



HUGO DE CHAIRE *b.1979*

You may not have heard of him before but you are a lot more familiar with the young composer's music than you realise... **John Evans** introduces the man who wakes you up, brings you lunch and at the end of the day, soothes you to sleep

Cast your mind back to the morning of Monday 15 June 2009. Anything seem different? Did you hesitate momentarily twixt butter dish and toast? Did you put down your newspaper and, lost in thought, gaze out of the window for a few seconds? In short, did things not feel *quite* the same? Good, but just a little bit different?

Chances are you don't remember the day at all, and that's just what Classic FM intended. You see, on that day the radio station launched a new signature theme; you know, the Classic FM melody and its numerous arrangements that punctuate the station's programmes, heralding the news and signalling a change of show.

Though the new tune should be (and is) memorable, its arrival was never intended to cause shock and distress – which is just as well. The job of a successful signature theme such as Classic FM's is to express the station's character and tone, providing a kind of sonic DNA that helps to sustain and support the station's programmes, not overwhelm them.

So while the new theme may only have just registered with you

that Monday morning, it was a significant event for the people who inspired and commissioned it – and the man who created it.

Hugo de Chaire is a modern classical composer. In his music studio he is surrounded by instruments and synthesizers creating music for films, commercials and TV shows. Credits include films such as *The Audition*, TV shows *Face the Music 2007* and *Never Mind the Full Stops*, commercials including campaigns for Hallmark and npower, and music for recording artists such as the operatic group G4 on their platinum album *G4 and Friends*.

Hugo was born 31 years ago to a musical mother who encouraged his fledgling talent. Percussion was his thing and from a young age he was composing music for his school band. The idea of being a professional composer took root and in time, Hugo enrolled at Kingston University.

'They had a strong reputation for music production and sound engineering,' says Hugo. 'And the students were into all styles of music from classical to electronica.'

Later, Hugo travelled to Seattle to study film scoring with Hollywood composer Hummie

Mann, and then went on to work as assistant to film composer Joey Newman in Los Angeles.

But despite his immersion in the world of soundtracks and commercials, the music of Mozart and Elgar still exerts a strong pull on Hugo. Indeed, add a twist of film composers John Williams, Ennio Morricone and Thomas Newman and you're getting close to his sound for Classic FM.

It was a concept based on a demanding brief. 'The radio station wanted the new sound to be accessible, emotive, strong, memorable, sensitive and interesting,' says Hugo.

Hugo adapted the main theme (he's now on 50 variations and counting) for one of the pieces, *Smooth Classics*, to sound like a lullaby. 'The sound is romantic and calming,' he says. 'With other pieces there's a pastoral quality like a soundtrack to a country walk.'

This mood extends to many of the theme's variations where Hugo uses muted strings, piano and clarinet. His favourite? 'The news theme at the top of the hour.'

Listen out for it and the other variations. If Hugo's done his job you'll notice them – for all the right reasons. ■

DISCOVERING DE CHAIRE

■ **Born** 25 January 1979, Norwich, UK

■ **Musicianship** Keen percussionist

■ **Composes** Film and TV music, and music for commercials. Credits include *The Audition*, John Sergeant's *Face the Music 2007* and commercials for npower

■ **Interesting fact** Hugo went to business school at 19 and after graduating worked for Bloomberg for 18 months. When Hans Zimmer released his score for *Gladiator* in 2001 (which Hugo loved) he saved some money and bought a music notation program. That was when he decided to change career and do what he loved most – music.

'The station wanted the new sound to be strong, sensitive and interesting'

HUGO'S FAVOURITE CLASSIC FM VARIATIONS – LISTEN OUT FOR THEM!

Top of the Hour News

'I wanted the sound to be heavy and staccato, very upbeat but also official and serious. It builds steadily to the end with those two strokes on the timpani by which time, hopefully, the music has the listeners' attention.'



Music bed: clarinet

A 'bed' is a piece of music over which the presenters talk. 'I wanted the long cues to be happy and positive, to be something the presenters would be happy talking over and for the music to be neutral.'

Movies

'This theme is occasionally used to herald movie music. I chose to craft a big, sweeping vistas type of sound, a sense of exploration with a nostalgia for home – our hero travels for years and eventually returns to his true love.'



Movement in F for clarinet

'I wanted to capture a really Viennese soundscape with this and for it to be uplifting, inspiring and positive. I use strong rhythmical string repetitions with a clarinet as my lead.'