

Recitals Australia
Wednesday 24 March at 12.30pm

Philippa McAuliffe, Harp and Piano solos

Program
HARP

George Frideric Handel (1685-1789)
Suite HWV 436 in D minor (1733) 8 mins
Transcribed for harp by Philippa McAuliffe

- i. Allemande
- ii. Allegro
- iii. Air
- iv. Gigue
- v. Minuet

This suite forms part of the second volume of Handel's *Suites de Pieces pour Le Clavecin* published by John Walsh in London in 1733. Whilst not as showy perhaps as Bach or Scarlatti, Handel was an exceptional organist and harpsichordist and his keyboard works beautifully balance counterpoint and melody. The theme of the Allemande also appears in his opera *Ezio* (HWV 29) and his *Trio Sonata in E minor* (HWV 398, Opus 5, No. 3) so was clearly one he was rather attached to. The harp is ideally suited to this work as the forebear to the plucked keyboard instruments of the Baroque period.

Al Ravin (1947-present)
Puzzle (2015)

The prestigious *Israel International Harp Competition* is held once every three years and attracts many of the greatest players under 35 years of age in the world. The Australian harpist, Alice Giles, won the event in 1982 which launched her international career and remains the only Australian ever to have been placed. Whilst it remains uncertain what will happen to the 21st competition it is still scheduled to take place this October and I have been working on the required repertoire (4 rounds) in the hope of participating. *Puzzle* is one of the most challenging of the large number of set works.

After 30 years of reclusive silence, Israeli composer Ravin produced this composition for the Hamburg Chamber Festival in 2015, converting it later into a harp solo. In the words of the composer it is "dedicated to the useless search of harmony in a life consisting of separated pieces of a soulless puzzle". Clearly Ravin is no optimist. The multiple unassembled randomly recurring fragments are the polar opposite to Mozartian Classical perfection and balance.

Evgen Andreev
Patterns (2021)

This work was commissioned for the third *Glowing Harp International Competition* which is running online from the Ukraine this April. Rather more mellifluous than *Puzzle*, it came with no information whatsoever from the young Ukrainian composer other than a marking of “Freely”, a suggested tempo range and some dynamics, leaving each competitor to develop their own interpretation. It opens with semiquaver rhythmic melodic repeated patterns. This gives way to a dotted rhythm right hand melody with accompaniment and these two themes then alternate and combine as the work progresses.

Avner Dorman (1975-present)
from Suite for Harp (2021)
i Prelude

Dorman is a multi-award winning young Israeli composer living in the USA. He holds a doctorate in composition from Julliard and his first opera recently reached the finals of the International Opera Awards. His works have been played by leading orchestras and soloists including the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Pinchas Zuckerman, Hilary Hahn and Gil Shaham. This *Suite* was released in January 2021 as a commission for the 21st *Israel International Harp Competition*. Dorman claims to have set out to explore the technical properties of the harp. His first movement focusses on string plucking with no pedal changes involved (so no accidentals at all) and uses mathematical concepts to model harmonic progressions and metric structure.

Elias Parish Alvars (1808-1849)
Grand Fantasia Opus 57 - Introduction, Cadenza and Rondo (c. 1840)

Flamboyant Parish Alvars, described by Berlioz as the “Liszt of the harp”, was born in Devon and first studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London under Bochsa but lived most of his working life in Europe where he became a renowned virtuosic soloist. Despite this he died young in abject poverty. This supremely Romantic fantasy incorporates a number of Italian opera themes, no doubt familiar to the composer from his long term position as the harpist at the Vienna Opera. Parish Alvars was constantly pushing the boundaries of the newly invented double-action pedal harp, introducing new techniques including advanced enharmonics, chordal glissandi and double and triple harmonics.

8' | 11' | 4' | 3' | 8' |

Piano Solo

Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Romance in F minor Opus 5 (1868)

This staple of aspiring pianists in the early 20th century is today one of Tchaikovsky's less commonly heard compositions. By the time of its completion he was a seasoned composer,

having produced a cantata, an overture, a symphonic poem, a symphony and two operas all of which he either destroyed or disavowed, suffering from extreme self-criticism. With this work however he recognised that he had found his personal voice; yearning, sentimental, lyrical and heartbreaking. It was dedicated to Desirée Artot, a Belgian opera singer to whom Tchaikovsky was briefly engaged and premiered in Moscow by Nikolay Rubinstein, younger brother of Anton and long-time promoter of Tchaikovsky.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Prelude and Fugue No 13 in F sharp major from
The Well Tempered Clavier Book 1 BWV 858 (1722)

Bach's first set of preludes and fugues was compiled and autographed in 1722 whilst he was working for Prince Leopold as Kapellmeister at Cöthen although many of the works predate this time. In 1720 Bach had presented a notebook to his eldest son (aged 9) containing drafts of 11 of the 12 preludes that later formed part of his WTC Book 1. Whilst debate continues as to what Bach meant by "well-tempered" it clearly was a system that resulted in all keys sounding in tune, as opposed to "mean-tone temperament" which emphasised the purity of the major third interval but in which many accidentals sounded out of tune, limiting the number of keys available. The great Bach exponent Angela Hewitt once said that these ground breaking works require "great sprightliness, clarity, rapidity, warmth, strength and subtle shadings...the difficulty is in making them sound easy."

Philippa McAuliffe (1999-present)
For Onslow (2020)

2020 was a year in which Onslow (a black dog of uncertain breeding who closely resembles Hairy McClary) and I spent a lot of time together at home. He has always loved the harp, curling up under the base and risking being squashed in order to feel the transmitted vibrations. As a hyperactive puppy the harp was the only thing ever guaranteed to send him to sleep. However, he has never been such a great fan of the piano. I therefore decided to see if I could compose something that might appeal to him. Labelled as a cross between early Chopin and a period romantic film score by one member of the family, it did prove attractive to Onsie who would come in to sleep by me whenever I was working on it. I hope you enjoy it too.

6' | 4' | 4' |

About Philippa

Philippa McAuliffe completed her B.Mus. (advanced classical performance) at the Elder Conservatorium in 2020, studying with Suzanne Handel. She has been the principal harpist of the Australian Youth Orchestra, was featured in the 2020 National Music Camp Advanced Chamber concert and has played casually for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Recent

highlights included performing the Glière Harp Concerto in Elder Hall and reaching the finals of the Chamber Music Adelaide Young Artist Awards.

Having previously studied overseas with the Concertgebouw and New York Met principal harpists, a Helpmann Creative Stimulus grant is currently providing online tuition from world-class harpists to help her prepare for international competitions, alongside her part-time honours studies this year.

When not rehearsing, she writes concert program notes professionally, teaches the harp and is a passionate Francophile who hopes to study one day in France. Additionally, an accomplished pianist, she has won the Adelaide Eisteddfod Open Piano Recital class and was awarded her Licentiate in 2019.