



25th Anniversary Cobra Records

Producer's Choice Vol. 2

Technological Advancement: From DSD64 to DSD 256

In 2017, we made the transition to an even higher super audio quality: DSD256.

With a heavy heart, I said goodbye to the dCS converters and replaced them with a Merging Technologies HAPI A/D converter and a HAPI D/A converter. While this did result in higher audio quality, I also suddenly lost my trusted equipment. Sonically, I felt I had to compromise. Only after a period of experimentation did I regain confidence and discover other qualities of this equipment.

An added convenience was that the entire recording setup became considerably smaller, perhaps even 100 kg lighter, and compact. The custom-made Rens Heijnis mixing console was no longer needed, so an additional piece of equipment could be left behind. It felt like the dawn of a whole new era.

On this sampler, I have selected tracks recorded with this new DSD256 technology. All projects are from the original DSD256 tracks pulled from the archives and remastered in PureDSD by Tom Caulfield of NativeDSD, with no PCM anywhere. They are mixed and mastered entirely in the DSD domain.

Adventure and Artistic Freedom

From 2017 onwards, the focus for our releases shifted increasingly to productions with a unique story. Musicians who pursue their projects with unstoppable passion were given priority for a spot on our label, and this priority continues today. It works like an infection that spreads to everyone with whom these musicians come into contact. As a label, we also enjoy being infected by musicians with this kind of passion. This forms the basis for a shared challenge to maximize the project's exposure.

This selection showcases a series of tracks by musicians who have worked with us for a long time, such as Musica Temprana and Cuarteto Quiroga. But new musical ensembles have also truly connected with our label over the past 10 years, such as Ksenia Kouzmenko, Nuala McKenna, and The Hague String Trio.

Anniversary Concert

Our anniversary concert was essentially a mini-festival. There were many musicians, diverse lineups, a wide-ranging repertoire, and a hall full of Cobra musicians, programmers, critics, fellow producers, piano tuners, and of course, family and friends. The concert, which lasted just under an hour, turned out to be a thrilling evening. From the very first minute, a special atmosphere permeated the air, and it was immediately clear that everyone in the hall was captivated by the beautifully varied music. We are immensely proud of the musicians who played for the most critical audience imaginable: fellow musicians, a hall full of them!

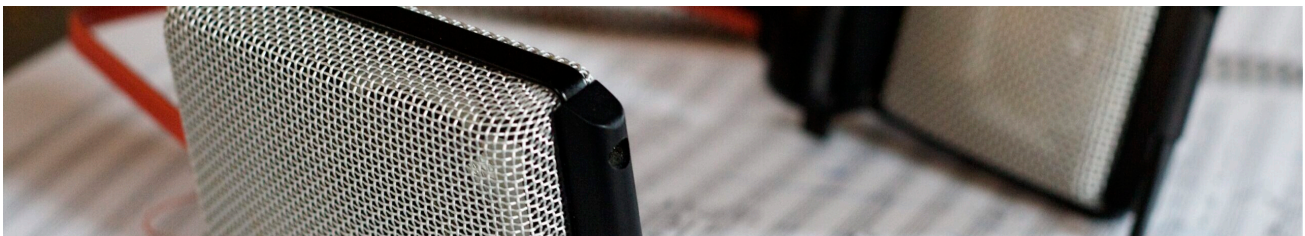
The performances were sublime, and during the changes, radio presenter Lex Bohlmeier created the perfect atmosphere with engaging interviews, piquing the audience's curiosity for the next performances. The audience's reactions became increasingly euphoric, and after the closing first movement of the Mendelssohn *Octet* (in which all the musicians played together), the audience was ecstatic. A tremendous outpouring of energy, joy, and gratitude—what a celebration.

The Cobra team, Maaiken Heslenfeld, and Tom Peeters, were deeply moved by the presence of so many people who, with and for us, made this anniversary possible. An experience beyond our wildest expectations.

Future Cobra Records

Standing still is going backwards, so it's time to adjust our course. Starting in 2026, we'll embark on a new adventure. The young producer/engineer Ernst Coutinho will officially join our team in January 2026. His talented contribution has been present for quite some time. He has already recorded and produced the remarkable productions *Of Ancient Days*, *Extemporize*, and *The Complete Beethoven Violin Sonatas* for Cobra Records. In doing so, he demonstrates not only his expertise as a producer/engineer but also the necessary insight into our label's unique programming style. He has some fantastic ideas about that, too. We have several new releases planned for 2026, which Ernst will definitely be responsible for. We look forward to a pleasant and long-lasting collaboration.

Tom Peeters



Selection 2017-2025



01. **Música Temprana**
Fuentes si nacéis (Anonymous)
[COBRA0068](#)

Música Temprana has become a household name when it comes to Renaissance and Baroque music from Latin America and the former Spanish Empire. The album *Muy Hermosa es María* features music from Quito. The beautifully rich instrumental lineup of baroque guitar, harp, violone, dulcian, organ, and double choir, with carefully selected singers who also take on solo roles, creates a rich and unique palette. Musica Temprana displays their exceptional flexibility between complete sound blending and perfectly supported solos.



02. **Ksenia Kouzmenko**
Love Song op.7 no.1 (Josef Suk)
[COBRA0070](#)

On this album, Ksenia Kouzmenko has fully immersed herself in the rich history of Czech piano music. With a combination of conviction and vulnerability, she performs a beautiful composition by Josef Suk, which serves as the starting point for a journey through other famous Czech composers, as well as equally impressive unknown composers such as Kvapil and Kabelác.



03...05. **Ardemus Quartet**

Bagatelles for wind quintet: movement IV, V, VI (György Ligeti)

[COBRA0071](#)

Ligeti doesn't always write the most accessible music. But I experienced these selections by the Ardemus saxophone quartet quite differently. They surprised me with every take of these sublimely performed pieces from this virtuoso and spectacular repertoire. The dynamics are truly enormous, from whisper-soft to fortissimo, and the result has a profound impact.



06. **Pauline Oostenrijk**

Pastorale (Alexander Voormolen)

[COBRA0072](#)

Pauline Oostenrijk is my personal hero, for whom I have enormous respect. She's a multi-talented musician who, you might think, has already achieved everything in her musical oboe career. But she never stands still in her development. On this album, she utilizes her hidden talents as a pianist, and in this particular composition she plays both oboe and piano (played one after the other, of course). A nice detail is that, for acoustic reasons, we used a different location for the oboe than for the piano.



07. **Guillermo Turina & Manuel Minguillón**
Sonata IV. Op.2 - Allegro (Jean-Pierre Duport)
[COBRA0073](#)

Guillermo Turina is not only an exceptional cellist but also a musicologist who has made a name for himself internationally. His research always leads to remarkable discoveries originating from the early days of cello history. Together with lutenist Manuel Minguillon, he performs a movement from the previously unrecorded sonatas of the Duport brothers. A gem performed with great class.



08. **Sandro Rodrigues**
Fantasia No.4 (TWV 40:29) I. Vivace (Georg Philipp Telemann)
[COBRA0075](#)

The young and exceptionally talented Portuguese guitarist Sandro Rodrigues took the initiative to transcribe the recently discovered *Fantasies pour la Basse de Violle* for guitar while still a student at the conservatory. This track clearly demonstrates that Sandro is not only an excellent guitarist, but above all, that he can do full justice to the music originally written for viola da gamba.



09. **Nuala McKenna**

Sonate op.8 in B minor - III. Allegro molto vivace (Zoltán Kodály)

[COBRA0078](#)

This Kodály *Sonata* belongs to the cello's royal repertoire and is of the highest technical caliber. In a concert once, Nuala McKenna played a movement of this sonata in complete darkness. All lights were turned off. It was an exceptionally impressive experience I will never forget. The complicated virtuoso score never overshadowed the music and the musical impact was enormous.



10. **Duo Rozemond & Bekkers**

Kaddish (Maurice Ravel)

[COBRA0082](#)

VOX: a rare ensemble featuring a violinist who also sings with an accordion. That in itself is an invitation to listen to this duo, in my opinion. Jacobien Rozemond and Renée Bekkers enchant with every conceivable color, from the extremely subtle and delicate to the massive and orchestral.



11. **Hervé Joulain & Silke Avenhaus**

Romance Op. 67 in E to Henri Chaussier: Adagio (Camille Saint-Saëns)

[COBRA0086](#)

Hervé Joulain is an immensely virtuosic horn player who continually travels the world to demonstrate his unique skills in both chamber music and orchestral settings. In this composition by Camille Saint-Saëns, Hervé demonstrates his unmatched technical skill, and also his musicality. He is joined by the excellent pianist Silke Avenhaus.

The horn is a challenging instrument to record in itself. Where does the sound actually come from on such an instrument with its bell facing backward? For me, the beauty lies in the great diversity of the color palette: from complete blending of sound with the piano to dazzling solo passages.



12. **Cuarteto Quiroga**

String Quartet in d minor, Op.42, I. Andante ed innocentemente (Haydn)

[COBRA0088](#)

Cuarteto Quiroga plays a Haydn composition from the album *Atomos*. The now-famous quartet can excel in virtuosity, but here we are dealing with technical simplicity in a sublime performance. The simplicity makes these compositions extremely vulnerable and therefore requires great skill to make them sound so musically impressive.



13. **Nuala McKenna (cello) & Robert Kulek (piano)**
Sonata for cello and piano: II. Cavatine (Francis Poulenc)
[COBRA0090](#)

Robert Kulek and Nuala McKenna are a very even match on this duo album. Without any restraint, both showcase all the extremes of their instruments, never losing sight (or ear) of each other. The complete equality in their interplay continues to captivate me. Nuala once again demonstrates how far beyond technique she is in her playing. The music always prevails, no matter how difficult it is.



14. **Prisma String Trio, Lars Wouters van den Oudenweijer, Folke Nauta**
Quintet in B-flat major: II. Lento (Franz Schmidt)
[COBRA0093](#)

The pianist Folke Nauta, who passed away far too early, can be heard here on his latest album, *Left Hand Legacy*. The minute-long piano opening (left hand only!) of this movement makes me think back with nostalgia to the intense recording projects we did that ended abruptly. The entire ensemble impressively displays a perfect, full balance between all five instruments. They let the music completely determine who takes or receives the lead. To my ears, a true pinnacle of chamber music.



15. **Música Temprana, Adrián Rodríguez van der Spoel**

Arvoles lloran por lluvias (Anonymous)

[COBRA0095](#)

This album, *In Terra Aliena* (In a Strange Land), features songs that tell of exile and homesickness for the land abandoned due to war, famine, and other dangers and threats. Migration is timeless, and certainly not just a modern phenomenon. With this album, Música Temprana poignantly demonstrates how people in the 16th century also struggled with exile, loss, homesickness, grief, and hope. The performances are unparalleled and express deep emotion.



16. **The Hague String Trio**

String Trio, Op.1 - I. Allegretto (Géza Frid)

[COBRA0096](#)

The Hague String Trio presents a composition by Géza Frid on their third album with Cobra. A beautiful album about three forgotten Hungarian friends (students of Kodály) who all ended up in the Netherlands. With courage and success, The Hague String Trio consistently explores the boundaries of classical music. Their interpretation is characterized by conviction, flexibility, flawless intonation, and a grand presence.