

MUSIC FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS

ED HUGHES

Flint | Nonet | Lunar | Chroma | The Woods So Wild



NEW MUSIC PLAYERS
PRIMROSE PIANO QUARTET

ED HUGHES: MUSIC FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS

Flint

1	Movement 1	4:15
2	Movement 2	4:13
3	Movement 3	5:18

Nonet

4	Movement 1 <i>Con moto</i>	5:31
5	Movement 2 <i>Tranquil</i>	5:54
6	Movement 3 <i>Flowing</i>	5:49

Lunar

7	Lunar 1	6:07
8	Lunar 2	8:43
9	Chroma	10:04

The Woods So Wild *

10	Movement 1	5:31
11	Movement 2	2:29
12	Movement 3	4:38

Total playing time	68:38
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NEW MUSIC PLAYERS
PRIMROSE PIANO QUARTET *

MUSIC FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS

Ed Hughes' refreshing, cultured, lovingly patterned music is built around a thoroughly contemporary theme; our present-day contemplation of landscape, and how we give it the attention and respect it deserves. Via music, the composer suggests, which works like the weather on a hilly walk in the South Downs. Our perceptions constantly change and re-energise as we encounter familiar objects while colours, shadings and vegetation are in a constant flow of development. The same can be certainly said of all the works in this rich collection, which surge forward with textural warmth and harmonic continuity. This is music for walkers, and people who love the earth.

Judith Weir

Introduction by the Composer

This album of new music is inspired by the South Downs, a range of chalk hills that extends for approximately 260 square miles across the south-east of England, from the Itchen Valley in Hampshire to Beachy Head in the East. Following work on two soundwalks for the Echoes Interactive Soundwalks App ('The Cuckmere Soundwalk' and 'Brighton Festival Ditchling Museum Music Trail') I was commissioned by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2021 to complete a score to a new film by Sam Moore, 'South Downs: A Celebration', to mark the National Park's tenth anniversary.

The music became the first movement of *Nonet*, and the photography throughout this booklet is all drawn from Sam Moore's film, which can be viewed at <https://edhughescomposer.com/nonet>.

The South Downs' special qualities include the light, sea, rivers, birds and animals, the geometric intersections of hills and valleys, and its people and their histories, including ancient paths, tumuli, rings, fortifications, an abandoned tide mill, and centuries of farming. When walking the South Downs, whether on short and circular walks, or on a longer journey, one is often rewarded with spectacular views, and space to reflect on people's relationship with beauty and fragility.

Musical process can be like a journey, in which features are repeated and varied in the course of an unfolding musical form. This works well as a metaphor for walking where familiar features may be viewed from different approaches or summits, or through the defamiliarising veil of changing weather systems. Making soundwalks has intensified my sense of walking as a physical and spiritual journey, and thus its affinities with music, in repetition and variation, whether in cold, piercing winter's light, drizzly autumn rain or bright summer sunshine.

Layering, harmony and repetition create flows of movement in time. I am fascinated too by complex, chromatic (literally colourful) note collections and harmonies which ripple the surface of an otherwise transparent harmonic discourse. This is like the shifts, shadows and plays of light experienced on a walk. Experiences of journeys are thus inscribed in some of my music. But beyond such abstract considerations, songs associated with place and memory are also powerful repositories of human experience. Two such songs of landscape are woven into two of this album's compositions.

Ed Hughes



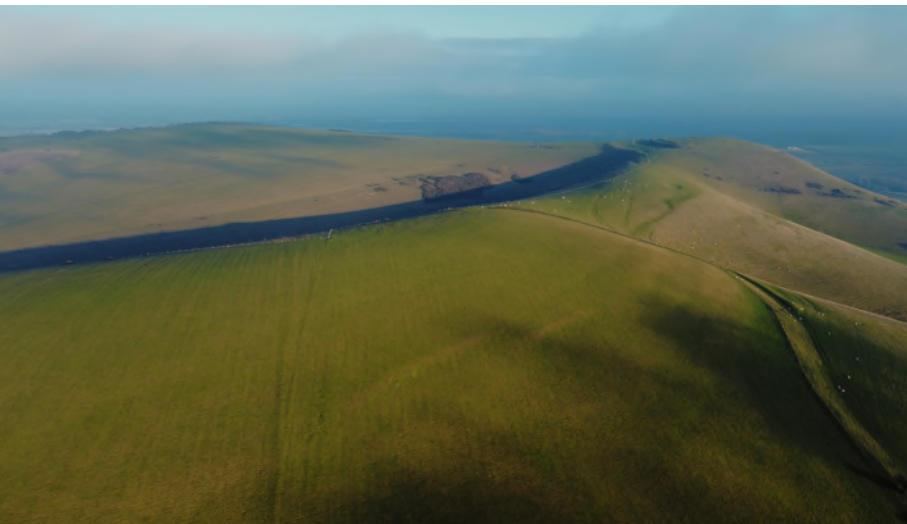
Wilmington

THE MUSIC

Flint (2019), for string ensemble in three movements, was commissioned by violinist Maeve Jenkinson and the Corelli Ensemble, with support from the RVW Trust. *Flint* evokes the Sussex landscape, with its undulating chalk downs and sudden cuts and verticals, whether at a quarry, or at locations where the land suddenly meets the sea. For example, in gradually unfolding musical lines, or sudden contrasts, as in the fast first movement. A Sussex folk song transcribed by George Butterworth in 1912 inspired the second (slow) movement, and also permeates the textures of the third and final fast movement.

Movement one is earthy and granular but there is also an ecstatic and soaring aspect to the top lines. The first violin hovers, dives, and flies high. Chromatic melody sometimes mixes with soft modal tunes, like sharp cuts of flint in a predominantly smooth and flowing landscape. Movement two paraphrases the song collected by Butterworth ('A Lawyer He Went Out One Day'). Though the harmony is gentle, the musical material ebbs, flows and drifts like naturally occurring systems in counterpoint. In Movement three, below a solo violin, the ensemble again has melodies formed out of the song from movement two, softly layered to produce a slightly amorphous string texture. The tension between lyricism and change characterises the journey of the whole piece.

Nonet (2020) is a three-movement work for written for the New Music Players. Movement one is marked *con moto* and maps to the rhythms of Sam Moore's new film (which can be seen here: <https://edhughescomposer.com/nonet>). Flow and momentum are designed to match the walker's movement through the landscape and provide musical affinities with features such as light and shadow, ascent, and the gradual sense of perspectives unfurling. Movement two is marked *tranquil*. It has a cooler, more detached feeling, and a slower pace than movement one. It is contemplative, mysterious, and somewhat bleak, like a walk in winter sunlight. It too has a sense of perspectives but with a more reflective quality. Movement three is marked *flowing*. It recalls qualities of movement one, but with more sparkling textures, suggesting descent, synthesis, momentum and return.



Mount Caburn



Kithurst Hill

***Lunar 1, Lunar 2* (2021)**

These are two studies, conceived for a mixed quartet of flute, violin, cello and piano. I wrote these pieces after seeing the Isamu Noguchi exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery in 2021. In one room, there were mainly wall-mounted sculptures entitled 'Lunars'. Noguchi was quoted in the exhibition as saying, 'I thought of sculptures in which the light source was integrally embedded...a luminous object as a source of delight in itself'. Sculpture and landscape are connected in Noguchi's work.

I was fascinated by the idea of artistic objects that are both luminous and evocative of a strange landscape. I was curious to explore compositions that could seem familiar, yet strange and unearthly.

In my own *Lunar 1* inward and mysterious textures use steady states of harmony which are static yet evolving. In *Lunar 2* I aim at a bright, flickering and radiant light, with contrasts and momentum. Though it is an abstract piece, the rising phrases are on the cusp of the vocal; sometimes they rise to a plateau.

Chroma (1997) for strings was commissioned by Scott Stroman's Opus 20 String Ensemble with funds from London Arts Board. Chroma is a single movement work for eleven strings, lasting approximately twelve minutes.

The music is mainly meditative in character, although the mood is constantly shifting and changing, like effects of light and weather. Textures and colours are modulated through layered pulses, tempos and cross-rhythms.

Four principal players (a string quartet) act as the centre of the sound, while the ensemble elaborates and comments.



Wilmington



Cuckmere Haven



Amberley

The Woods So Wild (2020-21) for piano quartet (piano, violin, viola and cello) was written for and dedicated to the Primrose Piano Quartet. I began writing this piece in 2020 during lockdown, and completed it in August 2021. 'Will Yow Walke the Woods soe Wylde' was a song in the Tudor era, possibly sung by Henry VIII and his courtier Sir Peter Carew (c.1514-1575). The fragment of melody that survives uses its scale's raised fourth expressively, creating a haunting, searching and restless quality. The song's qualities were not lost on Elizabethan composers William Byrd (1543-1623) and Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) who created brilliant keyboard variations. John Dowland (1563-1626) wrote a song entitled 'Can She Excuse My Wrongs?' which quotes the tune. It is thought this expressed in musical code his feelings of isolation on being excluded from the Elizabethan court.

My own work explores the consolations of landscape and 'the woods so wild'. The first movement is in a steady three time. The song's melody begins in the cello and drifts over the barlines, so that its modal sound is slightly distanced from the prevailing harmony. Extra melodies are interwoven, using all the notes of the chromatic scale, to create harmonic colour. The main tonal centres of the movement are F and G, echoing the original, and Byrd and Gibbons's own elaborations on the song (contained in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, a manuscript of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English music).

The second movement is in a slow to moderate 12/8 – a balance between four and three time. The music moves between D and E, again reflecting the stepwise harmonies of the original pre-classical song form. Towards the end of the second movement the Woods So Wild melody appears again in various forms and transpositions. The music accelerates and moves straight into the fast final movement without a break. The tune sings through the final movement too, which has cross-rhythms and weaving polyphony, like the intertwining roots, branches, moss and leaves of a sunlit wood.



Ditchling Beacon

THE MUSICIANS

Ed Hughes' (b. 1968, UK) music ranges from solo works to large-scale compositions including orchestra, stage and silent screen. Commissions include The Opera Group, London Sinfonietta, I Fagiolini, Mahogany Opera, Glyndebourne/Photoworks, and Brighton Festival. Performances and broadcasts have been given by BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Orchestra and many other ensembles and soloists. He founded and directs two ensembles: New Music Players, and the Orchestra of Sound and Light, whose projects include the South Downs Songbook, with commissioned songs from composers Rowland Sutherland, Shirley Thompson and Evelyn Ficarra.

Ed Hughes' opera *The Birds* (2005, libretto by Glyn Maxwell) was commissioned and toured internationally by the Opera Group and I Fagiolini. *When the Flame Dies* (2013, libretto by Roger Morris), a chamber opera, was commissioned by the Canterbury Festival. His original live scores to the classic silent films by Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* and *Strike*, were released on DVD in 2007, and included in C4's *The Story of Film*. *Chaconne for Jonathan Harvey* won a British Composer Award in 2014. A children's opera *The Feast That Went Off With A Bang* (2016, libretto by Peter Cant) toured the UK with Mahogany Opera, was nominated for a BCA award, and continues to be performed by young people. Hughes was commissioned by the Brighton Festival to write major works with contemporary silent film including *Brighton Symphony of a City* (2016, film by Lizzie Thynne) and *Cuckmere: A Portrait* (2018, film by Cesca Eaton). His previous albums on Metier are *Dark Formations* (2012), *When the Flame Dies* (2013), *Symphonic Visions* (2017) and *Time, Space and Change* (2020, Sunday Times top 100 albums).

Ed Hughes lives in Lewes and is Professor of Composition at the University of Sussex.

For further information on Ed Hughes, and to view perusal scores, please see edhughescomposer.com and uypm.co.uk/composers/ed-hughes

New Music Players is a contemporary classical group comprising world-class musicians who individually perform a wide range of music, from jazz, to chamber, orchestral and experimental, to Wagner and Schumann, to authentic Baroque and other classical and early music styles. Their combined musical intelligence, instrumental skill and multiple interests produce amazingly vivid performances and premières and give the New Music Players its distinctive edge. The ensemble has been featured in festivals at the ICA, Huddersfield and Brighton; performed and worked with students at Universities of York, Bristol, Sussex, Royal Holloway, Oxford, Nottingham, and given broadcasts on BBC Radio 3. The ensemble's work includes UK and European tours, multiple commercial recordings including Jo Kondo, James Wood, Rolf Hind, Rowland Sutherland, Gordon McPherson, and Michael Finnis, and many premières and performances of contemporary composers. For further information please see newmusicplayers.org.uk

The Primrose Piano Quartet was formed in 2004 by pianist John Thwaites and three of the UK's most renowned chamber musicians (Lindsay, Allegri, Edinburgh, Maggini Quartets). It is named after the great Scottish violist, William Primrose, who himself played in the Festival Piano Quartet. Their award-winning recordings feature works by Dunhill, Hurlstone, Quilter, Bax, Scott, Alwyn, Howells and Bridge. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies wrote his Piano Quartet for the Primrose in 2008, which was recorded in 2009 for the Meridian label. Annually they tour UK and internationally, including Denmark, Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal and Germany. 2018 saw the première of a new piano quartet written for the Primrose by the leading British composer Anthony Payne at London's Kings Place, with a new CD of Elgar, Payne and Bowen released later that year. In 2019 the Quartet released the complete Brahms piano quartets, the culmination of years of research, and recorded in the historic Ehrbar Saal, Vienna (where Brahms himself frequently performed), using three different pianos of the period from the famous Gert Hechner collection. The result has been hailed by critics as "revelatory". The Quartet's own festival is in the Hampshire Village of West Meon, and they are ensemble-in-residence at the Battle Festival. For further information, please see primrosepianoquartet.org.uk



Kithurst

Performers and recording details:

Flint

Susanne Stanzeleit, violin I (a) | Celia Waterhouse, violin 2 (a)

Bridget Carey, viola (a) | Joe Giddey, cello (a)

Amy Tress, violin I (b) | Anna Giddey, violin I (b)

Martyn Jackson, violin 2 (b) | Jonathan Stone, violin 2 (b)

Stephen Upshaw, viola (b) | Stephanie Tress, cello (b)

Paul Sherman, bass

Ed Hughes, conductor

recorded at St John's, Smith Square, London, on 18 March 2021

sound engineer: Morgan Roberts; Producer: Simon Weir, for Classical Media

Nonet

Rowland Sutherland, flute | Fiona Cross, clarinet

Richard Steggall, horn | Edward Maxwell, trumpet

Susanne Stanzeleit, violin I | Celia Waterhouse, violin 2

Stephen Upshaw, viola | Joe Giddey, cello | Richard Casey, piano

recorded at St John's, Smith Square, London, on 18 March 2021

sound engineer: Morgan Roberts; Producer: Simon Weir, for Classical Media

Lunar I and Lunar 2

Rowland Sutherland, flute | Susanne Stanzeleit, violin

Andrew Fuller, cello | Richard Casey, piano

recorded at Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, University of Sussex, on 4 December 2021

sound engineer: Richard Hughes; Producers: Susanne Stanzeleit and Liz Webb

Chroma

Susanne Stanzeleit, violin I | Celia Waterhouse, violin 2

Amy Tress, violin 3 | Martyn Jackson, violin 4

Anna Giddey, violin 5 | Jonathan Stone, violin 6

Bridget Carey, viola I | Stephen Upshaw, viola 2

Joe Giddey, cello I | Stephanie Tress, cello 2

Paul Sherman, bass

Ed Hughes, conductor

recorded at St John's, Smith Square, London, on 18 March 2021

sound engineer: Morgan Roberts; Producer: Simon Weir, for Classical Media

The Woods So Wild

The Primrose Piano Quartet:

Susanne Stanzeleit, violin | Dorothea Vogel, viola

Andrew Fuller, cello | John Thwaites, piano

sound engineer: Richard Hughes; Producer: Susanne Stanzeleit

recorded at Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, University of Sussex, on 28 October 2021

Album mastered by Simon Weir, for Classical Media

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Judith Weir

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Front cover image: The Seven Sisters

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Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts

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Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft

Brighton Festival

Explore 'The Cuckmere Soundwalk' and 'Brighton Festival Ditchling Museum Music Trail' South Downs soundwalks with music by Ed Hughes on the free Echoes Interactive Soundwalks App.



Kithurst



South Downs Way

THE MUSIC OF ED HUGHES



Time, Space and Change: Orchestral and chamber works
New Music Players,
Orchestra of Sound and Light
Métier MSV 28597 (CD, digital)

"Engaging, energetic, and lovely. Recommended." — *Fanfare*
"This is truly exciting music. I find it enthralling." — *American Record Guide*
"Enchanting... astoundingly fresh and utterly devoid of cliché."
— *MusicWeb International*



Symphonic Visions: Music for Silent Films
Clare Hammond, Richard Casey (pianos)
New Music Players,
Orchestra of Sound and Light
Métier MSVDX 99103 (DVD); ZME 50801 (digital audio)

"Five engrossing scores... skilfully conceived and delightfully accessible music."
— *MusicWeb International*
"Vibrant and engaging... the results are a joy." — *Silent London*



When the Flame Dies: An Opera in One Act
Libretto by Roger Morris
Soloists, New Music Players;
conducted by Carlos del Cueto
Métier MSV 77203 (DVD/CD, digital)

"Fizzes with invention... well realised, well cast, performed with commitment."
— *Tempo*



Dark Formations: Chamber, choral and instrumental works
New Music Players and Vocal Ensemble
Richard Casey (piano)
Métier MSV 28530 (2CD, digital)

"Unique originality and instrumental flair.... Irresistible." — *Musical Pointers*
"Compelling. Beautiful; remarkably fine scoring. Most stimulating." — *Fanfare*

This recording was made possible with the support of
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and the New Music Players

SOUTH DOWNS
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