



DISTANT VOICES, NEW WORLDS

SONGS, LANDSCAPES AND HISTORIES

Shirley J. Thompson | Evelyn Ficarra | Rowland Sutherland
Ed Hughes | Matthew Sheeran

New Music Players
Orchestra of Sound and Light

DISTANT VOICES, NEW WORLDS

SONGS, LANDSCAPES AND HISTORIES

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|-----|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| | Ed Hughes (b.1968) | |
| 1. | In leiunio et Fletu (2018) | 4:30 |
| 2. | Sky Rhythms (2022) | 6:03 |
| | Shirley J. Thompson (b.1958) | |
| 3. | Mighty Mandela (1990) | 8:12 |
| 4. | An Hymn to the Evening (2022) | 4:44 |
| | Matthew Sheeran (b.1989) | |
| 5. | Languet Anima (2024) | 3:12 |
| | Evelyn Ficarra (b.1962) | |
| 6. | The Arbitrariness of Language (2010) | 5:46 |
| 7. | What Larks (2022) | 5:50 |
| | Rowland Sutherland | |
| 8. | Eternal (2018) | 6:27 |
| 9. | Modes from the Downs (2022) | 8:00 |
| | Ed Hughes | |
| 10. | Dark Angel (2024) | 25:51 |

Total playing time 78:38

INTRODUCTION

The album title refers to revisiting, rediscovering and reworking historical, literary and compositional voices, and their relationship to culture and landscape, and recovering them through contemporary musical expression; so 'distant' as in reaching back into the past but rediscovering and making earlier voices vivid today through creative transformation.

The album features two ensembles. One is pure 'classical' (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano) and references the small chamber ensemble format pioneered by Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and his followers in the early twentieth century. This is the so-called 'Pierrot' ensemble containing wind, percussion and string colours, and capable of evoking the symphony orchestra with an economy of just five players.

The other is a mixed band with solo voice, and is a contemporary adaptation of the twentieth century classical formation: voice in delicate balance with acoustic and electric instruments (flute, clarinet doubling bass clarinet with effects pedal, piano doubling synth, electronics, electric guitar with effects pedals, cello).

At the expressive centre of the album are four new songs specially commissioned from four composers for the acoustic/electric line-up, performed by the Orchestra of Sound and Light. The songs address the human experience of landscape, because they are based on poems and texts specifically about the South Downs in England, at different points in its long and fascinating social history (1773, November 1787, 14 September 1800, 12 July 1937, and April 2022.)

Each of these four new songs is introduced by an earlier instrumental composition by each composer. Hughes and Sutherland offer new and very different responses to the work of the great 16th century English composer, Thomas Tallis (1505-1585). Thompson creates a portrait in solo flute sound of Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid activist, politician and statesman who was South Africa's first president from 1994 to 1999 - this is performed by Rowland Sutherland, for whom the work was

originally written. Ficarra's solo for piano reaches back to the sounds and structures of Medieval Japanese poetry to produce a further spin on instrumental transformation. And Matthew Sheeran's intimate vocal-like instrumental composition wraps itself around an unsung source liturgical text from the world of 14th century Ars Subtilior, *Languet Anima (mea)*, or 'my soul languishes', like a song without words.

The final composition in the album, *Dark Angel*, by Ed Hughes, is a tone poem for the ensemble of five, inspired by William Blake's engravings for *Paradise Lost*, the late seventeenth century epic poem by John Milton on the myth of the Fall. Blake's visions are as much a source for the changing textures, rhythms and harmonies as Milton's words because they present dramatic snapshots of timeless moments in human experience - love, loss, betrayal. Blake in a sense transposes Milton's world to the broad landscapes and skylscapes of the South Downs, where Blake lived for several years, as noted in Hughes' song on this album, *Sky Rhythms*. *Dark Angel* was a study for Ed Hughes' opera for the Brighton Festival 2024, *States of Innocence*.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Ed Hughes: *In ieiunio et fletu* (2018) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano

Tallis set *In ieiunio et fletu* in his *Cantiones Sacrae* (1575), a volume including some of his final and most expressive motets. This is a penitential text particularly suited to Ash Wednesday, with priests weeping at the altar and pleading for forgiveness for the people. As I absorbed the strange and beautiful harmonies while arranging the work for a modern ensemble in 2018, the violin came forward in my mind - prompting a new layer, based on the harmonies of the music, slightly blurring the original which nonetheless remains. To this the piano also adds a new layer. I enjoyed the process of exploring by 'writing through' the flux between voices and instruments that was a feature of 16th and 17th century practices in English music. This work was rescored in late 2018 as the fourth movement of a work for chamber orchestra, *Sinfonia*, (see Metier MSV 28597) and discussed in *Composing the Historical* (in the online open access University of Sussex journal REFRAME).

Ed Hughes: *Sky Rhythms* (2022) for voice, flute, clarinet doubling bass clarinet, piano, electric guitar, cello

For this song, I adapted the words of Marion Robinson contained in the Mass Observation Archive, written for one of the first 'Day Surveys' (12 July 1937). Marion Robinson was a resident near Felpham, West Sussex, in the 1930s. Marion writes about everyday life, her political views, and the way in which proximity to the South Downs raises her spirits. She also mentions the fact that William Blake lived in Felpham (in 1800-1803), and speculates that certain visual rhythms in his work from that period were influenced by the unique and beautiful effects of light and cloud over the Downs. I chose to end the song with a few lines from a poem Blake wrote in 1800, addressed to Ann Flaxman, wife of the sculptor John Flaxman.

Text for *Sky Rhythms* (adapted by the composer from the Mass Observation Archive Day Survey by Marion Robinson for 12 July 1937):

I live in a seaside bungalow town, in a furnished bungalow.
Very small and draughty,
but fortunately,
looking out across open fields and country
to the South Downs

The town is inhabited by get-rich-quick bourgeoisie
who all let their bungalows in summer
to come-and-go visitors.
These come for a fortnight at a time,
and wander about in various kinds
of holiday dress
shorts, beach slacks, sunbathing garments and bathing suits.
They rush into the sun and mostly burn bright pink
through trying to tan too fast.

To the news' agents
Daily Herald Placard
Stalin might do something to make our bread dearer
Further depressed by news in paper
which hopes that England will not let France down
but I am quite sure she will
Husband points out that things must get worse before they can get better
I know this with my mind
but the immediate prospect weighs upon me.
Also I have an uncomfortable fear
that if things come to a fight
I may not have the guts to do all I should.

I live in a seaside bungalow town, in a furnished bungalow.
Very small and draughty,
but fortunately
looking out across open fields and country
to the South Downs

The air is splendid,
 we get whatever sunshine is going,
 and witness superb skylscapes.
 Felpham, where Blake lived, is near,
 and one can often see in cloud arrangement
 his probable inspiration for the rhythms of the lines his pictures take –
 different from sky effects noticed elsewhere...

*Away to Sweet Felpham for Heaven is there
 The Ladder of Angels descends thro the air
 On the Turret its spiral does softly descend
 Thro' the village then winds at My Cot i[t] does end*

Words adapted from Marion Robinson Mass Observation Day Survey 12 July 1937
 William Blake excerpt from poem 14 September 1800



Daily Herald - 12 July 1937

Shirley J. Thompson: *Mighty Mandela* (1990) for solo flute

Mighty Mandela was composed to commemorate the release of the very Honourable Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela from Robben Island on 11 February 1990 after 27 years of false imprisonment as Prisoner 46664, by the apartheid regime. The work was specially composed for performance by virtuoso flautist Rowland Sutherland, and first performed by him at The Place, London, W1, in July 1990.

Mighty Mandela is one in a series of works for solo instruments by Shirley J. Thompson, including *Blue Iris* for solo cello (1989) and *Song Without Words* for solo violin (1988). Until this time, Thompson had composed many works for instrumental ensembles, including large orchestral works and now wanted to apply her artistry to creating equally compelling music for a single instrument.

Shirley J. Thompson: *An Hymn to the Evening* (2022) for voice, flute, clarinet doubling bass clarinet, piano, electric guitar, cello

A setting of *An Hymn to the Evening*, poem by Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784)

With this song for the South Downs Songbook project my intention is to evoke the 'majestic grandeur!' of the English countryside as asserted in the poem, *An Hymn to the Evening*, by the writer Phillis Wheatley. The vocal part is employed dramatically, assuming the protagonist in the poem and suggesting all kinds of mystery bubbling beneath the surface. The instruments perform supporting roles to the lead character, with intrigues of their own, but as accompaniment and as a chorus. I have much enjoyed setting Phillis Wheatley poems previously. Through her words, her witty, subversive and conversational personality yields deep insights into Georgian lives, evoking Jane Austen. *An Hymn to the Evening*, a warm and characterful poem, reminds me of walks on the Downs on a beautiful day, enwrapped by the supreme majesty of nature.

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring.

Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dies are spread!
But the west glories in the deepest red: ...
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labours of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair *Aurora* rise.

Matthew Sheeran: *Languet Anima* (2024) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello

Languet Anima is an original composition inspired by fourteenth century *Ars Subtilior* music, which was famous for its highly refined notational and rhythmic subtleties. It is scored for flute, clarinet, violin and cello. The music has a serene character, and follows a simple ABA structure. Unusually, the violin plays an accompanying role in its lower register, the main melody being played by the flute.

Evelyn Ficarra: *The Arbitrariness of Language I – Long Vowels* (2010) for solo piano

This piece is based on a poem by the Medieval Japanese poet Izumi Shikibu. A phonetic rendering of this poem in the Roman alphabet reads:

kuraki yori / kuraki michi ni zo / irinu beki / haruka ne terase / yama no ha no tsuki

translating roughly as;

*one must enter from the darkness into a dark path;
shine afar, moon on the edge of the mountains! **

In this piece, I focus on the sound and structure of the poem through a series of translations/transliterations. Each consonant and vowel has its pianistic equivalent. I explore mellifluous tremolo-like gestures for vowel sounds, harder staccato sounds for consonants. While honouring the rhythmic frame of the poem (31 syllables across 5 lines), I rarely give a complete uninterrupted 'reading' of the poem. For example, the first iterations of the poem mark only certain vowel sounds, leaving silences to fill out the frame. Gradually, other syllables are broken up and dropped into the gaps. Through

repeated, partial iterations, the poem's sounds and structures gradually accumulate, emerge, fragment and reform.

The title references the idea that there is no 'real' or organic connection between the stuff of words and what they mean. Yet our subjective connection with words can be very intimate. I hope that music emerges here from the tension between abstract structure and the materiality of sounds.

** Translated by Marié Abe, used with permission.*

Evelyn Ficarra: *What Larks* (2022) for voice, flute, clarinet doubling bass clarinet, piano, electronics, electric guitar, cello

This piece considers the experience of nature and time, and the otherness of non-human species. What is it to be a lark? How do they experience the closeness and immediacy of their nests in the ground, and the vastness and freedom of soaring above it? How can we imagine their perspective? How do the cliffs and the sea hold it all in place?

During composition, I read and re-read a suite of poems by my friend and collaborator Valerie Whittington, including *Summer - at Devil's Dyke*. Val allows me to range freely across her poems, using her words as raw materials that evolve in conversation with the sound world, in this case pecked apart and fragmented into repeated bird calls. I found the powerful landscape of the Downs evoked through images of listening and intense light: '*stark white and blue*', the '*hard pressed chalk*', the larks '*speaking in tongues*' - '*speaking decisively, but not for us*'. Her line:

*I have not written this
Not yet*

became a refrain for the whole piece - for all the things we have simultaneously done and not done - written, sung, heard - as our lives play out through imagination and time.

Below, Val's original lines are italicised.

I have not written this

I have

I have not I

I have not written this

Not not not not not

Not not not

Not not not not not

I have not written

I have not not not not not not not not not

Not yet

I have

I have not sung this

I have not sung

I have not sung

I have not sung

I have not sung this

I have not sung:

Hard pressed chalk

So bright so bright so bright

So bright it hurts our eyes

You who you who have not have not

You have not heard

Not who not heard not heard this

Have you not heard

The sun, the sun, the sun, the sun, the sun

The sun is exploding

The sun, the sun, the sun, the sun, the sun

The sun is exploding

exploding

Rowland Sutherland: *Eternal - featuring Distant Lamentations of Jeremiah* (2018) for flute, piano, cello

This is a composition in two parts. It begins with a segment entitled *Distant Lamentations of Jeremiah*. The opening features a lyrical cello line, freely supported by piano. The inspiration for this first section comes from Thomas Tallis's *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, known for its emotive and contemplative nature.

Following this introductory section, the second part, *Eternal*, begins with an expressive, improvised flute solo accompanied by a gently pulsating piano. This transition leads into the main section of *Eternal*, which draws inspiration from the meditative and hypnotic qualities of Turkish Sufi Whirling, also known as the Whirling Dervishes. The music captures the flowing, transcendent, and meditative feel associated with this spiritual practice.

Rowland Sutherland: *Modes from The Downs* (2022) for voice, flute, clarinet doubling bass clarinet, piano, electric guitar, cello

Rowland Sutherland's *Modes from The Downs* is inspired by the sonnet *Composed During a Walk on the Downs, November 1787* by the poet Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806).

Charlotte Turner Smith grew up in Bignor, West Sussex, in the South Downs. After her marriage, she left the region but eventually returned to Sussex, living in Brighton and later settling near Chichester. Smith's poem provides a romantic and evocative account of a nocturnal walk through the South Downs, conveying a range of emotions from melancholy and sorrow to endeavour and optimism.

Sutherland's composition reflects the moods and modes evoked by Smith's poem. The composer embarked on a musical journey that incorporates a variety of styles:

- Late baroque and early classical soundscapes
- British folk suites with symphonic wind bands
- Jazz ballads with hip-hop rhythms
- Latin jazz influences

His aim was to create a vivid auditory depiction of the poem's themes and emotions through a blend of these diverse musical genres. This approach underscores a dynamic interplay between words and music, offering listeners a multifaceted experience that mirrors the rich, emotional landscape described in Smith's poetry.

The dark and pillowy cloud; the fallow trees,
Seem o'er the ruins of the year to mourn;
And cold and hollow, the inconstant breeze
Sobs thro' the falling leaves and wither'd fern.
O'er the tall brow of yonder chalky bourn,
The evening shades their gather'd darkness fling,
While, by the ling'ring light, I scarce discern
The shrieking nightjar, sail on heavy wing.
Ah! yet a little — and propitious Spring,
Crown'd with fresh flow'rs, shall wake the woodland strain;
But no gay change revolving seasons bring,
To call forth Pleasure from the soul of Pain,
Bid syren Hope resume her long lost part,
And chase the vulture Care, that feeds upon the heart.

Ed Hughes: Dark Angel (2022-24) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano

John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost* (c. 1665-1667) is an epic poem in twelve books of blank verse, depicting a mythical story of human creation and relationships between human, divine and demonic forces.

The poem begins in the midst of things: God has cast Satan and his army of fallen angels out of heaven. They plot to resist God by corrupting mankind. Satan lands in the new world, and envies the happiness of Adam and Eve in Paradise, the Garden of Eden. Satan whispers strange fantasies into the ear of Eve as she sleeps and dreams. Raphael is sent to warn Adam about Satan's plot: Adam takes the opportunity to ask about God's creation and the celestial motions. Satan returns to Eden as a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam also eats, to share the fate of Eve. Eve and Adam are judged and have to become mortal and leave Eden.

This tone poem for chamber ensemble is designed to highlight key scenes in this poem, and was inspired by the composer's discovery of William Blake's series of engravings to illustrate *Paradise Lost*. The project led to an opera commission for the Brighton Festival 2024, *States of Innocence*, to a libretto by Peter Cant, in which the poet Milton's own characters take on agency and begin to defend what it means to be human, powerful yet fallible and vulnerable to love and loss.

1. DARK ANGEL

The fallen angels plot eternal War Irreconcilable on God under the leadership of Satan

2. GARDEN OF BLISS

Adam and Eve in the blissful Paradise of Eden.

3. MOTION IN THE HEAVEN'S

When Raphael warns Adam about Satan's plot Adam takes the opportunity to ask about God's creation and the celestial motions. This movement's musical methods are inspired by 17th century knowledge of planetary motions (e.g. Kepler) which Milton works into his poem.

4. FALL

Satan causes Eve to have Phantasms and Dreams while asleep. Satan returns to Eden as a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam also eats, to share the fate of Eve. They fight, but then agree to accept their fate ('to lose thee were to lose myself').

5. VISIONS

Eve and Adam are judged. They must leave Eden. The Son of God mitigates their future suffering. Satan's expectation of a triumphant return to Hell is a disaster for him. Adam and Eve leave Eden (*hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, Through Eden took their solitary way.*)

BIOGRAPHIES

Richard Casey (solo piano) was born in Manchester in 1966 and started playing the piano at the age of seven. After graduating in Russian at St John's College, Cambridge, he studied piano at the Royal Northern College of Music with Marjorie Clementi and Martin Roscoe. In 1997 Richard won first prize in the British Contemporary Piano Competition, an achievement which attracted a series of solo engagements in the UK and abroad. Based in Manchester, Richard complements his solo career with a strong commitment to chamber music. Since 1994 he has been pianist with the New Music Players and has performed frequently as a guest with the London Sinfonietta, London Musici, Lontano and Liverpool-based Ensemble 10:10. Richard has recorded collected solo piano works of Camden Reeves, Anthony Gilbert (with piano duo partner Ian Buckle), Anthony Burgess, Anthony Powers, Paul Newland and Peter Maxwell Davies, as well as Edward Cowie's epic *Rutherford's Lights* and Ed Hughes' *Orchids*. Richard also teaches at Manchester University.

Rachel Farago (singer) is a freelance Voice Actor, Actor and Musician living and working out of London, UK. Rachel appeared in *Il Forza del Destino* at the Royal Opera House, performing alongside Jonas Kaufmann, Anna Netrebko and Ludovic Tezier. Rachel completed her Mmus in Vocal Studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire under the tutelage of Mary Wiegold, Theresa Goble and Kelvin Lim. Recent operatic highlights for Rachel have included *Lola* in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Aylesbury Opera), professional chorus for Longborough Festival Opera (2018, 2020), Winslow Hall Opera (2017) and Grimeborn Opera (2017). Rachel is also a front-woman for the Transatlantic Ensemble performing Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* live across the country at renowned venues such as The Jazz Café in Camden, XOYO in Shoreditch, Wylam Brewery in Newcastle and Summerhall in Edinburgh. Rachel has worked as a freelance musician in multiple piano-bars and live music venues across London such as The Piano Works West End and Farringdon. She is passionate about music across a wide range of genres.

Evelyn Ficarra is a composer and sound artist working across a range of forms including electronic music, multi-media, installation, dance, film, and improvisation. She studied

composition at the University of Sussex and the University of California, Berkeley. Throughout her career she has enjoyed collaborative work with choreographers, directors, filmmakers, writers, musicians and visual artists. Evelyn met poet Valerie Whittington when they were both undergraduates at the University of Sussex. They have enjoyed a long friendship and series of collaborations, including *The Empress's Feet*, an opera for solo singer, originally commissioned by Linda Hirst, most recently staged by Michal Grover-Friedlander for Ta Opera Zuta and written about in her book *Staging Voice*. Evelyn is Professor of Interdisciplinary Composition at the University of Sussex.

Ed Hughes's music ranges from solo to large-scale compositions including orchestra, stage and silent screen. Described as 'enchanting...elaborate and strange, but incontrovertibly English' (Richard Hanlon), commissions have come from The Opera Group, London Sinfonietta, I Fagiolini, Mahogany Opera, Glyndebourne/Photoworks, Brighton Festival and others. His opera *The Birds* (2005, libretto by Glyn Maxwell) was commissioned and toured by the Opera Group. His chamber opera *When the Flame Dies* (2013, libretto by Roger Morris) was commissioned by the Canterbury Festival. His opera *States of Innocence* (2024, libretto by Peter Cant) was commissioned by the Brighton Festival. His work *Chaconne for Jonathan Harvey* won a British Composer Award in 2014. His children's opera *The Feast That Went Off With A Bang* (2016, libretto by Peter Cant) toured the UK with Mahogany Opera and continues to be performed internationally 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) and Cuckmere: A Portrait (2018). These works are included in his albums for Metier Records: Dark Formations (2012), When the Flame Dies (2013), Symphonic Visions (2017), Time, Space and Change (2020, Sunday Times top 100 albums & American Record Guide Critics' Choice 2020) and Music for the South Downs (2022). Ed Hughes is Professor of Composition at the University of Sussex. edhughescomposer.com

Matthew Sheeran (born 1989) is a British composer and arranger. He studied music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the University of Sussex and King's College London. In 2010 he won the Presteigne Festival's Alan Horne Prize for composition and the Shipley Arts Festival's Chairman of the Jury award. He has had his music performed at

the Aldeburgh Festival, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey.

Rowland Sutherland's commissions include Ensemble Bash, The New Music Players, COMA, Lontano, and for a trio recording by jazz trumpeter Chris Hodgkins. Rowland has also composed and arranged music for the Fidelio Trio, Jazz Warriors Orchestra, the Gnawa musicians of Morocco, world saxophonist Ray Carless, African master percussionist Pops Mohamed, vibes player Orphy Robinson, Indian east meets west group Shiva Nova and jazz trumpeter Byron Wallen. Rowland's composition *Enlightenment*, for large ensemble and inspired by John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in early 2015. It also featured in the 2014 Meltdown Festival for two sell out concerts at the QEH. As a bandleader, Rowland also composes for his jazz bands including the Brazilian influenced Mistura, his own six piece group Rowland Sutherland Sextet, Caribbean Nu Jazz outfit Creative Force and the London Art Collective with Rowland's arrangements of music by Sun Ra, Joe Henderson, Alice Coltrane and McCoy Tyner. Rowland lectures at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and tutors at the University of Southampton, and Goldsmiths, University of London. To hear Rowland Sutherland's music on Soundcloud please visit: <https://soundcloud.com/Rowland-sutherland>

Shirley J. Thompson The concert music and operas of multi-award-winning composer Shirley J. Thompson are performed and screened worldwide. Thompson is a highly versatile and prolific composer, filmmaker, professor of music, artistic director and entrepreneur. Thompson composed and conducted her symphony *New Nation Rising: A 21st Century London Symphony*. This epic musical story celebrated London's history, and featured the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra accompanied by two choirs, solo singers, a rapper and dhol drummers, and a total of nearly 200 performers. Originally commissioned to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, the concept later became the framework for the 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony. Her ballet PUSH toured to over 40 of the world's major opera houses, including The Marinsky Theatre, La Scala Milan and Sydney Opera House. Her opera series, *Heroines of Opera (2006)*, encapsulating narratives of iconic women in history and especially those of African and Caribbean heritage, created new roles for extraordinary performers as well as challenging the traditional portrayal of women in the operatic canon. Thompson has consistently demonstrated in her work a

belief in the transformative power of music to affect social, cultural and political change. Thompson was one of twelve British composers commissioned by His Majesty King Charles III to compose choral and orchestral music for The Coronation on 6 May 2023.



Richard Casey, piano



Rachel Farago, vocals



Evelyn Ficarra



Ed Hughes

photo by Katie Vandyck



Matthew Sheeran



Rowland Sutherland

photo by Richard Kaby



Shirley J. Thompson

photo by Wunmi Onibudo

The New Music Players

New Music Players was founded by composer and artistic director Ed Hughes in 1990. This contemporary classical group comprises world-class musicians who individually perform a wide range of music, from jazz, chamber, orchestral, contemporary, Wagner and Schumann, to authentic Baroque and other classical and early music styles.

Their musicianship, virtuosity and multiple interests produce amazingly vivid performances and premieres. The ensemble has been featured in festivals at the ICA, Huddersfield, Brighton; performed and worked with students at York, Bristol, Sussex, Royal Holloway, Oxford, Nottingham universities, and broadcast regularly on BBC Radio 3. UK and European tours include *Battleship Potemkin* and *Strike*; Iannis Xenakis at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Michael Finnissy at the ICA, and Evelyn Ficarra, Shirley J. Thompson, Rowland Sutherland and Matthew Sheeran at The Warehouse.

NMP feature on seven CD recordings including five discs of music by Ed Hughes on Metier: 'Dark Formations'; his opera *When the Flame Dies*; 'Symphonic Visions', a DVD of silent film scores; 'Time, Space and Change', featuring *Sinfonia* (2018) and *Medià Vita* (1991) released in March 2020; and 'Music for the South Downs' including *Flint*, *Nonet* and *The Woods So Wild*. They recorded Ed Hughes's scores for Eisenstein's films *Battleship Potemkin* and *Strike* for Tartan Video, and silent film scores by Ed Hughes for the BFI Ozu Collection.

newmusicplayers.org.uk

Rowland Sutherland, flute

Fiona Cross, clarinet

Susanne Stanzeleit, violin

Michael Atkinson, cello

Richard Casey, piano

Andrew Gourlay, conductor (for *Dark Angel*)



The New Music Players
photo by Katie Vandyck

The Orchestra of Sound and Light

The vision of the Orchestra of Sound and Light is to share the excitement of live music-making and composing through participatory projects ranging from primary schools to major Festival commissions. OSL is a core line-up of five musicians who all perform professionally at the highest level and have extensive teaching and facilitating experience, directed by composer and Artistic Director Ed Hughes. OSL has presented workshops and performance projects across East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, including major performances at the Brighton Festival in 2016 and 2018. Artistic director Ed Hughes and OSL were awarded funding by Arts Council England for a project in 2022 'South Downs Songbook' featuring new works by composers Rowland Sutherland, Evelyn Ficarra, Ed Hughes and Shirley J. Thompson, workshops in schools and colleges, and new digital resources.

orchsoundlight.org

Rachel Farago, solo voice

Helen Whitaker, flute (doubling piccolo)

Alison Hughes, clarinet (doubling bass clarinet)

Lee Westwood, electric guitar

Rachel Fryer, piano (doubling synthesizer)

Joe Giddey, cello



The Orchestra of Sound and Light

South Downs Songbook

A free educational resource pack for composing in schools and colleges is available:
[https://www.orchsoundlight.org/
orchsoundlight.org/southdownssongbook](https://www.orchsoundlight.org/orchsoundlight.org/southdownssongbook)

Recordings

20 May 2022 Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, University of Sussex - the Orchestra of Sound and Light with Rachel Farago (voice), conducted by Ed Hughes:
Ed Hughes Sky Rhythms (2022)
Shirley J. Thompson An Hymn to the Evening (2022)
Evelyn Ficarra What Larks (2022)
Rowland Sutherland Modes from the Downs (2022)

23 March 2024 The Warehouse, Theed Street, London - the New Music Players, with Andrew Gourlay (conductor) for *Dark Angel*:
Ed Hughes In Ieiunio et Fletu (2018)
Shirley J. Thompson Mighty Mandela (1990)
Matthew Sheeran Languet Anima (2024)
Evelyn Ficarra The Arbitrariness of Language (2010)
Rowland Sutherland Eternal - featuring Distant Lamentations of Jeremiah (2018)
Ed Hughes Dark Angel (2022-24)

All tracks are first recordings and live concert performances
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Producer: Simon Weir

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Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts, University of Sussex
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Media Arts and Humanities at the University of Sussex

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Liz Webb for Liz Webb Management, producer Orchestra of Sound and Light and New Music Players
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Sam Moore for kind permission to use cover photograph ('Wilmington'), a still from the film 'South Downs - A Celebration' (2022) by Sam Moore, with a score by Ed Hughes, commissioned by South Downs National Park Authority, and viewable at edhughescomposer.com/nonet
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