

MICHAEL KIERAN HARVEY COLLECTION

MICHAEL BERTRAM FANTASIE-SONATA

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Michael Kieran Harvey (piano)

Fantaisie-Sonata (1999)

1	First movement	20'41"
2	Second movement	13'43"
3	Third movement	14'02"
4	Six Bagatelles (2012) #2 Chant	4'46"
5	Violet 2	4'43"
6	Six Bagatelles (2012) #5 Uranus	3'44"

Seven Sarcasms for an Out-Of-Tune Piano (2010/2013)

7	I	2'17"
8	II	2'11"
9	III	2'01"
10	IV	1'41"
11	V	1'44"
12	VI	1'14"
13	VII	1'09"

Recorded at
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on 25, 26, 28 and 30
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Engineers:

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and Blake Stickland

Mastering:

Martin Wright

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FANTAISIE-SONATA (1999)

The sonata is in three movements. Each movement is built around a literary text and represents a journey. Through a Celtic phantasmagoria / from innocence to disillusion / and finally through darkness to light.

First movement:

“And then lost Niamh murmured, ‘Love we go
to the Island of Forgetfulness, and lo!
The Islands of Dancing and of Victories are empty of all power’
‘And which of these is the Island of Content?’
‘None know’ she said.”

The overall plan is an arch with a g sharp–g natural motif. Within this arch are a number of tone-rows and other episodic material. A secondary theme (employing the same motif) slowly builds to an avowedly romantic climax.

Second movement:

“We have an interval and then our place knows us no more“

A set of seven variations on the theme a-b-c-d, portraying a progression from ingenuousness to the dissolving of dreams. As befits a ‘life story’, some of the music is intentionally prosaic.

Third movement:

“... Man, in imitation of his Creator, ... wanted to reproduce the continuity of Cosmic Time ...”

A contrast between ‘darkness’ and ‘light’. The former is represented by an extended series of ‘synthetic’ scales which slowly transmogrify; the latter by ever mounting sequences of repeated notes and chords which ultimately recede into the infinite.

The last bars of this movement are marked ‘Like the beating of Angels’ wings’.

SIX BAGATELLES (2012) #2 Chant

A modest extemporisation on a long remembered folk song fragment. With just four notes this simple melody seems to sum up that particular Russian feeling for melancholy which I find very appealing.

VIOLET 2

The second of two 'Violet' pieces I have written, both of which depict the same journey, a very real and personal journey which commenced in some hope but finished in anguish. The harshness of the climax is an attempt to convey not anger but the powerlessness I felt at the time.

SIX BAGATELLES (2012) #5 Uranus

A glimpse of what it might perhaps be like in the cold, silent and forbidding world of the planet Uranus and its five moons. Brian Eno is the inspiration here.

SEVEN SARCASMS FOR AN OUT- OF-TUNE PIANO (2010/2013)

A suite of tongue-in-cheek retro pieces for (if needs be) an out-of-tune piano.

Along the way I find room for brief references to composers with whom I feel some affinity such as Satie, Messiaen, Webern and Hindemith. Also tucked away inside are glimpses of favourites of mine from the past such as 'The Ash Grove' and the German carol 'es ist ein ros entsprungen'.

The Sarcasms conclude with an out of left field two-note 'doorbell motif' in A major.

Liner notes: Michael Bertram

Michael Kieran Harvey was born in Sydney and studied piano with Alan Jenkins, Gordon Watson, and at the Liszt Academy, Budapest, under Sándor Falvai. His career has been notable for its diversity and wide repertoire. He has especially promoted the works of Australian and contemporary composers and recorded many CDs on various labels. Harvey's compositions have been performed in Europe, the UK, North and South America and Asia, in addition to major Australian festivals.

Harvey gave the 2012 Peggy Glanville-Hicks address on the state of contemporary Australian art music to acclaim and controversy. As a pianist Harvey's awards include the Grand Prix in the Ivo Pogorelich Piano Competition, USA (1993 – the world's richest at the time), the Debussy Medal, the Gilde Francaise Concours Paris (1986), the Australian Government's Centenary Medal (2002), and the 2009 APRA award for Distinguished Services to Australian Music.

Recent collaborations include the Chinese-Australian Typhoon ensemble with Brian Ritchie, the fluxus-influenced Slave Pianos and Indonesian punk outfit Punksila, James Hullick and JOLT, and Plexus piano trio. The Michael Kieran Harvey Scholarship was established in 2006 to encourage future directions in Australian keyboard art music, and to date has launched the international professional careers of six exceptional Australian musicians.

Michael Bertram was born in the United Kingdom in 1935. He won a choral scholarship to Lichfield Cathedral at the age of eight and sang full time in the cathedral choir until he was thirteen. At that age he had qualified to enter the Royal Academy of Music on a pianoforte scholarship.

Emigrating to Australia in 1952, Bertram continued his piano studies under Rex Hobcroft and Stephen Dornan in Perth and, later, Roy Shepherd in Melbourne. He was twice a State finalist in the ABC's Concerto and Vocal competition (as it was then called), performing with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. He also broadcast as a soloist for some years over the ABC in both Perth and Melbourne. In 1958 he obtained a Licentiate in Music (LMusA).

Turning in later years to composition (which he studied with Felix Werder and Peter Tahourdin), Bertram had the privilege of having Keith Humble give the first performance of his early *Sonatina* (1977). Other early compositions to receive performance include a *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* (1982) written for the Ormond College Choir and commissioned works for the Port Fairy Spring Festival: two song cycles for the soprano Margaret Haggart, *I will Write to You* (1992) and *The Green Castle* (1994) and a set of *Variations for Flute and Piano* (1991) premiered by Frederick Shade and Len Vorster.

His *Five Pieces for Piano* (1984) were included on a recent disc of contemporary Australian piano music issued on the Divine Art (UK) label whilst his overall piano output has been reviewed in Larry Sitsky's *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century* (Praeger, 2005).

Later works by this composer include a one movement *String Quartet* (2000); a *Mass* (2002) for choir, soloists, organ and cello, given its first performance by the Astra Choir in 2005; a chamber opera entitled *A King No More* (2007), [based on the Eugene Ionesco play *Le Roi se meurt*] and the piano pieces on this disc.

Michael Bertram is a Life Member of the Australian National Academy of Music.

