



# For Piano

by Hugh Benham



Natalie Tsaldarakis & Panayotis Archontides

## TRACKLIST

# For Piano

1	<b>Landscape and Airscape: II. Airscape</b>	. . . . . 2.30	11	<b>Hampshire Morning</b>	. . . . . 2.47
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>	
2	<b>Sonatina for Piano: I.</b>	. . . . . 3.05	12	<b>Little Suite for Piano: I. Aspiring.</b>	. . . . . 1.38
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>	
3	<b>Sonatina for Piano: II.</b>	. . . . . 3.22	13	<b>Little Suite for Piano: II. Recollecting Jubilee Hall</b>	1.22
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>	
4	<b>Sonatina for Piano: III.</b>	. . . . . 3.25	14	<b>Little Suite for Piano: III. Musing</b>	. . . . . 2.25
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>	
5	<b>Barbara Allen (Arr. H. Benham for Piano 4 Hands)</b>	2.32	15	<b>Little Suite for Piano: IV. Circling and Rippling</b>	1.30
	<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis &amp; Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>	
6	<b>Landscape and Airscape: I. Landscape</b>	. . . . . 3.32	16	<b>Little Suite for Piano: V. Phoebe Falling Asleep</b>	0.56
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>			<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>	
7	<b>Sonata for Piano: I.</b>	. . . . . 5.22	17	<b>Little Suite for Piano: VI. Dancing a Quadrille</b>	1.26
	<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>			<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>	
8	<b>Sonata for Piano: II.</b>	. . . . . 6.00	18	<b>Mice on the Farm (Two Themes from Childhood)</b>	2.47
	<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>			<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>	
9	<b>Sonata for Piano: III.</b>	. . . . . 7.11	19	<b>Finale for Piano 4 Hands</b>	. . . . . 3.30
	<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis</i>			<i>Natalie Tsaldarakis &amp; Panayotis Archontides</i>	
10	<b>Night Piece</b>	. . . . . 4.25			
	<i>Panayotis Archontides</i>				
				<b>Total Running Time</b>	. . . . . 59.49

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### 1: Airscape (2020)

*Airscape* is fast and lively, with strong dynamic contrasts. At the start, upward movement in the left hand (a 1-3-4-5 pattern) is counteracted by a descending offbeat pattern in the right hand which, as it were, keeps the music grounded. Later continuous semiquaver movement gets us airborne, especially where rising stepwise motifs in the right hand accompany semiquavers in the left. The range is increasingly high towards the end, and even the final chord is light – with a chord of A major in the right hand over a D major chord in the left, every note above middle C.

### 2-4: Sonatina for Piano (2016)

The three movements of the Sonatina follow a conventional quick-slow-quick pattern. The first (in a version of sonata form) has the ‘expected’ modulation from G to D in a monothematic exposition, and there are other echoes of the classical period. The development, more varied tonally, intro-

duces near its end a new lyrical theme in the left hand. This theme reappears as a coda at a slightly more deliberate tempo, and prepares tonally for the E flat major of the second movement.

The main melody of this second movement (whose rhythm recalls the baroque sarabande) is heard four times in the opening section, an octave lower each time. It reappears twice, differently harmonised, after a contrasting middle passage.

The final movement, although mostly fast, has a few reflective moments (a lyrical left-hand melody may recall the closing melody of the first movement). Much melodic material is based on a rising four-note stepwise pattern (beginning with three triplet quavers). Sometimes this spans a tritone, sometimes an ‘ordinary’ major tetrachord – but both patterns are melded together by deliberate over-pedalling. The opening bars suggest C major with a Lydian F sharp; the F sharp later serves as foundation of an F sharp major pattern with Lydian B sharp (the same note on the piano as C). Eventually a kind of compromise is achieved with a closing chord of G major.

## 5: Barbara Allen (Piano 4 Hands) (2021)

It was a joy to dedicate two duets to Panayotis Archontides and Natalie Tsaldarakis, the wonderful Ivory Duo Piano Ensemble. *Barbara Allen* is a short set of variations on the well-known traditional melody. Although the initial C major brightness is occasionally compromised, the sad fates of Barbara and her lover need not occupy our thoughts.

## 6: Landscape (2020)

The principal tune of *Landscape*, reminiscent rhythmically of an 18th-century Pastoral, was suggested by a sunlit Hampshire landscape near Winchester. A section with more vivid contrasts (an inexact palindrome, with a chordal crescendo and diminuendo flanking the development of short melodic motifs in the left hand) precedes a modified repeat of the opening. A very brief coda ends with a moment of shade, even mist.

## 7-9: Sonata For Piano (2015)

Like the Sonatina, the Sonata has three movements in a quick-slow-quick pattern.

The opening *Poco allegretto* (in sonata form) is predominantly lyrical and placid but with a more assertive *risoluto* passage heard fairly near the beginning and extended later. The closing *Poco meno mosso* acts as a bridge to the second movement: the first movement ends, and the second begins, with a D major chord.

After a brief chordal introduction, we hear a serene unaccompanied melody, almost entirely in pure B flat major. But there is soon a shift to a distant tonal region – E/B major – with descending 4ths on the beat gradually replacing (yet seeming to echo) the varied descending intervals of the opening solo. A move back in the direction of flat keys is negated at the end of the opening section by an inverted B major chord with added 9th. The following section is largely a less sparsely textured repeat, a semitone higher, of the first. A central section features an increasingly urgent

dynamic build-up, followed by a more static *dolce* passage. The movement ends with music based on the opening section, but again a semitone higher.

The third movement is more cheerful. Like the first, it is in sonata form, but it has distinct first and second subjects, which are recapitulated in reverse order. Near the end the music speeds up until almost out of control, before ending with a restatement of the four-note motif from the beginning of the first movement. This, however, is blurred by over-pedalling, until a quiet and clear D major chord finally emerges.

The dedicatee, Geoffrey Lanham, is a remarkable artist who has exhibited at the Royal Academy and elsewhere in London, and has sold pictures in various countries. Originally a painter of landscapes, he has latterly produced miniature abstracts.

## 10: Night Piece (2020)

A rather bleak ‘open’ E chord without major or minor 3rd heads a short and slow introduction. This leads to a

heavily-pedalled rhythmic alternation between the hands (*Andante*) that is initially calm and peaceful, but becomes increasingly tense. Fragments of melody gradually emerge, before a central *Adagio cantabile* section. This fades into a *lontano* (‘far-off’) passage in which bell-like notes suggest the progress of time. After a return of the *Andante*, slow chords complete the piece. The third-less chord of E from the opening is twice ‘adulterated’ with a third-less A flat chord (recalling the flat tonalities of the *Adagio cantabile*); we hear, as a result, an E major chord with added major 7th. Finally, an added quiet C ‘completes’ the A flat chord, at the same time leaving the final chord somewhat dark and mysterious...

## 11: Hampshire Morning (2018)

A simple piece designed to be played to a friend and long-standing supporter of my music – a born-and-bred Hampshireman, who used to come to see me from time to time, always in the morning. The piece begins in G with parallel



six-three chords over a tonic-dominant ostinato. The right-hand part is then re-heard in a Dorian E minor, and it is eventually a chord of E (major) that concludes the piece.

### 12-17: Little Suite for Piano (2021)

The titles of all six pieces feature the suffix 'ing'.

*Aspiring* features ascending melodic shapes which go beyond or revert to the note E (the third degree in the key of a C major with some prominent Lydian F sharps). The long bass descent that accompanies the return of the opening motifs (after the dissonant *poco rit.*) pulls against the upward striving of the melody. We may aspire, but sometimes there are forces that hold us back.

*Recollecting: Jubilee Hall*, with folk dance rhythms, is dedicated to my wife Fiona. We met through country dancing, some memorable events being held at a local Jubilee Hall. There is a hint of the Christmas melody 'Jingle Bells' in the second section.

*Musing* suggests day dreaming –

perhaps by a riverside – that eventually fades off into sleep. Melodically it is based on a cipher or cryptogram. The opening motif spells the name of a young lady who, in Victorian times, started her adventures by a river. In A major we have to read the F# as L(ah) in solfa terms; the B is I if G#, A, B can be encoded as G, H, I.

*Circling and Rippling* may further evoke watery images. But the 'circles' are also freely-spun 'circles of fifths' – as in the right hand's opening progression through triads of C, G, D, A, E and B.

*Phoebe Falling Asleep* takes us away from riversides and water: cats are not known to be keen on either! Phoebe, normally a very quiet cat, belongs to the dedicatees of this piece (my daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren). Phoebe announces herself at the opening, and twice later on, between progressively quieter and increasingly fragmented statements of a descending and ascending pentatonic shape, which might also suggest the self-satisfied, disappearing smile of a celebrated Victorian cat.

*Dancing a Quadrille* is dedicated to two fictitious and anagrammatic couples (Dawn, Eric, Linda, Noel).

### 18: Mice on the Farm (2021)

A very different version of this piece was created in 2014 as a means of demonstrating a large church organ to young children, with the aim of entertaining and enthusing them. The present version, in substance as well as texture, is a gift to my two grandchildren (four and three at the time of composition). The first theme, 'Old McDonald Had a Farm' has as its second phrase the stepwise descent B-B-A-A-G-G. This suggested the second theme, 'Three Blind Mice' (B-A-G, etc.). There are just a few attempts in the piece to imitate the sounds of farm animals or mice: those who wish to do so are free to supply more vocally!

### 19: Finale for Piano 4 Hands (2021)

The final track is neither a scherzo nor a waltz, but has elements of both. The first section (predominantly loud and heavy in texture) features a descending four-note scale pattern (first heard as C-B-A-G) and usually preceded by three ascending stepwise grace notes. The

metre is three-four, with plenty of 1-2, 1-2, 1-2 hemiolas, especially in the *fortissimo* endings to sub-sections. Much of the lighter middle section, with something of a waltz feel in the Secondo part, has plenty of quaver runs in the Primo. The final section recalls the first, but also incorporates a brief chordal section based on a rising triadic figure from the middle section; over low bass octaves all three upper parts sound simultaneously in three different octaves.

Hugh Benham





## BIOGRAPHIES

**Hugh Benham** is a graduate of the University of Southampton (BA, PhD) and a writer of academic and educational books and articles (chiefly on Tudor church music, and on subjects relating to A-level Music, including harmony and counterpoint). He is director of music at St Boniface CofE Church in Chandler's Ford,

Hampshire, Chairman of the Academic Board of The Guild of Church Musicians and a member of Council, and has served as Chair of the Winchester Area of the RSCM. The compositions on this disc are published by UMP (United Music Publishing Limited).

[www.hughbenham.co.uk](http://www.hughbenham.co.uk)



**Panayotis Archontides** is a Greek-Australian concert pianist. He debuted at the Sydney Opera House at the age of 16. Upon his graduation from Trinity Laban, he was awarded the coveted Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians (2007).

He has worked with many well-known musicians including James Judd, Nicholas Collon, Crispian Steele-Perkins, Linda Hirst, George Hadjinikos, and often performs solo and as member of the Ivory Duo Piano Ensemble in the UK and abroad. In 2004 Panayotis performed for the induction of the Olympic flame ceremony at the Athens Olympics. Broadcasts include BBC Radio 3, the National Greek Radio (ERA-3), WQXR (NY, US).

**Natalie Tsaldarakis** is a Greek concert pianist. At the conclusion of her graduate studies in the US and in recognition of excellence in performance Natalie was elected member of the American National Music Honor Society Pi Kappa Lambda, and upon her return to Greece she initially became assistant and mentee of new music specialist, concert pianist Danae Kara (1994-1996). Further studies saw her work with Elena Riu and Martino Tirimo (Trinity Laban Conservatoire).

Natalie's performing career includes solo and chamber music concerts in Greece, US, Finland, Serbia, and the UK, with broadcasts on the National Greek Radio (ERA-1, ERA-3), WQXR, BBC Radio 3 and others.

[www.ivoryduopiano.com](http://www.ivoryduopiano.com)

## CREDITS

# For Piano

### Composer

Hugh Benham

### Pianists

Natalie Tsaldarakis & Panayotis Archontides

**Piano** Steinway & Sons “Model D” Pianoforte no. 610591 (made in January 2019)

Recorded at **Master Chord Studios**, London, 5 September 2020, 6 & 7 May 2021

**Engineer** Ronan Phelan

**Photography & Artwork** Mike Cooter

**Engineer Assist** Michele Catri

**Producer** George Richford

**Mixing & Mastering** Adaq Khan

**Executive Producer** Adrian Green



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