

Invisible Spirits

*Classical music for flute, soprano, and piano,
inspired by sounds and songs from the realm of the unseen.*

Saturday 10th February 2024, 7:30pm EST
St. John's in the Village, NYC



Simone Maurer, flute

Simone Maurer is an Australian classical-contemporary flutist, music psychology researcher, and tertiary educator. Her early career encompassed orchestral performance with state and national youth orchestras and an internship with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. After a Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Simone relocated to the UK. During her MPhil degree at the University of Cambridge, Simone continued orchestral and chamber performance, including projects with the Britten Sinfonia—an associate ensemble at the Barbican in London. On returning to Australia, she began a PhD in Music Performance at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and continues to perform as a soloist and chamber musician.



Amber Evans, soprano

Amber Evans is a vocalist, composer and conductor based in New York. Winner of the inaugural Dwight and Ursula Mamlok Advancement Award for Interpreters of Contemporary Music, she premiered over thirty new vocal works and became well-versed in modern contemporary classic works of the last few decades. A recent graduate of the contemporary classical Masters at Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Lucy Shelton, Ms. Evans is also a featured soloist and chorusmaster on the CD of Poul Ruders' new opera *The Thirteenth Child* due to be released in conjunction with the Santa Fe Opera premiere in the summer of 2019 on the Bridge Records label.



Jeremy Chan, piano

Jeremy Chan is a freelance Australian pianist and vocal coach based in New York City. His playing has been praised as "superb" and for "summoning about as much color as can possibly be coaxed out" (New York Classical Review). Jeremy is on artistic staff at Juilliard and the Manhattan School of Music, and serves as Director of Music at Advent Lutheran Church. This season includes productions of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Massenet's *Cendrillon*, performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, BAM, NYU, and appearances with the Brooklyn Art Song Society, American Opera Projects, Central City Chorus, and the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation. Follow Jeremy @jeremychanpiano and jeremychanpiano.com

Program Notes

Ross Edwards *Water Spirit Song* (2003)

Water Spirit Song was originally part of a larger work, *Koto Dreaming* - a piece of music theatre featuring the koto player Satsuki Odamura and the Butoh Dancer Yumi Umiumare, which was composed for the 2003 Asian Music and Dance Festival in Sydney. The dance was accompanied by an ensemble consisting of Japanese and European instruments: koto, shakuhachi, cor anglais, darbukka, and cello. In the original, *Water Spirit Song* opened the work and was played by solo cello, accompanied by the sound of a waterfall. Later, it returned as a postlude played by cor anglais and shakuhachi. This version for solo flute captures the ebb and flow of water and gestural nature of the melodic lines. Born in Sydney, Ross Edwards is an Australian composer known for incorporating elements of nature and spirituality—reflecting his deep connection to the Australian landscape—and is recognized for his use of intricate rhythms, rich harmonies, and evocative melodies.

Robert McIntyre *SKY-STAINED WAVES* (2023)

From the composer: “Watercolour is an often-translucent artform, which allows light to pass through layers of suspended pigment or colourants when staining. When commissioned by Debbie to compose a new flute work for her 60th Birthday, I wanted to blend something so innately her with my own compositional aesthetic. Debbie’s watercolour paintings immediately came to mind, particularly her colloquially referenced artwork ‘Rainy day in Queenscliff’. *SKY-STAINED WAVES* encapsulates the beautifully nuanced blurred reflection that Debbie’s watercolour portrays, tapping into its shades, textures, bleeding, and brushstrokes. The work’s structure and substance take inspiration horizontally from left to right, where I constantly referred to the painting during the compositional process. This influenced a layering and blurring of notes, distinct use of pedalling, and the use of extended colour techniques on the flute. As a close friend and colleague of Debbie, this commission is particularly meaningful to me. It is my hope that she can enter this soundworld and contemplatively get lost in the beautiful colours that she brings to those in her life.” McIntyre is an Australian composer and flutist whose music creates an atmosphere of discussion and reflection. As well as having studied composition at the University of Melbourne (Australia), McIntyre is currently completing postgraduate study at the Melbourne Law School (Juris Doctor). As a 2022-23 University of Melbourne Wattle Fellow, he undertook a sustainability action-project composing a song cycle about the legal case *Sharma v Minister for the Environment* [2021] FCA 560.



Rainy day in Queenscliff – Debbie Brady 2023

© Debbie Brady

Ross Edwards *Four Mystic Springs* (2004)

Mystic Spring

Ngala

Arabesque

Ulpirra

Mystic Springs is a collection of nine contrasting solos by Edwards of which four will be performed on solo flute - the evocative and mysterious *Mystic Spring*, the upbeat *Ngala* which translated from the Australian Aboriginal Noongar language meaning “We Two”, the gracious and freely expressive *Arabesque*, and the playful *Ulpirra* which ends with a stomp and shout!

Albert Roussel *Duex Poèmes de Ronsard, Op. 26* (1924)

I. Rossignol, mon mignon

II. Ciel, aer, et vens

Albert Roussel (1869-1937) was a French composer whose early works were steeped in impressionism and neoclassicism, and later turned more chromatic and tonally complex. This work for flute and soprano was Roussel’s first chamber work and incorporated extramusical reference in the form of two poems by French poet Pierre de Ronsard (translated to English below).

I. *Fair nightingale*

Fair nightingale, flitting as you will
from branch to branch of the willows, alone,
singing [as I would that I could sing]
[She who must always be] in my mouth.
We both sigh. Your sweet voice tries
to sound the love of one who loves you so,
and I sadly regret the beauty
who has so wounded my heart.
There is one difference between us, [nightingale],
although we both have the same music.
You are loved, and I am not.
Your love yields before the sweet sounds you make,
but mine scorns my songs and covers her ears
so as not to hear them.

II. *Sky, air and winds*

Sky, air and winds, naked hills and plains,
vine-covered mounds and green forests,
twisting banks and flowing springs,
fallen thickets, green woods,
mossy caves half-concealed,
fields, buds, flowers, warming grasses,
viney slopes and pale beaches,
and you, rocks, schooled by my verses,
because when parting, full of care and anger,
I could not say adieu to this fair eye
which stirs me whether near or far,
I beg you, sky, air, winds, mountains and plains,
thickets, forests, banks and springs,
caves, fields, flowers, tell her for me.

Christine Draeger *Melusina's Dream* (1999)

Australian composer and flutist, Christine Draeger, has written works for solo flute, flute quartet, and theatre pieces. *Melusina's Dream* is from a theatre show, *The Secret Mermaid*, and the solo flute work later went on to win first prize in the Australian Flute Composition Competition in 1999. Melusina (or Mélusine) appears in various European legends most often depicted as a female water spirit with a serpent lower body—similar to that of a mermaid. Melusina's tale is best known from the 14th-century French writer Jean d'Arras who presented her in a sympathetic light. According to the legend, and d'Arras' work, Melusine was cursed by her mother to become half-serpent every Saturday until she married a man who would respect her privacy on Saturdays and not look upon her. She marries the nobleman Raymondin, promising to make him wealthy and famous, on the condition that he leave her alone every Saturday. Raymondin keeps his promise until one Saturday he is persuaded by family to spy on Melusine during her bath. When he breaks his vow to her, she transforms into the shape of a winged dragon and flies off, returning periodically to watch over her sons, flying around the castle crying mournfully. Draeger's version for solo flute uses many extended techniques - most notably is the use of vocalisation, in which the flutist 'sings' and plays at the same time causing a third, buzzing sound (known as a difference tone)—reminiscent of siren-like singing or wailing. Midway through the piece, multiphonics (two or more simultaneous pitches) produce further eerie singing-like sonorities, again underpinned by the unsettling difference tones. Percussive finger and tongue articulations add contrast to the quasi-sea shanty melodies heard throughout the piece.

Frédéric Chopin *Étude Op. 25, No. 1 "Aeolian Harp"* (1836)

Frédéric Chopin *Étude Op. 25, No. 9 "Butterfly"* (1836)

Polish pianist and composer, Frédéric Chopin, is considered one of the greatest Romantics in music who revolutionized piano technique and expression. An étude is a technical study designed to develop a technique or set of techniques on a musical instrument. Chopin's études are not just technical exercises; they are expressive pieces that showcase the composer's unique melodic gift and harmonic language. *Étude Op. 25, No. 1 "Aeolian Harp"* evokes the gentle sounds of the Aeolian harp, a stringed instrument played by the wind. Its ethereal melody in the right hand floats above delicate arpeggios, creating a peaceful and introspective atmosphere. The piece has an alternate nickname, "The Shepherd's Boy," suggested by a Chopin scholar who claimed that the composer envisioned a boy playing the melody on a flute to guide his flock. *Étude Op. 25, No. 9 "Butterfly"* is nicknamed for its fluttery and compact style - it is the shortest Chopin étude, lasting under a minute in performance. Its fast tempo and octave leaps showcase the pianist's technical skill, while the playful melody evokes the image of a butterfly flitting through the air.

Melissa Dunphy *Tesla's Pigeon: Mvt IV* (2010)

In the 1920's to 40's, Serbian-American scientist and inventor Nikola Tesla lived out his twilight years having metaphorically wrecked himself on Manhattan Island, bankrupted and broken by a public relations war with Thomas Edison. A staunch believer in the connection between his genius and sexual abstinence, Tesla shunned women, choosing instead to feed and care for street pigeons in his hotel room at the New Yorker. His closest friend was a white dove that visited him every day at his hotel room window. In moments of delirium, Tesla believed this pigeon to have mystical knowledge and the ability to communicate with him, and declared to friends that he was in love with her. One night, the bird flew into Tesla's room close to death, and according to Tesla, a light came from her eyes more intense than that of the most powerful lamps in his laboratory before she died in his arms. Tesla said that at that same moment, he knew his life's work was finished. *Tesla's Pigeon* is sung from the dove's perspective in these final moments, and explores parallels between the relationship between Tesla and his pigeon, and Prospero and Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, with text adapted from Ariel's songs, Goethe's *Faust*, the poetry of George Sylvester Viereck, Serbian traditional song and poetry, and personal letters to Tesla.

Ian Clarke *Hypnosis* (1994)

Hypnosis is a flute and piano piece re-worked from a track originally co-written by British composer Ian Clarke with David Hicks, and Simon Painter, when they worked together in the studio as part of a rock group. It evolved as a structured improvisation over numerous gigs between 1986 and 1988, and was one of the group's most popular tracks in live performance alongside a more conventional set of rock songs.

The piece was developed into a piano and flute piece by Clarke in 1993. Its dreamy and improvisatory style with powerful expressive peaks make this a popular flute piece.

Camille Saint-Saens *Une flûte invisible* (1885)

Saint-Saëns set the text of Victor Hugo's poem 'Viens! – Une flûte invisible' twice, first with the title *Viens!* for two sopranos (1855), and then thirty years later as a solo song, *Une flûte invisible* – a delicious pastorate with a delightfully catchy and simple vocal line. The words are simple and a little sentimental: A young man declares his love while "a flute unseen sighs in the orchards." We hear with a lover's ear the sounds of shepherds and birds as peaceful and joyous music, but of course it is the song of love he finds the most beguiling.

An Invisible Flute

Come! An invisible flute
Sighs through the woods.
The most peaceful song
Is the song of shepherds.
Beneath the holly-oak a breeze ripples
Across the dark mirror of water.
The happiest song
Is the song of birds.
Let not a care torment you.
Let us love! Forever love!
The most enchanting song Is the song of love.