



## Chamber Music 2000

Over the past 6 years **The Schubert Ensemble**, one of this country's leading chamber ensembles, who have a particular enthusiasm for playing the music of living composers, have commissioned over 40 composers to write pieces as part of an initiative called **Chamber Music 2000**. The aim of this project is to provide challenging but accessible repertoire (both to listen to and to play) for young people and amateurs, whilst ensuring the integrity of the composers' own musical language. The works – the longest of which is just over 6 minutes – include music by Martin Butler, Judith Weir, Michael Finnissy, John Woolrich and Colin & David Matthews. All the pieces are scored for piano and strings and there is something for every ability from grade 4 upwards.

### The Repertoire

A complete list of the repertoire is available from the Chamber Music 2000 website ([www.chambermusic2000.com](http://www.chambermusic2000.com)). All the works are all available from the British Music Information Centre which you can either visit in person at Lincoln House, 75 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1, phone on 0207 928 1902 or contact via their website [www.bmic.co.uk](http://www.bmic.co.uk). Scores and parts are sold at a not for profit rate and a number of them can be viewed on their website before you purchase them.

### Recordings

37 Chamber Music 2000 works have been recorded by The Schubert Ensemble and are available from NMC. **A White Room** (2001) and **Bright Future** (2003) provide a valuable resource when choosing and/or learning repertoire. Copies of the CDs are available from [www.nmcrec.co.uk](http://www.nmcrec.co.uk) reference numbers D075 (A White Room) and D080 (Bright Futures)

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**The Linbury Trust**

**The Radcliffe Trust**



# Content

## **This education pack contains:**

- General notes on playing in an ensemble
- Notes on composing a technically simple piece
- A score of the work
- A biography of the composer
- A programme note on the piece
- Hints from the composer and the Schubert Ensemble on learning the piece
- Suggestions for works you might like to listen to, read or look at to help you to understand the background to the piece.

NB Where the composer is quoted his/her initials will follow the quotation.  
With thanks to all the composers for their input into these packs

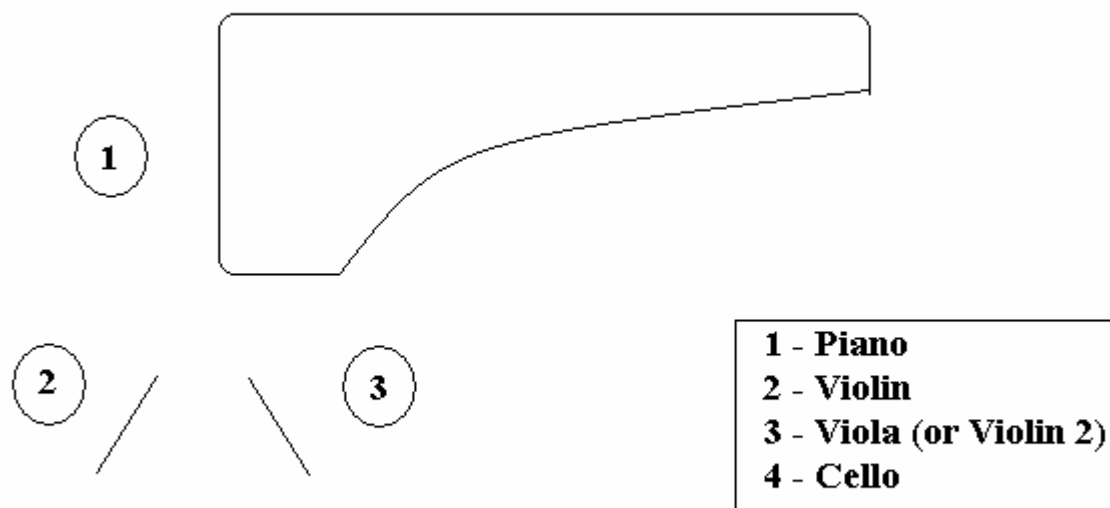
Helen Reid, Projects Manager (2004)

## Some Basics of Ensemble playing

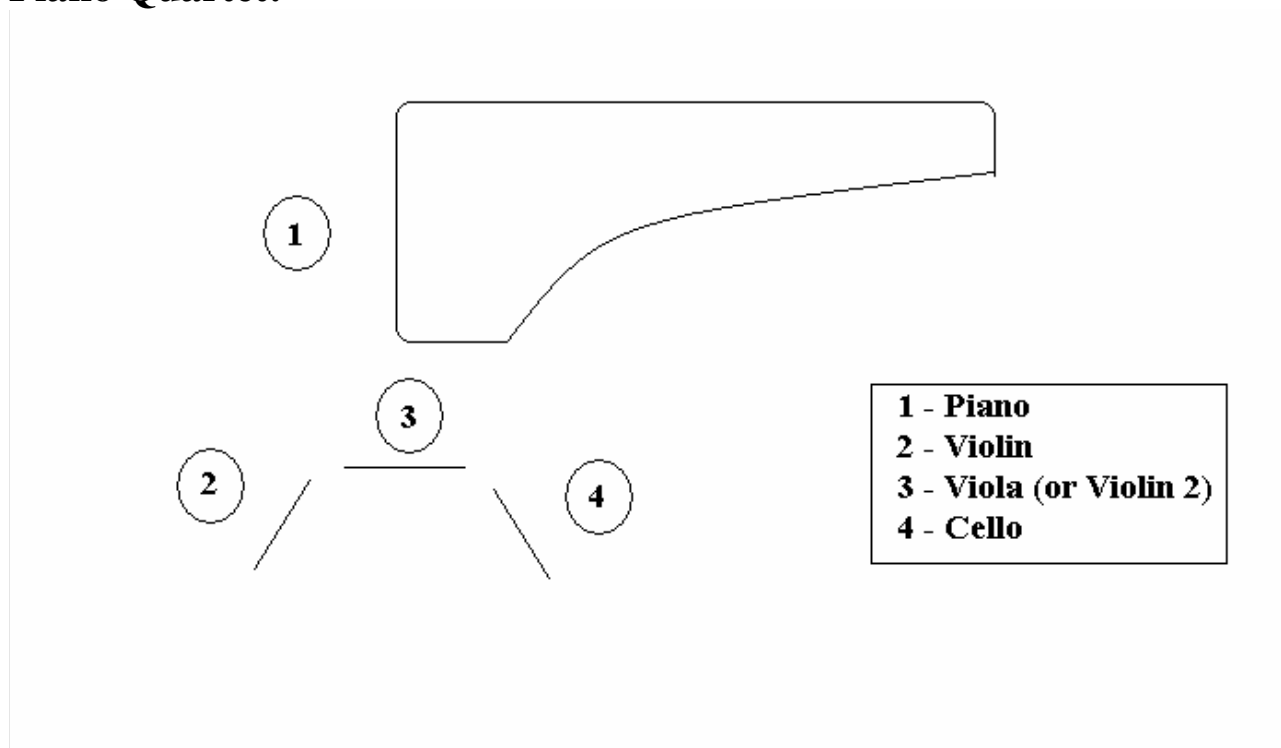
### Seating

- Although you will probably not always have access to a grand piano, you should always aim to sit in a way which enables as much communication as possible. In particular, try to arrange things so that everyone can see the first violin player. Suggestions for seating are set out below:

### Piano Trio:



### Piano Quartet:



As a general rule, the music stands of the string players should be set up close to one another.

## **Tuning**

- The lead violin should tune to the piano A, after which the other string players should tune to the violin one at a time.

## **The First Rehearsal**

- If it is possible, sight-read through the piece to gain an overall idea of the structure and the sound.
- If a piece is rhythmically complex it may be helpful for everyone in the ensemble to have a copy of the score at least for the first few rehearsals.
- In addition, it is very important for the string players to write cues in their parts. Examples of possible cues are given in the hints for learning the piece in the next section.
- All the members of the ensemble should also locate landmarks in the piece where they come together. These could be rhythmic, at a double bar, at a point where all members have a bar rest or are playing in unison, for example. This is useful, both as a reference point during a rehearsal and to build confidence for a performance
- **Finding a Tempo** – When you are deciding on a speed, try to think of the pulse of the piece and feel it physically.
- **Leading** - It is important that all members of the ensemble feel the start of a piece together, rather than one player leading and the rest of the group following. Think of this as ‘mutual conducting’ and practice with different members of the group leading the start.

## **Dynamics**

- Try to feel dynamics as a group and make them so clear that somebody would be able to take them down as a dictation.

## **Listening**

- Try to develop an awareness of what those around you are playing. Listen outside your own instrument to the sound the whole group is producing.
- In rehearsal it can be useful for one member of the group to stop playing and listen to the other members, even conduct them.

## Judith Bingham

## Mystery of Boranup

### Biography



A composer since childhood, Judith Bingham was born in Nottingham, grew up in Sheffield and studied composition and singing at the Royal Academy of Music. She is an extremely successful composer who has won many awards including, the RAM's Principal's Prize in 1971 and the BBC Young Composer award in 1977. Her highly distinctive composition style won commissions from all over the world including, the BBC Philharmonic and Scottish Symphony, Northern Sinfonia and London Symphony orchestra, the Proms, King's College Cambridge, Westminster Abbey, Three Choirs Festival and many others. She writes in many musical genres; opera, orchestral, choral, brass, chamber music and pieces for use in education.

Her repertoire includes the highly performed *Chartres*, *Temple at Karnak*, *Piano Trio*, string trio *Fifty Shades of Green* (*Classical Music* magazine's Premiere of the Year, 2001) and *Prague*, the only work by a female composer chosen as a brass band test piece of the 2003 National Championships. Other works include the French premiere of *Salt in the Blood*, an all-Bingham Choirworks programme on Radio 3, an organ piece commissioned for the EBU Christmas linkup in 2003, new works for the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, USA and Opus Anglicanum and features on her music at the National Festival of Wind in Manchester this Easter and Vienna in September.

Judith has been involved in a variety of projects including a massive score to celebrate the completion of Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral, a substantial choral piece for the BBC (2003) and works for Okeanos, Chamber Domaine, Westminster Cathedral and the organ of Symphony hall Birmingham. A CD devoted entirely to Bingham's work has been recorded by Black Box (2003).

## Programme Note

I was in Western Australia and spent time walking in the great forest of Boranup: mile after mile of karri trees with their ghostly white trunks and lacy canopies. Occasionally you glimpse a kangaroo looking at you, then bounding easefully away.

This piece tries to capture the way such a forest appears to live as one great ancient organism where Man has only a transient, alien part. The strings imitate a didgeridu sound and rhythm, and the piano rises and falls in sixths, seldom going above middle C. JB

## Analysis

This piece takes as its base a strong pictorial image, as you can see from the programme note above. It is interesting to see how the composer translates this image into music. The cello begins, creating the atmosphere, and throughout the work moves almost exclusively in semitones, reflecting the wavering tone which is typical of the didgeridoo sound. The violin and viola/violin 2 also frequently move in semitones. When the piano enters it is very low and is instructed to 'creep in darkly' by the composer. The piano remains at a low register throughout, the depth suggests the scale of the forest. Towards the middle, we hear the kangaroo in the chords of the piano and at the end it appears in the string pizzicato before bounding away, leaving the piano with the didgeridoo sound to end.

From a compositional standpoint, this piece provides a perfect example of the translation of image to music using an economy and focus of musical material.

## Hints on learning this piece

### From the composer:

- 'Have a visual image in your mind before you start playing of a mysterious huge forest in which you are the intruder, a dream-like world that is both intangibly strange and beautiful. Imagine the sound of the didgeridoo before you play, an instrument created from trees, the voice of the trees as it were, imagine those loose swung rhythms. 'JB

### From the ensemble:

- Don't be scared of making a strange sound!
- This piece should be swung, it has an almost jazzy feel.
- At bar 26 the string players should write in the piano entry as a cue.
- The piano playing should be very legato to make it sound creepy.

## Discography/Bibliography

### Suggestions from the composer:

- In connection with this piece, a wonderful book is **Bruce Chatwin's 'Songlines'**, which I was reading on my last trip to Australia. He discovered how the Aborigines 'mapped out' Australia using song. JB
- If I were to recommend a piece of my own, it would be my string trio '**50 Shades of Green**' (available on request) which explored a similarly strange jungle landscape JB

### Other Suggestions:

- The didgeridoo is used by the pop star **Jamiroquai** on several of his albums.
- For examples of pictorial images translated into music, you could listen to Debussy 'La mer' and many other works by Debussy, in particular the preludes for piano.

## Philip Cashian

## Music for the night sky

### Biography



Philip Cashian was born in Manchester in 1963. He has forged a very successful career in composition which has led to being awarded the Britten Prize, Mendelssohn Scholarship and the PRS Prize. He has been commissioned to write works by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the Composers Ensemble, the Kreutzer and Bingham Quartets, the Endymion Ensemble, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, BBC National Orchestra of Wales (*Nightmaze* - 1991), the Haffner Wind Quintet, the Britten-Pears Orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia, Sinfonia 21 and the London Symphony Orchestra (*Night Journeys* – 1998). He has also collaborated with other composers – including Ian Spink on *The Soul Cages* for 2 dancers/actors and string quartet.

Cashian is also active as a 'composer in education' and has written a number of works for children and amateur musicians. These include *The Forest of Clocks* for voices and large ensemble and pieces for the Associated Board's *Spectrum I and II* solo piano collections. He is a lecturer in composition at Royal Holloway College, University of London and a visiting tutor at the Birmingham Conservatoire.

### Programme Note

*'Music for the Night Sky'* was written in July 1999 for my two year old son Noah. I wanted to write a very static and atmospheric piece that had no sense of direction and depended very much on 'feel'. The piano assumes the role of soloist, freely floating over the string trio in a harmonic haze. The music is written using proportional notation. This gives the performers more freedom in performance, something I'm keen to explore in chamber music. P.C.

## **Analysis**

In this piece, the compositional focus seems to be on the creation of a particular soundworld. The strings have a small fragment in each bar which is repeated and between them they create what the composer has described as a 'harmonic haze'. The performers' freedom is achieved through the players coming together only at the beginning of each fragment. The piano part is notated in order to give an improvisatory feel. The pianist is given a lot of choice in the placing of each fragment through pause marks.

## **Hints on learning this piece**

### **From the composer:**

- 'Don't rush! Let each bar last as long as it needs – each is its own musical statement.'  
'Even though the piano has a more soloistic role than the string instruments the strings should think carefully about the quality of sound they're making and shape each arpeggio' PC

### **From the ensemble:**

- Keep listening to the sounds during the pauses which can be as long as you like. Don't think about the next section until you're ready. Imagine you are listening to the piece as an audience member. (this is an important aspect to consider when performing any work).
- The piano part should be absolutely unhurried.

### **Other Hints:**

- In this piece, the performers learn some of the most important aspects of chamber music. It is a piece which depends on 'feel'. Every performance can be different. Players must communicate at the beginning of each bar, but thereafter work at their own speed, thus the piece combines a strong sense of communication and individuality.
- The violin has a crucial role in following the piano part and leading the other instruments at the beginning of each bar. Here, the body language of the violinist in leading is important.
- In this piece, the composer states in the programme note, his wish was to create a 'static and atmospheric piece'. Try to think of ways in which this could be achieved. Body language could also have a role to play here. The strings need to create as unified a sound as possible.

## **Discography/Bibliography**

### **Suggestions from the composer:**

- Toru Takemitsu – 'Rain Tree Sketch' (solo piano)
- Morton Feldman – Piano and string quartet

**Biography**

Piers Hellowell's work has been commissioned, broadcast and performed in many countries. He has for some years taught composition at the Queen's University of Belfast as the Chair of Composition; from 2000 to 2003 he was also Gresham Professor of Music, a visiting post at the City of London University.

Recent commissions in the U.K. include those from the BBC Proms, the Hilliard Ensemble, Schubert Ensemble of London and the London Symphony Orchestra, with performances at numerous British and overseas festivals. His works include *The Hilliard Songbook* (1996) described, in the words of *The Independent*, 'one of the most enduring of their many commissions', *Inside Story* (1999), *Driftwood on Sand* (2001), *The Pear Tree of Nicostratus* (2002), *Cors de Chasse* (2004), *The Sage Gateshead* (Dec 2004) and *Landscape with Portraits* (2004).

Other collaborations have involved Michala Petri, Evelyn Glennie, Psappha, The Scottish Ensemble, Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, Medici String Quartet, The RTE Vanbrugh String Quartet and Trio Mediaeval.

Piers describes his music –

"Since the mid 1980s I have reacted strongly against the ornate surfaces of much instrumental music of our time. I seek in my work a more direct expression, particularly in my rhythmic and harmonic materials, yet I welcome the diversity that comes from uniting disparate, even dangerous elements under one roof."

**Programme Note**

*A white room* was the second short piece to be commissioned by the Schubert Ensemble for Chamber Music 2000. It was written in spring of 1999, during the composition of *Inside Story*, a double concerto for the 1999 BBC Proms.

*A white room* complements its predecessor in that it is a hushed scherzo rather than a slow aria; the latter type was by 1999 becoming rather prevalent among Chamber Music 2000 commissions, and the Schubert Ensemble suggested that I tackle the challenge of writing 'easy' fast music.

It turned out to be a challenge indeed; my solution to creating rapid movement using players of unknown technique was to employ ostinato repetition of simple fragments, largely using open strings - materials of a sort that in any case feature in my wider musical language. In addition I supplemented the rhythmic drive by percussive drumming on piano and cello (also aspects typical of me). These features add up to a sound picture in which rhythmic momentum predominates over

line - though a chorale fragment  
persistently tries to establish itself.

The title *a white room* indicates that this piece is an uncluttered space, a location in sound perhaps free of the more exotic images in *Hall Of Mirrors*.

## Analysis

In the twentieth century the concept of what music is was stretched to include just about anything. The culmination of the question of what constitutes music reached its climax in John Cage's 4'33 which consists of 4'33 of 'silence'. Of course, this is a piece which is different every time in performance depending on outside noises. During the last half century, pieces have been written for piano asking the pianist to play on the piano and inside the piano, as well as using the keys! In this piece, Piers Hellawell, as well as using pitched notes, asks the pianist and the cellist to use their instruments in a percussive way which sets up the rhythmic momentum. Indeed, the focus of this work is its rhythmic drive. The cello also plays glissandi which add to the interesting soundworld created in this work.

## Hints on learning this piece

### From the composer:

- 'It is very important to stay absolutely rhythmic within the metre, if the parts are to fit together. Once that is achieved, other freedom can begin, but it must be like clockwork at least to begin with!' PH
- 'Where you play something weird like a knocking or scraping sound, it is important to enjoy this. If you think 'oh no, this is weird - I feel embarrassed', you will not only look like that but also sound half-hearted. Only enthusiasm will make it sound good.' PH

### From the Ensemble:

- Don't be scared of strange sounds
- Cues are especially important in this piece.
- Examples of landmarks: b21, b29.
- It is very important that pianists remain very aware in this work.
- The energy in this piece comes from a strong sense of pulse and very clear dynamics. Even when playing *pp* make the sound very energetic.
- Build up the speed gradually in rehearsals.

## Discography/Bibliography

### Suggested by the composer:

- 'Of my works, *Truth Or Consequences* (for trio) or any of the three pieces from *Sound Carvings* series; all these are on a CD (MET CD1029) actually called 'Sound Carvings', on the Metronome label. I mention these because the sound-world is perhaps close to *A White Room*.' PH
- 'My own favorite trios from the classical repertoire are the Ravel, Brahms nos 1 and 3 and Beethoven's *Archduke* Trio.' PH

**Judith Weir**

**Arise, arise! You slumbering sleepers**

## **Biography**



Judith Weir is a British composer who studied composition, whilst at school in London, with John Tavener, and, at Cambridge University, with Robin Holloway. She is the holder of a Critics' Circle Award (1994), a CBE (1995), and the Lincoln Center's Stoeger Prize (1997), and in autumn 1999 became the inaugural holder of the Hambro Visiting Professorship in Opera Studies at Oxford University. From 1995-98 she held the post of Fairbairn Composer in Association with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

From the early 1980s, Judith Weir spent ten years working predominantly in opera and music theatre, and her three full length operas *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, *The Vanishing Bridegroom*, and *Blond Eckbert* have all been televised, and performed in Britain and the US. More recently Judith has concentrated on chamber music and on pieces of all sizes for the musicians of the CBSO. The creation of music which actively involves a wide musical community has been a particular priority for her and she has spent a considerable amount of time working with amateur and student musicians.

Her works have been commissioned and performed by, amongst others, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Schubert Ensemble, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Sir Simon Rattle, Dawn Upshaw, Jessye Norman and the BBC Proms.

## **Programme Note**

*Arise! arise! you slumbering sleepers* for piano quartet, was written for the Schubert Ensemble's Chamber Music 2000 project in 1999. It is based on an English/American folksong called 'Arise! arise! you slumbering sleepers', which is heard in fragments against a bell-like ostinato. I have dedicated the piece to Margaret Semple, who taught me music, in the most inspiring way, when I was at school.

This work is based on an English folk song collected in the Southern Appalachian mountains by Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles. Anything about folk song, folk music, emigration of music might be interesting and helpful in learning this piece - JW

## **Analysis**

Folk song (music of the people) has always been a strong influence in music. A tradition which has been passed through the generations orally, composers such as Bartok and Kodaly also made collections of the folk music which they heard around them. Many composers have used elements of folk song in their music (see discography). In this piece Judith Weir has taken the folk song as a basis and it is played in many different ways throughout the work in a similar way to a set of variations.

## **Hints on learning this piece**

### **Hints from the Composer:**

- Play the dynamics very vividly, grade the difference between mf,f,ff,fff etc very carefully. JW
- Try and think of it as 1 in a bar. This will help a lot when it moves from 3 crotchets in a bar to 4:3 and later back to 3 crotchets in a bar. JW

### **Hints from the ensemble:**

- The 1 in a bar is crucial to this piece. It will help if all members of the ensemble feel and lead each bar (especially those in which you are not playing!) There are many sections where feeling 1 in a bar is particularly helpful, see bars 26, 97 and 152, for example.
- Work hard on the first four bars as these really set up the whole piece.
- Don't take this piece too quickly. It is also easy to rush at places, bars 112 and 120, for example.
- Practice leading the last note AND coming off together!

## **Discography/Bibliography**

### **Suggestions from the composer:**

'Of my own work - I would recommend the recent double CD of my work on NMC (D090) which contains many folk-influenced chamber pieces, along with Arise arise played by the Schubert Ensemble.' JW

'Of work by others, I suggest exploring what English folk music you can find on CD - it used to be that there wasn't very much, but the whole field is undergoing a renaissance and there is a lot of interesting work happening now' JW

### **Other Suggestions:**

- Bartok – Rumanian Folk Dances for violin and piano

# John Woolrich      Five Pieces

## Biography



John Woolrich is a widely respected British composer, whose career has been varied but very much focused in composition. As well as composing he has also been a lecturer in composition and Composer in Residence at many British music colleges and universities, founded the Composers Ensemble (in 1989) and Hoxton New Music Days (in 1998) and organised many orchestral educational workshops.

There are several common threads running through Woolrich's music.

1. **Song** – the songs respond to a wide range of texts from the simplest folk poem to the fantastical visions of E.T.A. Hoffmann.
2. **Machines** – Combining instruments with machines. This influence can be felt most notably in *The Barber's Timepiece*, *The Ghost in the Machine* and *It is midnight, Dr Schweitzer*.
3. **Early music and the art of "re-composition"** - which has resulted in some of his most performed works - *Ulysses Awakes*, *Ariadne Laments*, *Favola in Musica I & II*; a series of works related to or inspired by Mozart including *The theatre represents a garden: night* and *Si va facendo notte*; and three pieces with influences of Purcell.

Other music composed by John Woolrich includes – an Oboe Concerto (1996), an opera - *In the House of Crossed Desires* (1996), a Cello Concerto (1998) and a Concerto for Orchestra (1999). His works have been performed and commissioned by, amongst others, BBC Symphony Orchestra (including a CD released by NMC), the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Music Theatre Wales, the Cheltenham Festival and the London Mozart Players

## Programme Note

This piano quartet is made up of five character pieces: the first a toccata, often simply a unison line hammered out, and the last a monolithic chorale. In between is a sequence of three miniature slow movements: a duet for violin and piano, a spectral night-piece, and a dark adagio.

## Analysis

In these pieces, Woolrich has taken as a starting point titles which already have a certain resonance. A Toccata, coming from the Italian *toccare* – to touch, is traditionally an exploration of just that and it is clear from the score that articulation and dynamics have a major role to play in the effectiveness of this movement. The third movement is entitled Nocturnal, having a clear connection with the more commonly used 'Nocturne'. Literally, 'of the night', Nocturnes have been

written by many composers, including most famously, Chopin (see discography). While the title of this work is 'Five Pieces', the separate pieces do additionally seem to function as a whole, enforced by the inclusion of an adagio as the fourth movement. The last piece, chorale, similarly to the toccata, was a form frequently used during the baroque period (see discography).

## Hints on learning this piece

### From the composer:

- Stravinsky said that he wrote 'bar-line music', by which I think he meant that his music didn't float over the top of the barlines, but instead the barlines are strongly emphasised. I feel the same. JW
- If the time signatures are quaver-based, think in quavers. JW

### From the ensemble:

- Toccata – All members of the ensemble should have a copy of the score and write in cues
- Practise with 1 member counting/conducting.
- Dynamics and articulation are very important (e.g. b4)
- Calmo – Calm/expressive, listen to the intervals carefully. The whole of this short piece is based on the interval of a minor third, or its inversion, a major sixth.

## Discography/Bibliography

### Suggestions from the composer:

- Just to give a context, the Schubert Ensemble's CD of my music, *Toward the Dark Sky* (on Black Box – ref: 1092) is very much the same atmosphere. Most of the pieces are for different combinations of piano and strings. Faber Music publishes the scores. Pianists could look at my *Pianobooks* (also Faber).JW

- If you want to look further afield, the Italian composer Luciano Berio wrote accessible, brilliant and moving music. Pianists could look at his *Erdenklavier*, violinists his *Duetti* for pairs or groups of violins, and if you can find a singer, (plus flute, clarinet, piano, violin and cello) his piece 'O King' is wonderful. JW

### Other Suggestions:

- Chopin – Nocturnes for piano
  - Bach – Toccatas and chorales.
- (Both of the above will give a background to the genre)