

Michael Kieran Harvey Collection

PRTZI

Chamber works composed by Michael Kieran Harvey



PRTZL Chamber works composed by Michael Kieran Harvey

CD one

- 1** **Module Fugue**
for piano (2018) (6'31")
- 2** **Piano Sonata No. 4 "A. Gramsci" (2018)**
(23'32")
- 3** **PRTZL**
for two opposing keyboards (2018) (2'32")
- 4** **Astro Labe, Coeur de Lion**
for electric piano, synthesizer and offstage trumpet
(2018) (2'24")
- 5** **Divertimento**
for pianoforte, clarinet, viola and violoncello (1780) by
Anna Amalia (Duchess of Braunschweig): arranged for
solo piano by M.K.Harvey (2019) (4'37")

CD two

- 1** **Tubby the President**
for baritone horn and piano (2018) (6'57")
- 2** **Gestalt Climate**
for two pianos (2019) (7'37")
- 3** **Deus est Fabula (vale Jon Lord)**
trio for violin, clarinet and piano (2014) (17'18")
- 4** **Toccata DNA**
trio for flute, percussion and piano (1993)
(12'34")
- 5** **Aporia II**
for three keyboards and one percussionist (2019)
(8'59")

This release of original compositions by Harvey includes solo and ensemble works centred around the monumental fourth piano sonata, a homage to the courageous anti-fascist Antonio Gramsci. This anti-fascist theme percolates through all the works, which range in mood from nostalgically whimsical to furiously satirical.



Module Fugue for piano (2018)

This fugue began as a contemplation on three notes, E, F and B, which suggest an ambiguous harmonic world, and which have a proportional relationship with each other that can be balanced at the distance of a fourth or fifth, or wildly imbalanced depending on the root note. A series of independent melodic, rhythmic and harmonic modules are possible from the various numbers generated by these notes and intervals, which are further interpreted intuitively by exploring the chroma of the resulting combinations. The work is dedicated to the Australian composer and pedagogue Richard Vella.

Piano Sonata No. 4 "A. Gramsci" (2018)

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian philosopher and writer. The "Gramsci" sonata takes the seven individual letters of Gramsci's surname to construct a work inspired by his struggle against fascism. Classical music and in particular classical piano music has a manipulated image inextricably linked with upper class luxury, wealth and hegemony. This work seeks to provide a perspective on

a figure critical of these connections, who faced many physical and political obstacles in his resistance to Mussolini, who in turn thought him so dangerous he sentenced him to incarceration for 20 years. Although he was physically disabled, Gramsci's writings were powerfully influential. His credo was stoic: "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." The sonata is in a single movement and the prime number seven features significantly. Its mood is relentless and violent, with a deliberate harshness of tone. Moments of respite are brief, and the use of repetition is rhetorical. Extended techniques begin and end the work, symbolically overriding the intricate "hegemony" of the piano keys, and the role of the piano as an ancient form of music computer, in favour of direct human contact on the strings.

PRTZL

for two opposing keyboards
(2018)

live recording

This work is a whimsical physical exploration of Max Weber's notion of the "iron cage" of capitalism, where the keyboard player is tied up in knots trying to find a way out of the configuration of opposing keyboards. Needless to say, an exit is not found; the music simply stops abruptly.

PRTZL is dedicated to Craig Mackie, a refugee advocate, barrister and solicitor based in Hobart, who represented Astro Labe. This piece is the companion piece to *Astro Labe, Coeur de Lion* (2018), and was premiered at Mona, Hobart on 17/11/2018.

Astro Labe, Coeur de Lion

for electric piano, synthesizer and offstage trumpet (2018)

live recording

Offstage trumpet: Simon Reade

Keyboards: Michael Kieran Harvey

“I’m never going to get the chance to head butt that c*nt again - so I seized the moment.” With these immortal words, Astro Labe aka DJ Funknuckl recalled spontaneously headbutting someone infamous. The joy engendered by this long-overdue act reverberated around Australia and has now become legendary. This short piece seeks to capture some of the energy, larrikin humour and courage of Astro Labe, who accomplished what so many had only dreamed of doing.

Divertimento

for pianoforte, clarinet, viola and violoncello (1780)

by Anna Amalia (Duchess of Braunschweig):

arranged for solo piano by M.K. Harvey (2019)

live recording

The two movements comprising this short piano quartet are entitled *Adagio* and *Allegro*. Although typical of the courtly style of the time, indeed very reminiscent of Mozart, it displays a robust sense of syncopation and some unexpected twists and turns, revealing a composer of character with a keen sense of humour. The music translates well to piano solo, becoming a rollicking two-movement sonata to rival any by Haydn or Mozart. As with all of my compositions and performances, the concept of interpretation is explored to the utmost, and so the *Divertimento* is heard through a prism of static interference evoking travel through time: not only is the music realized on an instrument unknown to Duchess Amalia – and further hampered mechanically by preparation with Blu-Tack – but the truncation of instrumentation and relentless march of history have further distorted what remains of her original conception.



Tubby the President

for baritone horn and piano (2018)

live recording

Baritone Horn: Simon Reade

Piano: Michael Kieran Harvey

This work is originally for tuba and is dedicated to the Canadian tuba player Adrian Rumson, who also commissioned it in 2018. The work was premiered by Simon Reade on baritone horn and Michael Kieran Harvey, piano, at the Green Oration, Hobart Town Hall in July 2018. This version of *Tubby the President* is a live recording from Mona, Hobart, from November 2018. The improvised text punctuating the performance begins with

the line: “That’s nuff o’ you Kieran Harvey – time to make Mona Great again ...”

The work is based on the locrian mode. This seemed apt as a cursed scale for the subject matter. The mythological Locrians were punished for the actions of their elected leader Ajax, who raped Cassandra, and generally behaved like a narcissistic imbecile drunk on power. The character of the piece challenges the nature of the instrument, asking it to behave like a much more agile instrument, and to employ various effects to stand out from the harrying piano textures. It was suggested by Simon Reade that the almost obsolete and repulsive baritone horn was even more appropriate as a vehicle for this work, being an evolutionary dead end of the brass family.

There are seven short sections:

1. Come un imbecille (Like a cretin),
2. Ritmico, ma come una persona che non sa ballare (Rhythmically, but like a person who can’t dance),
3. Twittare a mezzanotte (Tweeting at midnight),
4. Rubato, osservato una giovane donna (Cadenza, freely, observing a young woman),
5. Pesante, inferocito (Heavily, furiously),
6. A tempo, i farmaci per i capelli stanno funzionando di nuovo (A tempo, the drugs for the hair kick in again),
7. Coda, la vendetta di Melania (Coda, Melania’s revenge).

Gestalt Climate for two pianos (2019)

live recording

Piano one: Michael Kieran Harvey
Piano two: Arabella Tenniswood-Harvey

Two independent works combine to suggest a menacing analogy of climate catastrophe. Piano one plays a freely-interrupted version of, in this case, my *Module Fugue*, while piano two responds with a scaffolding of the aggregate material from the same work, performed implacably against the piano one interruptions. While the individual parts are interdependent, when combined they create a new whole which is greater than the parts, a feature of the concept of gestalt “prägnanz”. In this way, the analogy is drawn between the interference of humans with natural climate processes, producing an outcome of awe-inspiring and unpredictable consequences.

Deus est Fabula (vale Jon Lord) trio for violin, clarinet and piano (2014)

live recording (2017)

Violin: Tara Murphy

Clarinet: Derrick Grice

Piano: Michael Kieran Harvey

Deus est fabula (“God is a myth”) was commissioned by the Plexus trio (Philip Arkinstall, clarinet, Monica Curro, violin and Stefan Cassomenos, piano) for the MSO/ Melbourne Recital Centre’s 2014 Metropolis series, based around the theme of mythology. Derived from the word “Deus” (D + Es) the trio is structured on the first seven prime numbers.

It is in four main sections:

1. Credulità con rubato (Credulously, with rubato)
2. Moderato espressivo
3. Ossessionato (Obsessed)
4. Impietosamente (Mercilessly)

The first record I ever bought was Machinehead by Deep Purple. I was eleven years old and Jon Lord’s keyboard playing in this group blew me away, opening my ears to an eclectic musical universe. In a strange way Deep Purple led me back to appreciating anew contemporary classical music. In 2003 I had the great honour of premiering Jon Lord’s one and only Piano Concerto “Boom of the Tingling Strings” in Luxembourg and Brisbane in his presence. He was a modest and warm human being, and a highly intelligent musician. He died in 2013 and I salute him. “Lord” is another word for “Deus”. This trio seeks to capture some of the energy and surprise of Lord’s keyboard playing.

Toccata DNA

trio for flute, percussion and piano (1993, revised 2017)

Flute: Peter Sheridan

Percussion: Peter Neville

Piano: Michael Kieran Harvey

Toccata DNA for solo piano was premiered by Michael Kieran Harvey on ABC FM at the NGV, Melbourne on 14th February 1993. This trio version of *Toccata DNA* was premiered on 5th June 1993 for the Astra Chamber Music Society at Studio A, Gore St, Fitzroy by Mardi McCusle (flute), Graeme Leak (percussion), and Michael Kieran Harvey. This recording features Peter Neville on percussion and Peter Sheridan on flute. The following notes are from the solo piano version, but apply equally well to the trio interpretation.

“The title refers to the chain of nucleic acids that pass on instructions for hereditary characteristics in animals. Slight changes in the double helix have profound consequences; similarly the pitch material in the *Toccata* metamorphoses in character, while retaining its basic interrelationships. The first section is inspired by the *Art of Fugue* as realized by the German organist Gerd Zacher, where he subjects Bach’s fugue to various modern compositional treatments. The second section is influenced by the Berlin-based group Einstürzende Neubauten (Collapsing Buildings), in particular their song ZNS (Central Nervous System 1985).”

Aporia II

for three keyboards and one percussionist

live recording

Piano one: Michael Kieran Harvey

Piano two: Arabella Tenniswood-Harvey

Piano three: Erik Griswold

Percussion: Vanessa Tomlinson

Aporia is a state of bewilderment, of not being sure of the path (poria) forward. It is the state Socrates induced in his students by his questions. I first grappled musically with this concept in my 3rd Piano Sonata (2016). In this chamber work, two “tribes” respond to an initial event as if in a state of *aporia*. A stopwatch is recommended for each player, with synchronised start. The specified tribe member initiates each 2 minute section according to pitches, articulation, timbre (flesh, wood, membrane/key, metal) and texture (lines, intervals, aggregates etc). The remaining tribe members “respond” as if in a state of *aporia* according to the sequence at the beginning of each two minute section, and thereafter to each other for the remainder of the section. This may include a spectrum of responses: everything from not responding, to frenetic activity. The Coda is a gentle intermeshing of the four parts, quietly responding to each other as if in resignation. The piece begins and ends with the pitch row C-A-G-E-D.

Module Fugue, Piano Sonata No. 4 recorded in June 2019; *Toccata DNA* recorded in December 2018 at Move Records studio by Vaughan McAlley and Martin Wright

PRTZL, Astro Labe, Tubby the President recorded live at MONA in Hobart on 17 November 2018 by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation / Toby Frost and Veronika Vincske

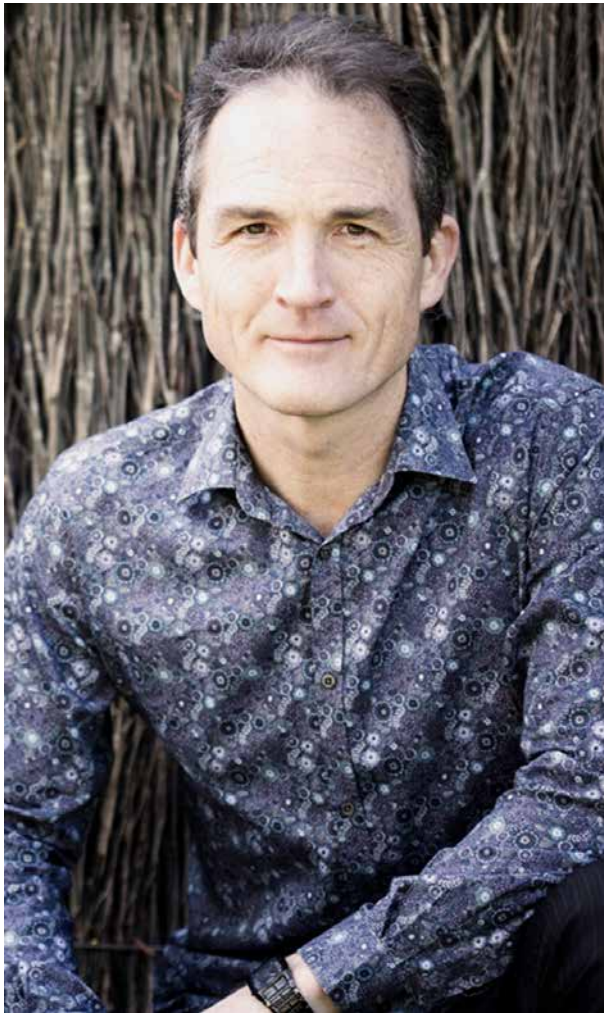
Divertimento, Gestalt Climate, Aporia II recorded live on 3 May 2019 at the Griffith Conservatorium by Clocked Out

Deus est Fabula recorded live in November 2017 at Stanley Burbury Theatre, Hobart by Paul Radford

Mastered at Move Records by Martin Wright

Photos by Graeme Lee

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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 over 40 solo CDs on various labels. He has premiered many new Australian and international concertos with all Australian symphony orchestras, and more than 300 solo Australian keyboard works, many of which are dedicated to him.

As well as his activities as a pianist, Harvey holds a PhD in composition. His compositions have been performed in Europe, the UK, North and South America and Asia, in addition to major Australian festivals. He concentrates on non-standard formats, often humorously questioning classical music and embracing diverse influences.

Dr Harvey gave the 2012 Peggy Glanville-Hicks address on the state of contemporary Australian artmusic to acclaim and controversy. Since this address he has been developing a different model of existence as a musician in the Australian context. This model considers the response of the musician to climate change and neoliberalism, and to the effects on the musician of ubiquitous social media.

As 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 Guilde Francaise Concours Paris 1986), the Australian Government's Centenary Medal (2002), the 2009 APRA award for Distinguished Services to Australian Music, and the 2014 AMC state award for best classical performance (Gyger's Inferno).

The Michael Kieran Harvey Scholarship was established in 2006 to encourage future directions in Australian keyboard art music. Dr Harvey is on the guest faculty of ANAM and is based in Tasmania.