

A close-up photograph of a marble sculpture depicting two arms and hands. The hands are clasped together in a complex, intertwined manner, with fingers and palms visible. The marble is light-colored with some darker veining. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a natural setting like a garden.

# No Title Required

chamber music by  
**Priault Rainier**  
and **Sadie Harrison**

**DOUBLE IMAGE**

**METIER**

## PRIAULX RAINIER

The composer Priaulx Rainier (born 1903, South Africa) is often referred to as self-taught. This is misleading: her musical talent was noticed as a small child, and she received an excellent musical education, distinguished by a number of scholarships and awards. Her early lessons, in violin, harmony and theory, were in Cape Town; at the age of seventeen she came to England to study at the Royal Academy of Music. Thereafter London (and the RAM, where she was later a professor) became her base, and remained so for over sixty years.

Like Rebecca Clarke before her and Sally Beamish after, Rainier started her professional life as a string player. Only gradually did composition assert itself; when she was in her mid-thirties she began to give it pride of place, and went to Paris for some months of study with Boulanger. In the decade that followed - the war years and the period immediately after - she established her own recognisable voice as a composer, and also made friendships that were to be of lasting importance. Among musicians, Michael Tippett was one of her closest colleagues; but her friendship with the artists Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson proved to be as influential as any.

The three works on this CD were composed between 1943 and 1955, and thus come from this formative and fruitful time. The music has boldly direct rhythmic patterning, spare textures which eschew counterpoint, and deceptively simple melodic shapes. If these qualities were already implicit in her music before her friendship with Hepworth and Nicholson, they were more fully realised as Rainier came to share the artists' preoccupation with purity of line and with the luminosity of austere texture.

Doubtless her memories of childhood in Natal inform her music, though she always denied any overt African influence. She might well have echoed Nicholson: 'It's not the stones that I paint, it's the spirit of the place'. Like her artist friends, she was excited by the rhythm of pattern and pulse, by the potential of a bare outline etched on a flat surface. Form is intuitive: the music does not tell stories but, in Stravinsky's words, expresses itself.

A critic reviewing Rainier's work after the war referred to her as 'a young Frenchman'. Evidently all composers were assumed to be European and male! Others were better informed: Rainier's work began to attract attention, notably from William Glock. He remained a champion of her work, commissioning several works for the Proms after he became BBC Controller of Music. Other distinguished musicians who commissioned her were Peter Pears and Yehudi Menuhin. In some ways, therefore, her life as a composer was closely linked to the British musical establishment. Yet she felt herself to be excluded: she believed that she was regarded, whether for reasons of nationality or gender, as an outsider.

To be an outsider is double-edged: the disadvantages are obvious, but there are advantages too. Marginalisation means a lack of opportunity, but it also breeds a non-conformist spirit, a freedom from the constraints of modishness. Rainier belongs to no 'school'; her music has the clarity of an individual and idiosyncratic voice.

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### **Priaulx Rainier remembered...**

Priaulx Rainier was a significant influence upon my musical development, and it has been a particular pleasure for me to be involved in this recording. My first composition teacher at the Royal Academy of Music was an eminent composer, also immensely charming and urbane. It seemed that I was most fortunate to study with such a distinguished figure, but I soon came to realise that the sum total of his compositional advice was to 'bring something nice again next week'. Eventually, I found the need for a more rigorous approach, and I transferred to Priaulx Rainier—a composer who had gained a reputation for her abilities as a teacher. Until then, I had only been aware of a handful of works and a seemingly austere presence. Although some of her finest music was still to be written, she was already known to be a composer of carefully crafted scores, mostly small in scale, although the musical arguments expounded in works such as the *Viola Sonata* are not commensurate with their relative brevity. Early on, I had been introduced to the *Barbaric Dance Suite* by my friend and its dedicatee Margaret Kitchin, and I attended the first performance of the *Five Keyboard Pieces* at the Wigmore Hall. In those days, keyboard works such as these were considered 'difficult' and 'modern'—certainly far removed from the pastoral cosiness that was prevalent in English music at that time. There was a freshness and vitality about Rainier's music which convinced me that I might be able to gain from her teaching, but I was not prepared for her uncompromising attitudes.

On attending my first session, I presented some piano pieces which I had already had the audacity to play in public, only to be told by Priaulx that 'these are mere sketches'. This was typical of her uncompromising attitude, although she was essentially a kind and warm hearted woman; she also had a tremendous sense of fun, and could be prone to almost uncontrollable giggles. I shall never forget being at a concert with Priaulx of 'Musique Concrète' presented by Pierre Schaeffer at the Wigmore Hall. The reverence displayed by the majority of the audience was punctured by a red faced Priaulx spluttering with mirth. She could also be very severe; she was quite shocked to hear that I had seen a performance of *West Side Story*, and at a Dartington Summer School she upbraided me for forsaking incomprehensible analysis lectures by Luigi Nono for the far more attractive classes of the pianist Vlado Perlmutter.

As a teacher, she never imposed her will, but was willing to enter into the sound world of the work that was being scrutinised, always making constructive comments, so that one never left a lesson feeling despondent or unable to continue with the piece in hand. Of course, she shared her enthusiasms for Stravinsky and Bartok with all her students, and one of her main objectives was to assist in the avoidance of mundane utterances; she was particularly adept at injecting rhythmic vitality into passages which she considered lacking in that respect.

Priaulx Rainier was an exceptional woman; her stern appearance belied a warm, generous personality. Her apparent reserve could be attributed to acute shyness, but beneath the surface there were reserves of humour and charm. My last encounter with Priaulx was on the occasion of her 80th birthday which was celebrated in style at the Wigmore Hall, and preceded by a discussion at the BMIC. With typical modesty she told me that she was both fortunate and surprised to see so many friends; of course, we were the fortunate ones.

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## **SADIE HARRISON**

Sadie Harrison (born 1965 in Australia) is now emerging as one of the foremost composers of her generation. Though her music has no stylistic link with that of Rainier, she too has a strikingly individual voice that defies categorisation into a 'school'. Perhaps it is not coincidental that she also has remained somewhat outside the inner circle of British contemporary music.

Harrison, like Rainier, left her native country in early life. She too exchanged wide skies and expansive landscapes for the clutter and clamour of London and the intensity of metropolitan concert life. A music degree (with first class honours) at Surrey was followed by postgraduate study at King's College London, where she won a succession of prizes. By the time of her doctorate (1993) her professional career was well established. In this she was unlike Rainier, for Harrison was composing prolifically in her twenties and never mistook her vocation.

These early works - music for chamber ensemble, large ensemble, voice and chamber orchestra - are virtuosic, both in their challenge to performers and in their technical brilliance. However intricate or dense the texture, the music has a radiance which characterises all Harrison's work, and stems from the sureness of her ear. The musical language is complex (and not a little indebted to Boulez) but it is deployed with a deceptive ease.

Harrison herself was not at ease in these works: she came to feel that their technical assurance was too dominant and was masking her own identity. Though these early pieces won her considerable accolades, she turned away from them in a search for a more direct expression of her musical ideas. A bleak span of nearly two years without composing turned out to be a positive experience: in distancing herself from the contemporary music fraternity, Harrison found a new independence of thought. Without compromising either the sophistication of her palette or the distinctiveness of her musical imagery, she discovered ways of shaping her music more lucidly. The fluency remains, but the melodic and rhythmic contours are simpler, the textures more spacious.

All three chamber works on this CD bear witness to these qualities. The beguiling fluidity of the music is created by the composed rubato and the fluctuating tempi: nothing is constant, passages of intense energy dissolving into moments of limpid stillness. The ambiguities of the harmonic language offer surprise alongside familiarity; the music is by turns dramatic and reflective, extrovert and intimate. Harrison has an endlessly inventive fantasy, yet her skill in forming and transforming musical shapes means that we are never disoriented. It is not difficult to find a path through this music and discover its rewards, and with repeated hearings we can savour it with deepening pleasure.

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## **No Title Required**

The title of this work is taken from a poem of the same name by the Polish poet, Wislawa Szymborska (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996). The content of the poem, which considers the importance of revolutions, tyrannicides and political conspiracies in relation to skimming shadows, fluttering white butterflies and windblown clouds, has no bearing whatsoever on the substance or structure of the musical work. Nonetheless, it seemed completely appropriate given the circumstances surrounding the work's composition.

*No Title Required* has two movements. The first is fast and virtuosic, the second, lyrical and colouristic. Both have the same formal pattern - a series of variations where one aspect of each section provides the 'theme' for the following variation. Whereas the first movement juxtaposes blocks of material to create a disjunct, segmented structure, the second weaves lines together to create a single, flexible texture (disrupted towards the end by 'reminiscences' of the work's opening).

*No Title Required* was commissioned by Double Image (to whom the work is dedicated) and has received several performances worldwide. The work was chosen to represent Australia in the ISCM World Music Days, Hong Kong in 2002.

### Three Expositions

The piece is based on three musical fragments, heard in their most basic form in the opening phrase. The first fragment, two 'bell-like' harmonics, develops into a lyrical Song. The second, a group of fast semiquavers, become an agitated, virtuosic Dance and the third, an angular, syncopated figure acts as an interruption cutting off the development of Dance and Song. The three characters are juxtaposed in a collage-like structure with the expressive Song gradually transforming the other musics into versions of itself.

*Three Expositions* was written for Carola Neilinger in the Spring of 1997.

### After Colonna

This work is the second in a series that takes its inspiration from the extraordinary 15th-century mythological romance, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (meaning 'the strife of love in a dream'). The text was presumed authored by the infamous friar, Francesco Colonna. Although one of the most famous books of its day, the first English translation (by Joscelyn Godwin) appeared only in 1999. This was due to the difficulty of the highly stylised and arcane text, which relates the story of Poliphilo's quest for his beloved Polia through a series of obsessively detailed allegories and elaborate descriptions of architecture, gardens, pageantary and music. The action takes place entirely in Poliphilo's dreams and as such the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* has been described as a sustained erotic fantasy. However, Poliphilo's turmoil is caused not just by his excessive desire for Polia but also by his passion for Antiquity, a forgotten past that he recreates in glory within his idealised dreamstate.

Like the book, my work is divided into three main narrative sections which run without a break. It opens with a drifting, sensuous depiction of Poliphilo's dreamworld. This builds towards a passionate and luminous climax as the hero supposedly reaches his lover (with overt references to the ecstatic trills of Scriabin's Tenth Sonata). However, echoing Poliphilo's realisation that he has found Polia only in his dreams, the music disintegrates into a chaotic and panicked exchange between the instruments. The work concludes with a fleeting reference to the opening, drawing the listener back into the world of Poliphilo's sleep.

*After Colonna* is dedicated to David Carhart and Miriam Lowbury who premiered the work in 2001.

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**DOUBLE IMAGE** was formed in 1989 and soon established itself as a vibrant and versatile ensemble, specialising in the performance of music by women, and works by little known or neglected composers. Their large repertoire ranges from the Viennese classics to music of today. They have performed the complete cycle of Beethoven trios on several occasions. A 10th-anniversary celebration concert at St John's Smith Square prompted a critic to remark that "Double Image is an important chamber ensemble in our musical life, of a standard all too rarely encountered today". The ensemble recently completed a 5 year residency at the University of Southampton, and last year, a 'year of the artist' award allowed them to present a series of workshops and concerts for the University of the Third Age (U3A) in London. Double Image has appeared at all major venues in London and on Channel 4 Television.

Further information about DOUBLE IMAGE can be found at their website:  
[www.doubleimagemusic.org](http://www.doubleimagemusic.org)

Further information on the music of Sadie Harrison can be found at the UYMP website:  
[www.uymp.co.uk](http://www.uymp.co.uk)

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## PRIAULX RAINIER

### Suite for clarinet and piano (1943)

Andrew Sparling (clarinet) and David Carhart (piano)

- |    |     |                                |             |
|----|-----|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | I   | <b>Vivace</b>                  | <b>3:58</b> |
| 2. | II  | <b>Andante come da lontano</b> | <b>1:51</b> |
| 3. | III | <b>Spiritoso</b>               | <b>2:03</b> |
| 4. | IV  | <b>Lento e tranquillo</b>      | <b>2:52</b> |
| 5. | V   | <b>Allegro con fuoco</b>       | <b>2:04</b> |

### Five Pieces for keyboard

David Carhart (piano)

- |     |     |               |             |
|-----|-----|---------------|-------------|
| 6.  | I   | <b>(1952)</b> | <b>3:16</b> |
| 7.  | II  | <b>(1955)</b> | <b>2:17</b> |
| 8.  | III | <b>(1952)</b> | <b>1:10</b> |
| 9.  | IV  | <b>(1951)</b> | <b>2:23</b> |
| 10. | V   | <b>(1952)</b> | <b>2:55</b> |

### Viola Sonata (1945)

Bridget Carey (viola) and David Carhart (piano)

- |     |     |                           |             |
|-----|-----|---------------------------|-------------|
| 11. | I   | <b>Allegro. Ricercare</b> | <b>3:45</b> |
| 12. | II  | <b>Andante tranquillo</b> | <b>4:37</b> |
| 13. | III | <b>Presto</b>             | <b>2:55</b> |

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METIER Records website: [www.metierrecords.co.uk](http://www.metierrecords.co.uk)

## SADIE HARRISON

### No Title Required (1994)

Carola Neillinger (flute), Andrew Sparling (clarinet), Philippa Ibbotson (violin), Miriam Lowbury ('cello) and David Carhart (piano)

- |     |    |             |
|-----|----|-------------|
| 14. | I  | <b>5:19</b> |
| 15. | II | <b>6:40</b> |

- |     |                                 |             |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 16. | <b>Three Expositions (1997)</b> | <b>8:15</b> |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------|

Carola Neillinger (flute)

- |     |                             |              |
|-----|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 17. | <b>After Colonna (2001)</b> | <b>12:44</b> |
|-----|-----------------------------|--------------|

Miriam Lowbury ('cello) and David Carhart (piano)

Total time 70:15



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