NAXOS

Lyell
CRESSWELL

Landscapes of the Soul
Piano Concerto
Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet

Stephen De Pledge, Piano
New Zealand String Quartet
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Hamish McKeich

# Lyell Cresswell (b. 1944)
## Piano Concerto · I Paesaggi dell'anima · Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet

### Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

This piano concerto is written in memory of a close friend, the composer, Edward Harper, who died on Easter Sunday 2009. The concerto is in seven movements, which are played without a break:

1. Funeral March –
2. Adagio 1 –
3. Scherzo 1 –
4. Addolorato –
5. Scherzo 2 –
6. Adagio 2 –
7. Presto

Movements 3, 4, 5 and 6 were written before Edward died, but he was already ill with cancer and the whole concerto was written under the shadow of this.

The first movement, *Funeral March*, opens with a sequence of low six-note chords in the piano. These chords provide the basis for the complete concerto and are treated in various contrasting ways in each movement. The orchestra becomes an extension of the piano, sustaining these chords and taking them where the piano cannot go. The concerto is not a confrontation between soloist and orchestra – the piano is more like another section of the orchestra. A slow throbbing, but varying, pulse runs through the *Funeral March*, first in the harp, sometimes the timpani, sometimes pizzicato and, at the climax, with brass and woodwind. In the following tranquil *Adagio* the six-note chords are turned into serene melodic lines with quiet sustained chords in the strings. The first *Scherzo* is short, fast and restless. The central movement, *Addolorato* (distressed, grieving, upset), is, in turn, slow and reflective (in the piano), and querulous and disturbing (in the orchestra), posing questions rather than offering solutions. The second *Scherzo* is fast, light and fleeting – with a hushed centre. The second *Adagio* is composed of slow, unsettled and quiet chords leading to an angry outburst at the climax, and the pace in the final *Presto* is only interrupted briefly with some reference to *Adagio 1*.

The composer gratefully acknowledges the generosity of Jack Richards in commissioning this concerto for Stephen De Pledge.

### I Paesaggi dell'anima (Landscapes of the soul)

*I Paesaggi dell'anima* was written as part of a project exploring the links between music, painting and landscape. The plan was to look into the affinities between the creation of painting and of music through dialogue between painter and composer based on the idea of landscape. The project involved the Italian painter Maurizio Bottarelli and myself.

Painters interpret the landscape as abstract patterns. They examine tiny details or take a large overview, they probe the many different aspects of every colour and the play of light and shade, and they scrutinise the shapes, lines, angles and movement within the landscape. In the same way the music of *I Paesaggi dell'anima* follows imaginary landscape patterns through rhythm, colour, line and evolving motifs.

### Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet

The *Concerto for Orchestra and Sting Quartet* is in one continuous movement, which comprises eleven sections – there is also an introduction and a short coda to round things off. In the introduction the trumpet introduces the melodic material on which the whole piece is based. Within the one movement framework there are elements of a more traditional concerto form – three movements: fast, slow, fast. But this design is fragmented to create the following pattern: Introduction A B C B A B A B C B C Coda  (A = the first movement, which in turn becomes a kind of scherzo; B = the slow movement, and C = the finale).

It is some five minutes before the quartet plays together. The soloists are gradually introduced as follows:
viola … viola + 1st violin … cello … viola + cello …
1st violin … 1st violin + 2nd violin …
1st violin + 2nd violin + viola
and eventually (in the third section) the whole quartet.

So there is a progression from individual soloists, through dialogue among the four players, to a unanimous voice. The orchestra has three rôles: to accompany the quartet, to assist the quartet (solo instruments from the orchestra are sometimes used to enrich the quartet), and to contribute to the musical argument by, for instance, signalling changes in direction or taking over from the quartet.

During the writing of this work some friends died far too early. It is dedicated to their memory. The concerto was commissioned by the City of Aberdeen with subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council and first performed by the Yggdrasil Quartet and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in February 1997.

**Lyell Cresswell**


*Photo by Piero Casadei*

### Lyell Cresswell

Lyell Cresswell was born in Wellington, New Zealand. He studied in Wellington, Toronto, Aberdeen and Utrecht. From 1978-80 he was Music Organiser at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff; from 1980-82 Forman Fellow in Composition at Edinburgh University, and from 1982-85 Cramb Fellow in Composition at Glasgow University. Since then he has been a full-time composer based in Edinburgh. Lyell Cresswell's music has been featured at many festivals around the world. The numerous awards he has received include a Scottish Arts Council Creative Scotland Award (2001), an honorary D.Mus from Victoria University of Wellington (2002), the inaugural Elgar Bursary (2002), and the Sounz Contemporary Award for his *Piano Concerto* (2011). In 2006–7 he was Creative New Zealand / New Zealand School of Music Composer in Residence.
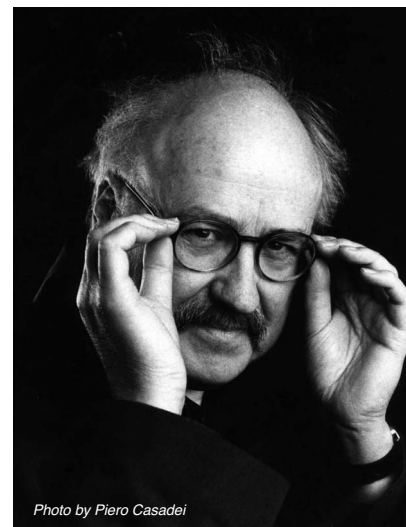
### Stephen De Pledge

New Zealand pianist Stephen De Pledge has a wide-ranging career as soloist and chamber musician. He has performed with orchestras including the Philharmonia, BBC Scottish Symphony, Bournemouth Symphony and New London, and appeared at many international festivals in countries including the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Italy, Zimbabwe and New Zealand. His solo engagements have included performances in Hong Kong, New York, Tokyo, Paris, and the Wigmore Hall in London, where he has played numerous times since his début in 1999. Stephen De Pledge has made many acclaimed recordings, including the recorded premières of works by Bliss, Gorecki, Pärt, and Rorem, and works by Messiaen, Shostakovich, Beethoven and Brahms. He has also given the premières of many works written especially for him, including Cresswell's *Concerto*, and the *New Zealand Landscape Preludes*, a suite of short piano pieces by twelve different composers. **www.stephendepledge.com**

*Photo by Jack Liebeck*

### Hamish McKeich

Hamish McKeich has established an acclaimed partnership with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He served as the Orchestra's Associate Conductor from 2002-2006, continuing thereafter to perform and record with them. Working regularly in Australia and Europe and conducting all the major Orchestras in New Zealand, he has performed in New Zealand, Australia, China, the Netherlands, England, Armenia, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, France and Germany. Initially a bassoonist, he studied conducting with Ilya Musin, Valery Gergiev and Sian Edwards. Recently he has conducted the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Elision Ensemble, Metropole Orkest, Asko Ensemble of Holland, Orchestra Filarmonica Italiana, Armenian Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, Adelaide Symphony, Melbourne Symphony, Queensland Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia and the Christchurch Symphony amongst others. He has given over ninety world premières of new works and is also chief conductor of the contemporary ensemble Stroma. In 2012 Hamish McKeich was awarded a Douglas Lilburn Trust citation for services to New Zealand music. **www.mckeich.net**

*Photo by Tracy Valarie*

### New Zealand String Quartet
**Helene Pohl, violin · Douglas Beilman, violin · Gillian Ansell, viola · Rolf Gjelsten, cello**

The New Zealand String Quartet has an established reputation for its fresh approach to ensemble music. Drawing from an every-expanding repertoire the Quartet remains tireless in its quest to deliver world-class programmes embracing everything from the great classics to the boundary-pushing works of contemporary New Zealand and international composers. Career highlights have included acclaimed débuts in London at the Wigmore Hall, in New York at the prestigious Frick Collection and Washington's Library of Congress Coolidge Auditorium. International tours and festival successes have taken the group to Canada and the United States for twice-yearly visits as well as throughout Europe and to Mexico, Curaçao, Korea, Australia, Sweden and China. The New Zealand String Quartet's extensive discography includes Bartók, Ravel, Debussy, Beethoven, Dvořák, Berg and Wolf, the complete Mendelssohn string quartets on the Naxos label and works by numerous New Zealand composers. *Notes from a Journey*, a collection of works by New Zealand composers, won best classical album at the New Zealand Music Awards in 2011. Their latest Naxos release, *Asian Music for String Quartet*, is enjoying critical acclaim. Dedicated teachers as well as performers, the group has been quartet-in-residence at Victoria University of Wellington, now the New Zealand School of Music, since 1991. In North America they have been artists/teachers-in-residence at the Banff Centre, Quartet Fest West, and The Quartet Program at Bucknell, Pennsylvania. The current members of the New Zealand String Quartet have played together as a full-time professional ensemble for twenty years.

*Photo by Robin White ScorpionMedia*

**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra**

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is the country's national full size, full-time professional orchestra and one of the world's oldest national symphony orchestras, in existence since 1946. The orchestra is continually on the road, touring as many as a hundred symphonic concerts as well as dozens of dedicated concerts for children and small communities each year. In 2010, the NZSO completed the most prestigious and successful international tour in their history, appearing at the Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern, the Victoria Hall, Geneva, the Shanghai World Expo and the Musikverein, Vienna. Earlier tours have featured concerts at the BBC Proms, the Snape Maltings in England and the Aichi World Expo in Japan. Led by Music Director Pietari Inkinen, the NZSO has won consistent praise in the press for its performances, both in concerts and on recordings. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. More than one million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the past decade. **www.nzso.co.nz**



*Photo by Patrycja Szwarczynska*

Lyell Cresswell, one of New Zealand's most distinguished composers, is represented on this recording by three examples of his mastery of the orchestral sound world. His *Piano Concerto* is cast in seven movements, written in memory of his fellow composer Edward Harper, and suffused in expressive intensity, by turns grieving and unsettled. *I Paesaggi dell'anima* explores affinities between music and art through imaginary landscape patterns. The *Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet* is ingeniously constructed and pursues the idea of progression from solo voices, to quartet interplay and finally to a unanimous voice.

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## Lyell
# CRESSWELL
### (b. 1944)

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|---|---|---:|
| **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra** | | **29:33** |
| 1 | Funeral March – | 5:45 |
| 2 | Adagio I – | 4:20 |
| 3 | Scherzo I – | 2:04 |
| 4 | Addolorato – | 4:40 |
| 5 | Scherzo II – | 3:35 |
| 6 | Adagio II – | 3:28 |
| 7 | Presto | 5:41 |
| 8 | **I Paesaggi dell'anima (Landscapes of the Soul)** | **16:51** |
| 9 | **Concerto for Orchestra and String Quartet** | **27:16** |

**Stephen De Pledge, Piano [1–7]
New Zealand String Quartet [9]
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • Hamish McKeich**