

NIGHT THOUGHTS

LEN VORSTER piano



NIGHT THOUGHTS

LEN VORSTER piano

1	ERNEST BLOCH	<i>In The Night – A Love Poem</i>	4:59
2	PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY	<i>Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor</i> <i>Op. 19 No. 4</i>	3:49
3	CLARA SCHUMANN	<i>Notturmo in F Major</i> <i>from Soirées Musicales Op. 6 No. 2</i>	5:18
4	GABRIEL FAURÉ	<i>Nocturne No. 11 in F-Sharp Minor</i> <i>Op. 104 No. 1</i>	4:43
5	JILLIAN ROSE TYMMS	<i>Silberstreif – Nocturne in E Major</i> <i>Op. 1 No. 1</i>	5:11
6	PAUL HINDEMITH	<i>Nachtstück</i> from “1922” <i>Suite for Piano</i> <i>Op. 26 No. 3</i>	5:51
7	HENRI DUPARC	<i>Aux Étoiles...</i>	6:03
8	CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES	<i>Notturmo – from 3 Fantasy Pieces</i> <i>Op. 6 No. 2</i>	7:44
9	PETER SCULTHORPE	<i>Nocturne – Seascape</i>	1:57
10	ERIK SATIE	<i>Nocturne No. 1</i>	2:57
11	FRANCIS POULENC	<i>Nocturne No. 4 Bal fantôme</i>	1:29
12	MICHAEL EASTON arr. LEN VORSTER	<i>Nocturne – 2nd movement</i> <i>from Sonata for Flute and Piano</i>	4:41
13	LEONID DESYATNIKOV	<i>Nocturne from Giselle’s Mania</i>	4:34
14	PETER KLATZOW	<i>Moments of Night No. 4</i>	3:27
15	AARON COPLAND	<i>Night Thoughts ‘Homage to Ives’</i>	8:07

Total playing time: 70:59

move

Night Thoughts evolved in 2020 during the extended Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns in Melbourne, Australia. This was a time where the curfew stillness of night provided the perfect space to listen to and be inspired by music that resonated with a range of thoughts triggered by the pandemic. Although there were many moments of frustration, fear and sadness, there was also an ongoing yearning for a silver lining. *Silberstreif* by Jillian Rose Tymms, written for me in 2020, encapsulates this uncharted experience. This CD was recorded in 2022 and celebrates the centenary of 2 works composed in 1922 (just after the Spanish flu pandemic) – Bloch's love poem *In the Night* and Hindemith's *Nachtstück* from "1922" *Suite for Piano*. This elegiac tribute concludes with the tolling bells in Copland's *Night Thoughts*.



ERNEST BLOCH (1880–1959)
***In the Night – A Love Poem* (1922)**

Ernest Bloch, Swiss-born American composer of Jewish descent, is best known for his cello works *Schelomo*, *Méditation Hébraïque* and *From Jewish Life*.

In the Night begins quietly in the dark key of A-flat minor, and the cello-like bass of the piano gradually rises to an impassioned theme which surges to and fro and finally recedes into the brooding atmosphere of the opening.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)
***Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor Op. 19 No. 4 from 6 Morceaux* (1873)**

The hauntingly beautiful *Nocturne* is the fourth of the *Six Pieces Op. 19* which Tchaikovsky completed in November 1873 in Moscow. It is dedicated to the pianist Monika Terminskaya. In 1888, Tchaikovsky transcribed the *Nocturne* for cello and orchestra.

CLARA SCHUMANN (1819–1896)
***Notturmo in F Major – from Soirées Musicales Op. 6 No. 2* (1836)**

Regarded as one of the most eminent pianists of the Romantic era, Clara Schumann exerted her influence over a 61-year concert career.

Soirées Musicales, Op. 6 was composed when Clara was only 17. It was published with a dedication to German pianist Henriette Voigt, and frequently performed by Robert Schumann.

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845–1924)
***Nocturne No. 11 in F-Sharp Minor Op. 104 No. 1* (1913) in memory of Noémi Lalo (1870–1911)**

Of the thirteen Nocturnes Fauré composed, the eleventh is one of the most moving musical tributes; it is an elegy in memory of Noémi Lalo, wife of Pierre Lalo, the son of the French composer Édouard Lalo.

The Gregorian modality underpinning the deeply emotional melody expresses the feeling of grief at the sudden death of Noémi Lalo.

JILLIAN ROSE TYMMS (b. 1993)
***Silberstreif – Nocturne in E Major Op. 1 No. 1* (2020) dedicated to Len Vorster**

Jillian studied Music Performance at Monash University where I was her piano lecturer.

Tymms writes: “The title *Silberstreif* translates loosely to ‘ray of light’ and/or ‘light at the end of the tunnel’. I chose this title because I wanted this piece to be evocative of the tumultuous feelings that Covid-19 thrust upon Victorians, and to represent how we all longed for ‘lockdown’ to end. I composed this work during Melbourne’s second ‘lockdown’. The chromaticism and unusual modulations resemble restlessness, hopelessness and a sense of searching for answers – where there were often none to be found.”

The work received its premiere performance by Len Vorster at the Barn Gallery, Montsalvat, Victoria, Australia on 5 June 2022.

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895–1963)
***Nachtstück “1922” Suite for Piano Op. 26 No. 3* (1922)**

Nachtstück is one of five movements from “1922” *Suite for Piano*. 1922 was a year in which Hindemith explored a variety of compositional styles. The intensity of the outer sections of *Nachtstück* is contrasted by an ethereal middle section.

HENRI DUPARC (1848–1933)
***Aux Étoiles...* (1911)**

Henri Duparc is best known for his melodies including *L'Invitation au Voyage* and *Chanson Triste*.

Composed originally in 1874, the meditative *Aux Étoiles* (To the stars) was the first part of a three-movement orchestral work. In 1911 Duparc made a piano reduction of *Aux Étoiles*; this is his only published work for solo piano. It is prefaced by the following words by the French priest Auguste Joseph Alphonse Gratry:

*La lumière sidérale des nuits!
Qui peut savoir les vertus secrètes
de cette lumière si humble, mais
venant de l'immensité ?...*

*The night-time starlight!
Who can know the secret powers
of this humble light, from the
immensity [of the heavens]...*

The work is dedicated to Francisco de Lacerda, a Portuguese conductor, composer and musicologist.

CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES
(1884–1920)
Notturmo from 3 Fantasy Pieces Op. 6
***No. 2* (1915)**

Griffes was born in Elmira, New York, and sadly passed away during the worldwide pandemic at the age of 35. He became the most famous American representative of musical Impressionism.

The *Notturmo* is inspired by one verse from Paul Verlaine's poem *L'heure exquise*:

*L'étang reflète, Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure...
Rêvons; c'est l'heure!*

*The pond reflects,
Mirror so deep,
A silhouette:
the black Willow's,
Where the wind weeps
Let's dream, 'tis the hour!*

PETER SCULTHORPE (1929–2014)
***Nocturne – Seascape* (1948)**

Peter Sculthorpe was born in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia. The *Nocturne* known as *Seascape* was written in 1948 at the age of 19 when Sculthorpe was a student at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

The work, starting in E-flat major and ending in C major, reflects a brief nocturnal impression of the gentle ebb and flow of the ocean.

ERIK SATIE (1866–1925)
***Nocturne No. 1* (1919)**

Erik Satie is chiefly known for his *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. Of the five *Nocturnes*, *Nocturne No. 1* was accompanied by a little story:

*The night is silent
Melancholy is all-pervasive
The will-o'-the-wisp disturbs
the peaceful landscape
What a bore! It's an old will-o'-the-wisp
Trust him to come
Let us resume our reverie, if you will*

However, Satie soon abandoned the text to allow the *Nocturne* to stand as 'pure' music. *Nocturne No. 1* was dedicated to the French pianist Marcelle Meyer, but was premiered by Jane Mortier at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on March 18, 1920.

FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963)
Nocturne No. 4 *Bal fantôme* (1934)

Poulenc's Nocturne '*Bal fantôme*', dedicated to the American writer Julien Green, carries a quotation from Green's French novel *Le Visionnaire*:

*Pas une note des valse ou des
scottisches ne se perdait dans toute
la maison, si bien que le malade
eut sa part de la fête et put rêver sur
son grabat aux bonnes années de sa
jeunesse.*

*Not a note of the waltzes or the
scottisches was lost in the whole
house, so that the sick man shared in
the festival and could dream on his
death-bed of the good years of his
youth.*

The *Nocturne*, a dreamy and melancholic waltz, was composed in Rome, March 1934. This performance is dedicated to my mother Sue Vardy who was born in March 1934.

MICHAEL EASTON (1954–2004)
Nocturne – 2nd movement from *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1993) (arr. Len Vorster in 2021)

Michael Easton studied composition with Sir Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music in London from where he received an ARAM in 2001. He moved to Australia in 1982 and established himself as a prolific composer, pianist, lecturer and music critic.

The *Flute Sonata* was written for Australian flautist Richard Thurlby. The *Nocturne*, arranged for solo piano by Len Vorster, is dedicated to Michael's memory.

LEONID DESYATNIKOV (b. 1955)
Nocturne from *Giselle's Mania* (1995)

Leonid Desyatnikov was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and first made his reputation with a number of film scores.

The 1995 film *Giselle's Mania* is based on the life of Olga Spessivtseva who was one of Russia's finest prima ballerinas. She became famous for her starring role in the ballet "*Giselle*". However, "*Giselle*" later caused her mental breakdown. Spessivtseva performed in Sydney in 1934 and already needed hospitalisation. Desyatnikov's *Nocturne* from *Giselle's Mania* captures the anguish and sadness of her portrayal.

PETER KLATZOW (1945–2021)
***Moments of Night No. 4* (1968, revised 1982)**

Peter Klatzow, a South African composer and pianist, was one of my lecturers at the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town.

Moments of Night is a suite of four miniatures, and the final piece quotes from *Nag Musiek* by South African composer Arnold van Wyk. Peter Klatzow sadly passed away in December 2021 from Covid-19.

AARON COPLAND (1900–1990)
***Night Thoughts 'Homage to Ives'* (1972)**

Night Thoughts was commissioned by the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Copland, who admired Charles Ives, added the subtitle and said of it, "By calling it that, I stopped a lot of my friends from telling me how Ivesian it sounds". Copland employs bell-like chord clusters and an extreme range of dynamics and textures.

Doing most of his composing late at night, Copland said: "Music is largely the product of the emotions, and I can't get emotional early in the day."

LEN VORSTER – PIANO

Len Vorster left South Africa for Australia in 1983 after completing postgraduate piano studies with the eminent American pianist Lamar Crowson at the University of Cape Town. He made his concerto debut with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra in Mozart's *Piano Concerto K456* in 1976.

As a concerto soloist he has recorded Michael Easton's *Concerto on Australian Themes* with the State Orchestra of Victoria for Naxos, and gave first performances of the work in Italy, Hungary, Germany, and with the Royal Academy Orchestra in London in 2001.

Len has given further concerts in America, Taiwan and Hong Kong; also at the Melbourne International Festival, Melbourne Spoleto Festival, Messiaen Festival, Sydney Festival, Barossa Festival, and Castlemaine State Festival.

In 2022 Naxos released his recording with British tenor Ian Partridge of the complete songs and solo piano music of Lord Berners. His Naxos recording of Holst's *The Planets* (two-piano version with Robert Chamberlain) has received a Gramophone Magazine award. With soprano Merlyn Quaife, he has been nominated for an Aria award for his Naxos recording of songs and solo piano music by Manuel de Falla. He has also released a solo CD *Summer Waves*. There are further CD releases by ABC Classics, Tall Poppies and Move Records.

Len Vorster is the founding Artistic Director of Port Fairy Spring Music Festival. He was for many years on the piano staff of the University of Melbourne, Monash University, and Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. For further information: lenvorster.net



Producer: Thomas Grubb

Engineer: Jack Montgomery-Parkes

Piano Tuner: Phil Sander

Design and Layout: Sonja Michelini

Tree drawing: Nicholas Chan

Len Vorster performed on a Steinway Grand model D

Recorded at Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Centre, Melbourne, Australia

on 27 April, 17 and 30 June 2022.

lenvorster.net

© 2023 Len Vorster

move move.com.au