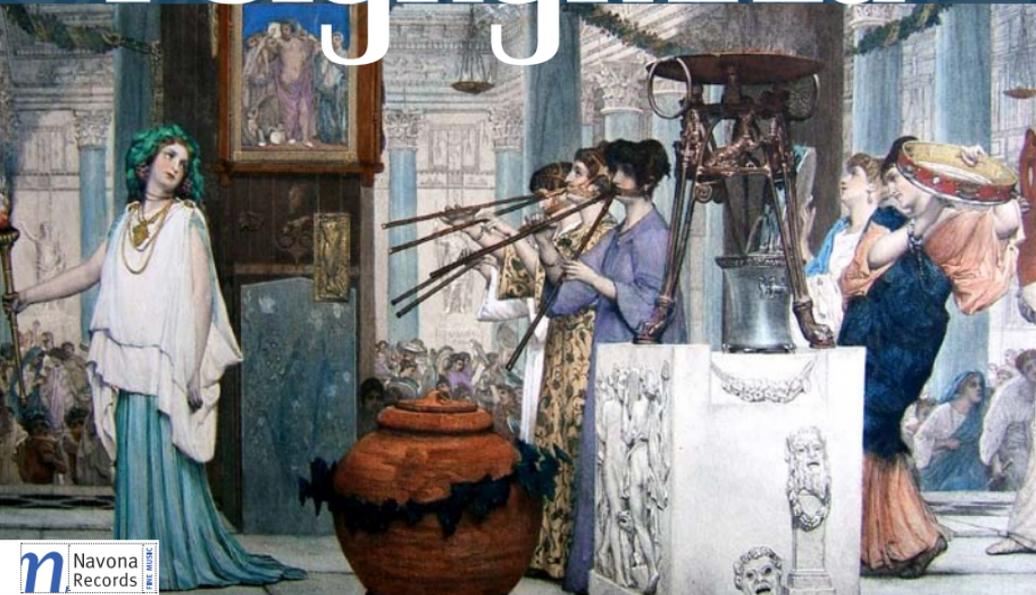


STRING, ORCHESTRAL AND CHORAL WORKS OF JONATHAN LITTLE

Polyhymnia



n Navona
Records

THE HISTORY

CZECH, KIEV AND MORAVIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRAS

The release of this disc has been made possible through the support of an inaugural Musicians Benevolent Fund *Professional Development Award*. Grateful thanks are therefore expressed to the UK music business's own charity, the Musicians Benevolent Fund (celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2011), and to their own supporters for this particular project, the Willis and Grace Grant Charitable Trust. Further thanks are also due to ASCAP (USA) for their support through the ASCAPPlus Awards scheme, and to the University of Chichester for their support through both Arts Research Fund and Research Incentive Fund Awards – all helping to make available to the wider public this collection of works by British-Australian composer, Jonathan Little (b.1965).

It was in 2008 that the first complete album of Jonathan Little's compositions was released in the UK on Dilute Recordings. Its varied repertoire of choral, string, percussion and orchestral music was greeted with universal critical acclaim, in America becoming a *Fanfare* magazine Critics' Choice for the year (joining its prestigious "Want List 2008"). From its very first review in Cambridge University Press's contemporary music journal, *Tempo*, the title orchestral work was introduced as a "ground-breaking tour de force", while *Fanfare's* end-of-year "Want List" citation pronounced the composer to be a "a new, original, and quite brilliant classical voice." Since that time critics have been striving to characterize Little's music; it was

ambiguously termed by one commentator, "completely novel, yet hauntingly familiar." The first of Little's orchestral works to be recorded was *Terpsichore*, Op. 7, which forms just one movement of an ambitious series of symphonic portraits of all the *Nine Muses*, each aimed at capturing a different color and atmosphere suggestive of the essential spirit of every one of the fabled sister goddesses of Ancient Greek mythology.

According to Hesiod, the Muses were born at the foot of Mount Olympus, and were living embodiments of various branches of creative endeavour, responsible for bestowing or bequeathing human inspiration, learning, the arts and culture. According to this ancient allegory, Zeus (Almighty Creator, and powerful Father of the Gods) lay with Mnemosyne (Memory, the encapsulator of all past events), and it was She who gave birth to the Nine Muses – through this mystical union of the spirit of universal power with that of universal memory. By such means (and by implication) we mortals are able to create anew ourselves – albeit as a pale reflection of perfect heavenly forms – constantly striving to fashion ideal works from synthesized elements recalled from intense and symbolic past experiences. In spirit then, the Artist may be likened to the medieval alchemist – forever producing new wine from old bottles through the peculiar agency of these extraordinarily gifted and bountiful goddesses.

This current disc brings together two important works from the composer's projected *Nine Muses* series, and presents them in the order in which they are ideally played: firstly, the title track, *Polyhymnia* ("She of Many Hymns" – or *Muse of Sacred Poetry*), and then *Terpsichore* ("The Whirler" – or *Muse of Dance*). *Polyhymnia* is, in fact, a string version of a slightly earlier choral work, *Recordare Domine*, the score of which is rounded with a postscript – another musing on the power of Mnemosyne:

*"And in the end we shall all be memories,
one to another."
–So speaks the voice of Silence.*

Here the program is completed by the important multi-part choral work: *Kyrie*, op.5 – for SATB double choir and soloists – a short polychoral composition of great structural clarity; and there is also a poignant, atmospheric work for string quintet in a similar vein, entitled *Sacred Prelude*. The brief but powerful Fanfare that marks the mid-point of the program also serves to effect the transition from the first (larger-scale) string and orchestral works, to the chamber and choral compositions.

All music published and available at: Wirripang –

www.AustralianComposers.com.au

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For clearance see: www.ascap.com

Polyhymnia: "She of Many Hymns" or Muse of Sacred Poetry, Op. 10

(from *The Nine Muses*, No. 6 of 9)

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Strings of the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra (and Principal Soloists),

directed by Petr Vronský

Recorded in the Reduta Hall, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

(ASCAP Title Code: 881321624; Conductor's score and Hire parts published by Wirripang)

In *Polyhymnia* – a searing, many-layered "Lamentation for String Orchestra" (with soloists) – the *melos* or "melodic thread" often weaves between all parts, and is slow-moving throughout. Initially, it emerges like a cry from the deep. Tension is built, maintained, and released over long periods. Leaving aside the (rather folk-like – or Celtic sounding) middle interlude, the whole work is effectively a series of extended "waves" – at times dissipating, before swelling and cascading forth again, towards a final powerful and sustained climax. Harmonically, the work makes great play of clashing semitones, and gradually builds up clusters of notes into evolving, ever-changing, and ultimately resolving chord patterns. The string orchestra is employed *multi-divisi* throughout: there are four individual violin lines (besides an extra four solo parts), ditto in the violas, eight individual cello lines, and two bass lines. This tends to create a thick, rich and complex texture, yet there are also some exceptionally lucid passages – for although *Polyhymnia* is also the *Muse of Eloquence*, She is more often characterised as a serious,

pensive and meditative holy woman (whose main role is to sing praises to the gods). According to some ancient sources, Polyhymnia (sometimes pronounced or abbreviated to “Polymnia”) is believed to have invented the lyre, and is also said to be an encourager of the dance.



Petr Vronský and the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra

Terpsichore: “The Whirler” or Muse of Dance, Op. 7
(from *The Nine Muses*, No. 7 of 9)

Kiev Philharmonic Orchestra (and Principal Soloists),
directed by **Robert Ian Winstin**

Recorded in the Philharmonic Hall of Ukraine, Kiev.

(ASCAP Title Code: 502825438; Conductor’s score, Study score, and Hire parts published by Wirripang)

Being another in a series of intense and ethereal or (as here) kaleidoscopically vibrant and sparkling symphonic portraits of the nine muses, *Terpsichore* is itself divided into nine dance scenes:

1. *The precocious Muse begins her wild, whirling dance*
2. *Entrancing Terpsichore dazzles all those who behold her*
3. *A most majestic and dramatic solo performer*
4. *The beguiling Muse slows and strikes a pose*
5. *Her frenzied dance resumes*
6. *The Muse displays her hypnotic, swaying gracefulness*
7. *She pauses one last time*
8. *Her recollection of past glories, and homage to the ancient circular dances*
9. *The capricious Terpsichore’s Finale!*

Fanfare, Op. 3a

Brass and Percussion players of the Kiev Philharmonic Orchestra,

directed by **Robert Ian Winstin**

Recorded in the National Radio Studios of Ukraine, Kiev.

(ASCAP Title Code: 360982396; Performing score published by Wirripang)

This brief fanfare is scored for 4 trumpets, 4 horns, 3 trombones + tuba, 2 sets of timpani, plus percussion – comprising bass drum, snare drum, suspended cymbals and 2 tam-tams. The 2 sets of timpani are ideally to be positioned at either side of the stage, with the rest of the brass stretching across the front of the stage, in an arc (with percussion behind). Finally, the 2 sets of 2 trumpeters are positioned on each side of the auditorium balcony (opposite and facing the stage) – for maximum spatial effect.

Sacred Prelude, Op. 1

String Soloists of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra,

directed by **Robert Ian Winstin**

Recorded at the Czech Radio Studios (Studio 1), Prague, Czech Republic.

(ASCAP Title Code: 492881219; Score and parts published by Wirripang)

A natural rubato is felt throughout this haunting, single-movement, chamber work for string quintet. Its much-darker-than-usual instrumentation sees two violas and two cellos set against only one violin (which sometimes, like a single voice, soars high above the texture). The sound is reminiscent of that of ancient church music. Written in the *stile antico*, it opens with a “Plainsong” then comes the main central “Anthem.” There is a brief reprise of the opening theme, before the work closes with a more emphatic “Fantasia” (where the sense of rubato becomes almost improvisatory). The work, as a whole, may be said to comprise a poignant “prayer” for strings.

Kyrie, Op. 5
(from *Missa Temporis Perditi*)

Thomas Tallis Chamber Choir,
conducted by Philip Simms

Recorded with 60 voices, at the Royal Peculiar Church of St. Alfege, Greenwich, UK.

(ASCAP Title Code: 410202721; Performing score published by Wirripang)

This *a cappella* setting for SATB double choir and soloists of the first section of the traditional Latin Mass – “Kyrie eleison” – is based around permutations of one central motif. The eight main vocal lines are sometimes further divided for fullness of texture and motivic completeness. At least 21 voices are required to perform the work (choir: SSAAT'TBB, SSAAT'TBB + soloists: SSA, SA). The short central section of this ternary form composition (“Christe eleison”) features high C’s in both treble parts, and requires extra soprano and alto soloists to be present offstage (or situated in a gallery), a little removed from the main body of the choir. *Kyrie* was first performed in November 2005, during the historic Thomas Tallis 500th anniversary concerts held at Waltham Abbey, Essex (where Tallis worked) and St. Alfege, Greenwich (his burial place).

Track 1: © J. D. Little 2011. Recording Engineer: Shaun Michaud
Track 2: © J. D. Little 2006. Recording Engineer: Andrij Mokrytsky
Track 3: © J. D. Little 2004. Recording Engineer: Andrij Mokrytsky
Track 4: © J. D. Little 2005. Recording Engineer: Vaclav Pavel
Track 5: © J. D. Little 2005. Recording Engineer: Adi Winman



*Interior view of the east window of Waltham Abbey, Essex, UK:
venue for the première performance of Kyrie.*

