

# *Mirabile in Prague*

ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS AND ORCHESTRATIONS OF PIANO WORKS OF **BRAHMS** AND **DEBUSSY** BY **JOHN ALLAN**



Members of the **PRAGUE RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Conducted by Dr David Kram



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ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS AND ORCHESTRATIONS OF  
PIANO WORKS OF **BRAHMS** AND **DEBUSSY** BY **JOHN ALLAN**

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1 **Aeolian Caprice** 5'14"  
(composed 1988, orchestrated 2003)

2 **Fantasia on Mahler's Purgatorio** 9'23"  
(composed 1991, orchestration revised 2005)

3 **Mirabile** 5'49"  
(composed 2000, orchestrated 2001,  
orchestration revised 2007)

4 **Mirabilia Antipodia** 5'35"  
(composed 2005)

5 **Marcia Mirabilis** 11'21"  
(composed 2004, revised 2010, 2014 and 2017)

6 **Debussy: *La Soirée dans Grenade*** 4'55"  
(orchestrated 2011)

7 **Brahms: *Piano Sonata No.1 in C Op. 1 - Scherzo*** 6'19"  
(orchestrated 2011-2013)

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I am an Australian composer resident in Melbourne and have been composing since 1987. Recently I have been very fortunate to have some of my orchestral music performed and recorded by members of the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. David Kram, and produced by Concerti Recording Inc. The content of this CD consists of 5 original compositions and orchestrations of piano pieces by Debussy (*La Soirée dans Grenade*) and Brahms (*Piano Sonata No. 1 in C Op.1-Scherzo*).

## ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

### 1 **Aeolian Caprice** (composed 1988, orchestrated 2003)

This work was originally composed for solo piano in 1988. I orchestrated this piece in 2003 because I thought it would probably be more effective in an orchestral format.

### 2 **Fantasia on Mahler's Purgatorio** (composed 1991, orchestration revised 2005)

The third movement of Mahler's incomplete 10<sup>th</sup> symphony is entitled *Purgatorio*. This movement is considerably shorter than the other four movements. It possesses a very ironic and elusive character and acts as a bridge between the first two and final two movements.

In 1991, I was studying this third movement at my keyboard and I wondered what would happen to the main thematic material if I inserted a quaver into the melodic line changing the time signature from 2/4 to 5/8. The insertion of the extra quaver and altering some other details changed the character of the melody considerably. This discovery inspired me to undertake the writing of a fantasia based on Mahler's *Purgatorio* movement.

One way of describing my fantasia is that I have "poured new wine into an old bottle".

### 3 **Mirabile** (composed 2000, orchestrated 2001, orchestration revised 2007)

This piece also started life as a work for solo piano and was inspired by the birth of my daughter Miranda in 1998 and is dedicated to her and my wife, Clare. *Mirabile* is a very lyrical piece and I decided to orchestrate the original piano version in 2001 because I started hearing orchestral colours when I heard the original piano version.

### 4 **Mirabilia Antipodia** (composed 2005)

The composition of *Mirabile* in 2000 has provided material for four other pieces that use variations of the *Mirabile* thematic material. The variation of the *Mirabile* theme that is used in this work is an inversion of the *Mirabile* theme with some small changes to the rhythm. This piece is in three sections that are based on the variations of the *Mirabile* material that are used in the first and third sections. A further variation, slower in tempo forms a contrasting lyrical middle section.



**5 Marcia Mirabilis**  
(composed 2004, revised 2010, 2014  
and 2017)

*Marcia Mirabilis* (Marvelous March) is the latest in a series of works that uses a variation of the *Mirabile* theme in the lyrical contrasting sections of a fast march in five sections.

**ORCHESTRATIONS**

**6 Debussy: *La Soirée dans Grenade***  
(orchestrated 2011)

*La Soirée dans Grenade* is the second of 3 pieces that make up Debussy's piano cycle *Estampes* and it is in the form of a slow habanera. It is a very evocative piece that has overtones of nocturnal middle - eastern music (appropriately so because the Moors were in Spain for over 800 years).

The reason I orchestrated *La Soirée dans Grenade* is that when I was listening to the piece in early 2011, I started hearing the various orchestral colours that the work opens with and this encouraged me to orchestrate the piece.

**7 Brahms: *Piano Sonata No.1 in C Op.1 - Scherzo***  
(orchestrated 2011-2013)

Brahms' *Piano Sonata No. 1 in C* is an early work written in 1853 (when Brahms was 20), and was one of two works (the second work was the *Piano Sonata No.2 in F# minor Op.2*) that Brahms performed for Robert and Clara Schumann when he visited them in 1853. The Schumanns were very impressed with these pieces.

The scherzo and trio of the sonata is in three parts, ABA with the scherzo material literally repeated after the slower and more lyrical trio B section.

When I was listening to the scherzo of this sonata in 2011, I started hearing the main theme in French horns and therefore decided to orchestrate the whole movement.



All tracks performed by members of the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. David Kram

Performances and recording produced by Concertori Recording Inc., Paul Kram president

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Recording sessions in Prague Radio Studio



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