

CONVIVIVUM
RECORDS



NOSTALGICA

KORROS ENSEMBLE

TRACKLIST

1	Jacqueline's Theme (Nick Ellis).	06:38
Trio for Flute, Clarinet and Harp (Elizabeth Poston)		
2	i. Piacevole	03:15
3	ii. Molto moderato	05:02
4	iii. Dolce delicato	02:05
5	iv. Vivace scherzando	03:04
Trio (Howard Blake)		
6	i. Allegro	02:59
7	ii. Andante	03:09
8	iii. Allegro	02:30
9	Vocalise (Cheryl Frances-Hoad)	05:34
10	Nuntii (Catrin Finch)	04:30
Three Pieces for Flute and Harp (Elizabeth Poston)		
11	i. Ricordanza	02:17
12	ii. Bacarolle	01:37
13	iii. Calypso	01:53
14	Forma for Harp (Elizabeth Poston)	05:19
15	Pennillion (Howard Blake).	08:47
Total running time:		58:42

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PROGRAMME NOTE

Nick Ellis (1980-)

Jacqueline's Theme

Nick is a clarinettist, saxophonist, flautist and composer/arranger having studied at the Royal Academy of Music and the Sibelius Academy of Music. He has performed with groups including Britten Sinfonia, The Nash Ensemble, Catrin Finch Ensemble, CHROMA and the Wihan Quartet. A winner of the Royal Overseas League Chamber Music Competition, Nick has performed across the world from London's Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Albert Hall to Glastonbury Festival and with solo artists Sir Elton John, Sir Karl Jenkins and Andrea Bocelli. Nick is also a founding member of the Symphony Orchestra of India.

As a composer/arranger, Nick has a special affinity with writing for the harp and has had his arrangements recorded by Catrin Finch, Bryn Terfel and the Pavao Quartet. He has honed his skill in writing for the instrument through

his ongoing work with Catrin, and his own group the Korros Ensemble (flute, clarinet, harp).

Jacqueline's Theme was written for the Korros Ensemble in 2020. Dedicated to the composer's mother-in-law on her 80th birthday, the work takes inspiration from the era she was from, harking back to the world of cinematic music in Hollywood's golden age. The outer sections of the work are characterised by lush textures and romantic melodies. The central theme and emotional heart of the work pares back to a solo harp figure, followed by a gentle and elegant clarinet melody, reflecting the warm personality of the dedicatee. The music in turn unfolds into variations before the original romance returns.

Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987)

Trio – Three Pieces - Forma

British composer, writer, and musicologist; Elizabeth Poston was a multi-talented musician with

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a distinguished career in radio broadcasting.

Well known as a composer of hymn tunes, carols, and pieces for radio and television, Elizabeth Poston's involvement in music was multifaceted. Pursuing her musical talent at the Royal Academy of Music, she graduated in 1925 with a prize for her violin sonata, which was subsequently broadcast by the BBC, with seven published songs already to her name.

Among the most significant of Elizabeth's musical achievements are her compositions for radio and television, of which there are over 40 for radio alone; her work saw her collaborate with prominent writers such as C.S. Lewis and Dylan Thomas. In 1914, she moved with her mother, Clementine Poston, to nearby Rooks Nest House, where E.M. Forster had lived as a child. Poston and Forster subsequently became good friends.

In addition to her success as a composer, Poston had a highly

accomplished career as an academic; having written for the Arts Council of Great Britain, in 1947 she also created a five-part lecture series for the BBC on composer Peter Warlock, and subsequently presided over the Society of Women Musicians from 1955 to 1961.

What remains particularly interesting about Poston's life is her secretive work as a war agent; during World War II she worked for the BBC using gramophone records to send coded messages to allies in Europe. Interestingly, Poston never revealed the exact nature of this work and it remains secret to this day. Elizabeth Poston, although best-known for her small-scale vocal compositions – the carol, *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*, and many song books – also produced much incidental music for BBC dramatic productions and chamber music for various instruments, including three works for the harp.

The *Three Pieces for Flute and Harp/Piano*, in three movements (*Ricordanza*, *Bacarolle* and *Calypso*) were composed in

1953 and broadcast the following year.

Her *Trio for Flute, Clarinet/Viola and Harp/Piano*, composed in response to the California Harpist Association's request, was first performed at the Hampton Music Club in 1958, dedicated to A. W. Frieze-Green. It became an immediate success, being chosen to represent Britain at the Brussels World Fair and, the following year, having its London premiere and first broadcast with Maria Korchinska (harp), Thea King (clarinet) and Wilfred Smith (flute). Soon it was taken up by other groups and music academies at home and abroad.

Two of its four movements are unusual in being named in her correspondence but not on the published score. She confided that the second, *Pastorale nostalgica*, “was the expression of regret for a green countryside given over to pylons and concrete”, referring to the establishment of Stevenage New Town which had destroyed her birthplace. Of the last

movement, she said the “magic Fileuse spins finer than gossamer”.

Maria Korchinska chose the *Trio* as an outstanding work when asked as a representative of Britain at an International Harpists Contest and in 1959 Elizabeth wrote *Forma*, dedicated to her.

Howard Blake (1938-)

Trio - Pennillion

Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians states that “Howard Blake has achieved fame as pianist, conductor and composer.” He grew up in Brighton, at 18 winning a scholarship to The Royal Academy of Music where he studied piano with Harold Craxton and composition with Howard Ferguson. In the early part of an intensely active career he wrote numerous film scores, including ‘The Duellists’ with Ridley Scott, which gained the Special Jury Award at the Cannes Festival, ‘A Month in the Country’ which gained him the British Film Institute Anthony Asquith

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Award for musical excellence, and ‘The Snowman’, nominated for an Oscar after its first screening. His famous song *Walking in the Air* was the chart success that launched Aled Jones in 1985, whilst the concert version for narrator and orchestra is performed world-wide and the full-length ballet for Sadler’s Wells runs for a season every year in London.

Concert works include the *Piano Concerto* commissioned for Princess Diana, the *Violin Concerto* commissioned for the City of Leeds; the *Clarinet Concerto* commissioned by Thea King and the English Chamber Orchestra and large-scale choral/orchestral works such as *Benedictus* and *The Passion of Mary* both recorded with the RPO. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 1988 and received the OBE for services to music from Her Majesty The Queen in 1994.

The *Trio for flute, clarinet and harp* (opus 600) was originally composed as music for an experimental 16mm film

called ‘A Few Days’ (opus 6), a poignant little love story which Blake produced, directed and had shown at the National Film Theatre in 1962, not long after finishing his studies at The Royal Academy of Music where he studied composition and piano. Soon after this showing he was approached by music publishers Chappell and Co. for whom he arranged it into the three-movement concert work as it now exists and as it is here recorded. It was published by Chappells in 1964, republished by Highbridge Music Ltd. in 2005.

The ancient Welsh word ‘Pennillion’ translates as a set of instrumental variations on a song. The work in fact originated as a piece for violin and harp (1975, opus 202) and was commissioned by violinist Jack Rothstein and harpist Annabel Etkind. They wanted something fairly virtuosic to feature at a large Jewish celebration in a hall just off Grosvenor Square. It didn’t exactly fit the bill and thereafter went through various

transmogrifications until finally achieving its splendid trio format of flute, clarinet and harp in June 2009 (opus 600) as here recorded. The work was reported in Der Tagesspiegel as “a concisely-constructed work with an astonishingly-inspired melody”.

Cheryl Frances-Hoad (1980-) *Vocalise*

“Frances-Hoad drenched each phrase in dramatic expression of the most ravishing intensity.” - Matthew Wright, The Arts Desk.

Admired for her originality, fluency and professionalism, Cheryl Frances-Hoad has been composing to commission since she was fifteen. Classical tradition (she trained as a cellist and pianist at the Menuhin School before going on to Cambridge and King’s College, London) along with diverse contemporary inspirations including literature, painting and dance, have contributed to a creative presence

provocatively her own.

“Intricate in argument, sometimes impassioned, sometimes mercurial, always compelling in its authority” (Robin Holloway, The Spectator), her output – widely premiered, broadcast and commercially recorded, reaching audiences from the Proms to outreach workshops – addresses all genres from opera, ballet and concerto to song, chamber and solo music.

Vocalise was written when Cheryl was 13, especially for the Purcell Composition Competition: it went on to win the prize for composers under 25 years old. The work, originally scored for soprano, flute and harp was written very intuitively, although with much help from an orchestration book since it was the first time she had written for the harp. The majority of the piece, reworked for the Korros Ensemble, comprises a melody in either or both of the melody instruments, with an undulating accompaniment in the harp.

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Catrin Finch (1980-)

Nuntii

Internationally renowned harpist and composer Catrin Finch is one of the most accomplished harpists of her generation. A childhood prodigy, Catrin studied under Elinor Bennett achieving the highest mark in the UK for her Grade 8 ABRSM exam at the age of nine. She studied at The Purcell School and the Royal Academy of Music with Skaila Kanga, graduating with the Queen's Commendation for Excellence in 2002. Catrin is the former Royal Harpist to HRH the Prince of Wales. Holding the appointment from 2000-2004, she had the honour of reviving this ancient tradition last held in 1873 during Queen Victoria's rein.

Catrin has performed extensively throughout the USA, South America, the Middle East, Asia, Australia and Europe, both as a soloist, and appearing with many of the world's top orchestras, and has recorded for many of the major

international recording companies, including Universal Records, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI and Sony Classical, both solo and with notable artists such as Bryn Terfel, Sir James Galway and Julian Lloyd-Webber.

A versatile, fearless and ground-breaking artist, Catrin continues to explore and push the boundaries of her art with award-winning international collaborations with artists such as kora maestros Seckou Keita (Senegal) and Toumani Diabaté (Mali) and Colombian joropo cowboy virtuosos Cimarron.

Nuntii (the Latin word for Messengers or Messages) started its life as part of a show I wrote for the 2016 National Eisteddfod of Wales in Abergavenny called Serenestial. It was a show based on our Solar System, and so included movements named after each of the planets. This work Nuntii was born out of the movement *Neptune* (who Gustav Holst famously called The Winged Messenger); hence the reference to its name.

KORROS ENSEMBLE

Comprising the beautiful and unusual combination of Flute, Clarinet and Harp, the Korros Ensemble has been performing together since its formation in 2001 during the musicians' studies at the Royal Academy of Music.

The Korros Ensemble performs with dynamism and flair, and the sound world they produce is lush and mesmerising. The group has performed at The Tate Modern, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Birr Castle, Killaloe Cathedral and the Örbyhus and Gävleborg Festivals, Sweden. They have made appearances at many festivals across the UK, including Deal, Canterbury and Sounds New. They have collaborated with Ballet Rambert, and Pineapple Dance Studios and received new works written for them by some of the finest British living composers including Catrin Finch, Patrick Nunn, Andrew Morgan and Olivier Award nominee, Philip Venables.

With a strong vision of adding something new and original to the chamber music world, Korros also



Nick Ellis

KORROS ENSEMBLE

cleverly reworks and reimagines its favourite repertoire – creating an exciting and fresh way of listening to beloved orchestral, chamber and solo works.

Collectively, Camilla, Nick and Eliza are highly experienced and in demand artists, having individually performed with all major UK orchestras, including

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Royal Opera House (on stage soloist), BBC Concert Orchestra and London Sinfonietta. They have also toured with Sir Elton John, Peter Gabriel, Andrea Bocelli, Sir Karl Jenkins, Bryn Terfel, and recorded with Sir Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder and

Camilla Pay



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Katherine Jenkins, and on numerous Hollywood blockbuster soundtracks for Hans Zimmer, Danny Elfman and Ennio Morricone. No strangers to Theatreland, The Korros musicians have appeared at the RSC, National Theatre, on all major West End Shows, and Eliza currently holds the flute chair for The Lion King at London's Lyceum Theatre.

The Korros Ensemble's 2020 'lockdown' research into finding repertoire for its unusual combination of instruments took the musicians on a fascinating musical odyssey, with the discovery of harp chamber music by the overlooked composer, Elizabeth Poston.

The group was very excited to discover that Poston composed a *Trio for flute, clarinet (or viola) and harp (or piano)*, probably the first ever of its kind. They also uncovered Poston's solo harp work, *Forma*, dedicated to Maria Korchinska and *Three Pieces for flute and harp* – previously thought lost – both included on this premiere recording.

Eliza Marshall



C R E D I T S

NOSTALGICA

KORROS ENSEMBLE

Flute **Eliza Marshall** Clarinet **Nick Ellis** Harp **Camilla Pay**

Engineer **Adaq Khan**

Artwork **Mike Cooter**

Photography **Sophie Dunne**

Producer **George Richford**

Executive Producer **Adrian Green**

Recorded at Beaulieu Abbey, UK, July & November 2021

Contributions to the programme note by Dr. John Alabaster, Ates Orga, Howard Blake, Nick Ellis & Catrin Finch.



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