptych of Rand works, traces the sun's progression from dawn to dusk in a single day through a widely-varied, multilingual string of 14 poems, separated by interludes. Norwegian tenor Magnus Staveland tosses off the work's numerous pyrotechnical passages with flair, his full-bodied, flexible voice projecting above the ensemble. Whether he's singing in English, French, Italian, or German, his

diction is superb. Conductor Timothy Weiss and his 10-member mixed ensemble are a tour-de-force throughout the nearly 30-minute cycle.



The album booklet contains the text and translations of each poem, as well as Peter Laki's informative liner notes and a complete roster of student performers. Produced, mixed and mastered by Paul Eachus, the album was recorded in 2017 (*Concerto*) and 2019 (*Canti de Sol*) in Warner Concert Hall and Clonick Hall at Oberlin with engineering and digital editing by Andrew Tripp.

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