Robert Thompson has enjoyed a career unique among bassoon players since his highly praised recital debut in Carnegie Hall. A graduate of Yale School of Music and Julliard, his extraordinary musicianship was apparent from the start and composers from the American John Downey to the Polish Sir Andrzej Panufnik have trusted him with their works. The wide range of his artistry is apparent in the CD box set released for his 80th birthday on Heritage encompassing the classics such as Vivaldi and Mozart but also lesser known works by Franz Danzi, Gordon Jacob and Arnold Bax. This new release for Heritage (HTGCD 402), displays not only the diversity of repertoire available to the solo bassoon, but also the distinctive tones and virtuosity of one of today’s great performers.

Having been Principal Bassoon of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra for some time, he has an innate understanding of the dynamics of being a soloist and has appeared and recorded with many of the leading world orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, the Manchester Camerata, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra, and the London Musici. His distinctive playing was recently praised by Andrew McGregor on BBC Radio 3: 'There is something compelling about Robert Thompson’s tone and musicianship that makes his performances unforgettable’ and other critics have been equally fulsome with The Guardian describing him “as a wonderful, powerful and eloquent player” and The Independent describing him “as a player of plangent expressiveness.”

When the musicologist Bernard Jacobson introduced Thompson to Composer Andrzej Panufnik, it was a legendary meeting that resulted in one of the masterpieces of twentieth century composition. Thompson’s acclaimed performance of the work in 1987, in a historic occasion in the Warsaw church of the murdered priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszki (to whom the concerto is dedicated), was received with great emotional response by the audience. On the release of the recording with the BBC SO under the composer’s baton for the centenary of Panufnik’s birth in 2014, Andrew Clark wrote in the Financial Times: ‘Panufnik’s music of depth, poetry and emotion is revealed in this heartfelt reading by Robert Thompson of the elegiac power of the Bassoon concerto’ And Paul Driver said in The Sunday Times: ‘This recording of the Panufnik Bassoon concerto is notable for its dramatic impulse and Thompson’s beautiful lyric tone.’

His recordings for Columbia Records, Chandos, Gaspara, the Musical Heritage Society, Harmonia Mundi, and Conifer have been widely acclaimed and his album ‘The 20th Century Bassoon’ was nominated for both Gramophone Magazine’s ‘Outstanding 20th Century Recording’ and the Koussevitsky Award for 20th century music.

He has also made many remarkable chamber recordings, working with the Fine Arts Quintet, the Coull String Quartet, the Chicago Symphony String Quartet, the ECO and the Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra. Today, he continues to give master classes all over the world including at the Royal Academy of Music, the Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, and the Royal Northern College of Music. He is in all one of the finest bassoon players of his generation and many of those who have worked with him pay their tributes to him on the occasion of his 80th birthday.
America's musical tradition is a source of great pride and a symbol of our nation's cultural heritage. The American Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor David Amos, is dedicated to preserving and promoting this tradition through concerts and educational programs. Amos, a seasoned conductor with a deep understanding of American music, has brought new life to classic works and introduced audiences to contemporary composers. His commitment to innovation and excellence has earned him widespread acclaim from critics and audiences alike.

American Symphony Orchestra: David Amos

As a conductor, I appreciate the talent and industry of Robert Thompson, who aside from being an outstanding musician is also a visionary and a pioneer in rediscovering, performing, and recording jewels for the bassoon repertoire which have been unjustly neglected.

My admiration for Robert became evident at the time we met in London to record music by Arnold Bax together with the London Symphony Orchestra. His professionalism and musicality was obvious to us who participated in the recording session. Congratulations on his 80th birthday, and with best wishes for many years of creativity and music-making.

David Amos

David Amos is an orchestral conductor who has specialised in introducing lesser known works of composers worthy of greater recognition. It was in this vein that he worked with Bob on the recording of the little known Poinciana and Scherzo for bassoon and strings by Arnold Bax which has been widely acclaimed. David has commissioned new works as well as conducted world premiere performances in concerts and recordings with leading London orchestras such as the LSO and LPO as well as many other national orchestras. An ongoing project is documenting American and Jewish music through live recordings and encouraging young composers in these genres.