

THREE PSALMS SOLO PIANO
Psathas

John Psathas (1966)

New Zealand composer and teacher

John Psathas is one of New Zealand's most frequently performed composers. With works in the repertoire of such high profile musicians as Evelyn Glennie, Michael Brecker, Pedro Carneiro, Michael Houston, Joshua Redman, the Hallé Orchestra and others, he has established an international profile and is receiving regular commission offers from outside New Zealand.

Psathas grew up in Taumaranui and then Napier, and left high school early to study composition and piano at Victoria University of Wellington.

Psathas studied further with composer Jacqueline Fontyn in Belgium before returning to New Zealand, where he has since lectured in music at the New Zealand School of Music and continued to fulfil a busy schedule of commissions.

Early success came in 1991 with *Matre's Dance*, a maximum-energy duet for percussion and piano that has since made Psathas' name internationally known through having been taken up and championed by percussionist Evelyn Glennie. This work and *Drum Dances* are now standard repertoire for percussionists throughout the world.

In August 2000, the premiere of his saxophone concerto, *Omnifenix*, by legendary jazz saxophonist Michael Brecker in Bologna, Italy, brought international acclaim; further prominent performances of his works have included the 2001 Klangspuren Schwaz Festival of Contemporary Music in Austria; *Psyzygysm*, performed by Pedro Carneiro with Strike and Stroma in the 2002 New Zealand Festival; the premiere of *View from Olympus* at the 2002 Royal Gala Concert in Manchester, and the premiere of *Orpheus in Rarohenga* in November 2002. This last, a major work for choir, soloists and orchestra, was a joint commission from poet Robert Sullivan and John Psathas by the Orpheus Choir of Wellington.

Psathas' recent career highlights include the creation of key ceremonial music for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games and more recently *Zeibikiko*, an entire

programme of music celebrating the heritage of Greek music from antiquity and the present day. *Zeibikiko* was commissioned by the Eduard van Beinum Foundation at the request of the Nederlands Blazers Ensemble and toured Holland in 2004. It was a highlight of both the 2004 Bath Festival (UK) and the 2006 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts.

John Psathas has received a number of awards and honours, including twice winning the SOUNZ Contemporary APRA Silver Scroll Award (2002 and 2004) for individual works and twice taking Classical CD of the Year awards (2000 and 2004) in the NZ Music Awards. In 2003 he was made a New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate and in 2005 was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM).

Latest information about the composer may be found at www.johnpsathas.com.

Three Psalms (2003)

Programme note

I. Aria

II. Inferno

III. Sergei Bk.3 Ch.1

I. Aria

The opening of this movement introduces a simple kind of melodic motion, which evolves throughout the concerto. It is this simple idea which ‘tells the story’ of the concerto. In the first movement there is a tendency for the melody to fall by step; in the second movement it vacillates, is often uncertain and sometimes even becomes lost. By the third movement, all of the motion is upward by step – eventually ecstatically so.

II. Inferno

The second movement was inspired by the haunting and deeply disturbing images in James Nachtwey’s photographic elegy, *Inferno*. Nachtwey travels

to the world's most troubled places, looks at the grimmest sights to be seen there and photographs them in such a way as to thrust them into the view of the world. It seems impossible to go through Nachtwey's book in one sitting—to do so gives the feeling that one's own soul is irretrievably dissipating.

Musically, energy is constantly atrophying in this movement, yielding to despair. It requires the positive energy of the entire final movement to pull one out of the pit.

III. Sergei Bk.3 Ch.1

As the finale to the work evolves it becomes a celebration of one of the most ebullient passages in piano concerto literature; the initial *allegro* passage in the first movement of Prokofiev's third concerto. This material has inspired me for the entire course of my musical life to date, and I have always wished that it lasted longer and went further. As I composed the final movement of the concerto, there developed an irresistible gravity that drew together the energy in Prokofiev's concerto and that in my own.

John Psathas, 2004

Three Psalms was commissioned by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra at the instigation of Michael Houstoun (to whom it is dedicated). The composer writes, "Michael's playing inspired me throughout its composition, and his enthusiasm for the work as it grew, boosted the confidence that can be sensed in the music."

Three Psalms was first performed by Stephen Gosling (piano) with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Judd at the Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington, on 16 April 2004.

A recording of *Three Psalms* is available on the Rattle Records CD/DVD "View from Olympus" (RAT-DV015). It is performed by Michael Houstoun (piano), and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marc Taddei. See www.viewfromolympus.com.

Instrumentation

Percussion 1: vibraphone (motor off), sleigh bells, tambourine (with sticks), marimba (shared with player 2), triangle

Percussion 2: marimba, tubular bells (shared with player 3), finger cymbals, china crash cymbal, vibraphone (shared with player 1), bass drum (shared with player 3)

Percussion 3: timpani (4 drums), triangle, tubular bells, mark tree, wind chimes (metal), vibraphone (shared with player 1), tam-tam, bass drum, 2 bongos, finger cymbals, marimba (shared with player 2)

Harp

Solo Piano

Strings

Transposed score

THREE PSALMS SOLO PIANO

John Psathas

ARIA

♩ = 76

Solo Piano

ff

4

8

12

17

Red. *

Red. *

Measures 22-24 of the musical score. The piece is in E-flat major (three flats) and 2/4 time. Measure 22 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a bass clef. The right hand has a whole rest, while the left hand plays a descending eighth-note scale. Measure 23 continues the left-hand pattern. Measure 24 features a treble clef and a complex right-hand melody with slurs and accents, while the left hand continues its eighth-note pattern.

Measures 25-26. Measure 25 continues the left-hand eighth-note pattern. Measure 26 introduces a treble clef and a new right-hand melody with slurs and accents. The left hand continues its eighth-note pattern.

Measures 27-28. Measure 27 continues the left-hand eighth-note pattern. Measure 28 features a treble clef and a right-hand melody with slurs and accents. The left hand continues its eighth-note pattern.

Measures 29-30. Measure 29 continues the left-hand eighth-note pattern. Measure 30 features a treble clef and a right-hand melody with slurs and accents. The left hand continues its eighth-note pattern.

Measures 31-33. Measure 31 continues the left-hand eighth-note pattern. Measure 32 features a treble clef and a right-hand melody with slurs and accents. Measure 33 continues the left-hand eighth-note pattern and the right-hand melody.

34

37

41

B

44

48

C

51

Leo. Leo. Leo. *

54

Leo. *

56

ff

Leo.

60

*

64

D

*mf dim.
non staccato*

67

p

72

77

81

E

85

secco

89

93

97

F

101

105

109

112

115

117

119

122

Measures 122-124 of the musical score. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 2/4. The score is written for piano. Measure 122 features a bass line with a series of eighth notes and a treble line with a few notes. Measure 123 continues the bass line with a more complex pattern. Measure 124 shows a transition with a treble line entry and a more active bass line.

125

Measures 125-126 of the musical score. Measure 125 shows a treble line entry with a series of eighth notes. Measure 126 continues the treble line with a more complex pattern. The bass line remains active with eighth notes.

127

Measures 127-128 of the musical score. Measure 127 shows a treble line entry with a series of eighth notes. Measure 128 continues the treble line with a more complex pattern. The bass line remains active with eighth notes.

129

Measures 129-130 of the musical score. Measure 129 shows a treble line entry with a series of eighth notes. Measure 130 continues the treble line with a more complex pattern. The bass line remains active with eighth notes.

131

Measures 131-132 of the musical score. Measure 131 shows a treble line entry with a series of eighth notes. Measure 132 continues the treble line with a more complex pattern. The bass line remains active with eighth notes.

133

cresc.

136

ff

Red. *

139

GP

H

143

p

146

Red.

149

Ped.

152

Ped.

154

sfz *mp* molto

156

J *ff* Ped.

160

4 4 *mp brillante* 3 3 Ped.

K

171

8va

3

2

3

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

182

8va

menof

5

pp

mp very gentle

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

187

8va

3

3

pp

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

L

194

8va

3

3

pp

Ped.

197

8va

3

3

pp

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

220

224

228

232

235

N

240

Measures 240-242 of the musical score. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 2/4. The music is written for piano in a grand staff. Measure 240 starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. Measures 241 and 242 continue the rhythmic pattern with various articulations like accents and slurs.

243

Measures 243-245 of the musical score. Measure 243 features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. Measures 244 and 245 continue the melodic and harmonic development with slurs and accents.

246

Measures 246-249 of the musical score. Measures 246-248 feature a series of chords in the right hand, some with slurs. Measure 249 ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a fermata. The word "Ped." (pedal) is written below the staff.

O

250

Measures 250-253 of the musical score. Measure 250 begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a series of chords. Measures 251 and 252 continue with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand. Measure 253 features a triplet of eighth notes. An asterisk (*) is placed below the staff in measure 250.

254

Measures 254-256 of the musical score. Measure 254 has a whole rest in the right hand. Measures 255 and 256 feature a melodic line in the right hand with slurs and accents, while the left hand continues with a rhythmic accompaniment.

256

258

260

263

P

267

270

ffz

Ped.

273

ffz

Ped.

276

ffz

Ped.

279

ffz

Ped.

283

ffz

Ped.

II

INFERNO

Gently ♩ = 80

p

Leg.
una corda (sempre)

rit. molto

Leg.

a tempo

Leg.

Leg.

rit. molto

a tempo

Leg.

22

26

a tempo (slower than before) ♩ = 68

29

rit. molto

R

Tempo I ♩ = 80

33

43

S

53

(*Leo.*)

T 8va

ppp

63

ppp

U

(*Leo.*)

72

V

(*Leo.*)

81

V

p

7

(*Leo.*)

[illegible][illegible]

135

Y

Reo.

Reo.

Reo.

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Y' (135). It is written for a piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Reo.' (Ritardando). The score begins with a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff has a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp. The bass staff has a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, as well as triplets and slurs. The piece concludes with a final measure in the second system.

146

p

Ped.

Ped. (half-pedalling)

151

Ped.

Ped. (half-pedalling)

155

Ped.

Ped. (half-pedalling)

A1

167

Ped.

Ped. (half-pedalling)

172

Ped.

Ped. (half-pedalling)

198

C1

Ped.

201

Ped.

204

Ped.

208

Ped.

D1

215 **Slower** ♩ = 72

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a standard staff format. The tempo is marked 'slower, 1/2'. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of 10 measures. The first five measures show a steady bass line with a treble staff that has rests. The last five measures show a more active bass line with a treble staff that has rests. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

E1

[illegible]

232

8va

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a two-staff format. The upper staff, marked with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), contains the melody. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in a 3/4 time signature. The lower staff, marked with a bass clef, contains the bass line. The key signature for the bass line is one sharp (F#). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The melody in the upper staff consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes a trill-like figure in the final measure. The bass line in the lower staff is mostly composed of whole and half notes, with some rests. A '232' is written at the beginning of the upper staff, and an '8va' is written above the final measure of the upper staff, indicating an octave shift.

242

243

244

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

251

lunga

III

SERGEI Bk.3 Ch.1

Semplice ♩ = 80

Leo.

*

Leo.

*

F1

19

sf

23

8va - -

27

G1

Red.

31

35

dim. poco a poco

Doppio più movimento ♩ = 160

H1

40

44

47

50

53

J1

55

58

61 **K1**

64

67

69

p sub. *sfz*

71

p *sfz* *p* *8va*

L1
73

pp

75

pp

77

pp

M1

79

p

82

dim.

86

pp *p*

90

8va

N1

94

8va

98

cresc.

8va

102

cresc. molto

105

sfz

sfz

sfz

108

sfz

sfz

O1

110

f

113

116

8va -----

119

122

8va -----

125

P1

128

sfz

131

133

8va

135

Q1

sfz

138

141

8va

143

And. sempre

145

147

149

151

R1
153

p sub.

155

157

160

162

164

S1

poco più f

(solo)

167

171

176

Leo. *

179

cresc. poco a poco

più *f*

più *f*

183

T1

f

più *f*

186

dim. poco a poco (allow outer lines to decay more than the ostinato)

190

p

193

pp

pp

197

pp

pp

pp

pp

U1

201

pp

pp

pp

pp

U1

205

pp

pp

pp

pp

U1

209

pp

pp

pp

pp

V1

213

pp

pp

pp

pp

V1

216

8^{va}-----

8^{va}-1

Leo.

Leo.

Leo.

Leo.

220

W1

poco

8^{vb}-----

Leo.

224

sim.

228

232

dim. poco a poco

240

X1

243

246

249

252

255

Measures 255-256: Two staves in G major (one sharp). The music features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more complex eighth-note pattern in the right hand, including triplets and accents.

257

Measures 257-259: Continuation of the eighth-note patterns. Measure 259 ends with a treble clef change, indicating the start of the next system.

260

Measures 260-261: The right hand begins with a treble clef. Measure 261 features a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand.

262

Measures 262-263: Measure 263 ends with a key signature change to A major (two sharps).

Y1

264

Measures 264-265: Measure 264 includes a triplet in the right hand. Measure 265 includes a triplet in the left hand and a triplet in the right hand. The system ends with an 8va (octave up) marking.

266

Measures 266-267: Measure 266 includes a triplet in the left hand. Measure 267 includes a triplet in the left hand. The system ends with a 4/4 time signature change.

268

270

272

274

277

279

281

Ped.

283

Ped.

285

Ped.

287

Ped. *mp* *cresc. molto*

289

ff