

Susie Vaughan

BIOG

Susie Vaughan trained as a composer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, (MMus, Lutoslawski Prize: 2nd Place for her ballet *Ariel* for the London Contemporary Dance School) after receiving a BMus (1st Class Hons, Edward and Florence James Prize) at Royal Holloway and a British Academy Award to undertake postgraduate research at Magdalen College, Oxford. Her research into Postmodern music very much influenced her own eclectic compositional style:

"I have a desire to re-enchant the past, to take the listener to a splintered sound world where period instruments and historical styles, idioms, harmonic language and ornamentation, are refracted through the contemporary prism of film, folk, cabaret, circus and musical theatre."

Susie is particularly interested in setting love poetry through the ages (from Sappho to Shakespeare to Sylvia Plath) and devotional text. She was the first woman in 550 years to compose for the Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford – a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis to celebrate 20 Years of Women at the College in the Year 2000.

Over Lockdown, Susie took part in the Arts Council England project Theorbo Today, for which she composed *He is more than a hero* for Two Sopranos, Lute and Theorbo.

Current projects include: *Cantata Amorosa: Re-imagining Barbara Strozzi's L'Eraclito Amoroso*; *Shakespeare's Sonnet Circus: A Song-cycle of Eight Sonnets for Countertenor Solo and Six Baroque Obligato Instruments* (Flûte Traversière, Oboe, Bassoon, Baroque Triple Harp, Theorbo & Harpsichord) and Baroque String Orchestra; *Agnus Dei* and *Que Suis-Je Hélas?* from *Sounding the Pages*, inspired by the life of Mary Queen of Scots and performed in London (2022) and Hay-on-Wye (2023) by Theorbo Today.

A "fun-fact" about Susie – discovered whilst researching her ancestry during Lockdown – is that she is Henry Purcell's first cousin, nine generations removed.

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LA CONVERSATION ENCHANTEE ET GALANTE

was first inspired by Ada Witczyk's brief to: "explore Telemann's Paris Quartets and celebrate the art of conversation between instruments."

The subtitle of the piece *Le Chardonneret est le Fantôme dans la Machine* (*The Goldfinch is the Ghost in the Machine*) was inspired by the painting of a Goldfinch, sitting on a branch, on the soundboard of the famous 1769 Pascal Taskin Harpsichord in the Raymond Russell Collection in St Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh. Here, the painted Goldfinch comes to life and flies into the music, making its appearance in the song-like trills in all the instrumental parts and in the fluttering chords in the Harpsichord. The ensemble trills herald the start of each new episode.

La Conversation was also inspired by circus arts and aesthetics. Starting on the anacrusis, with a 'Curtain Up' on the spectacle of the group of 'musical conversationalists', the idea of performance 'in the round' is mirrored by the circular, revolving 3/4 time, which in turn refers to the 3/2 time of Telemann's final TWV 43:e4 *Modéré* Chaconne. In keeping with the equivalent architectural style to the 'galant' in music, the piece is further described as 'Une Chaconne Rococo': ornamental, asymmetrical and theatrical.

In terms of form and structure, just as the circus occupies an aesthetic space of strong contrasts and contradictions - between aerial and ground, light and dark, comic and tragic, and between swiftly changing acts that form a narrative - so the episodes of the piece have rapidly changing affects expressed by the rising and falling six-note quaver melody. This is passed between the instruments in high and low registers, forte and piano dynamics, exhilarated and reflective moods, as both a driving melodic force and a connecting ritornello.

La Conversation Enchantée et Galante:

Le Chardonneret est le Fantôme dans la Machine

Un Nouveau Quatuor en un Seul Mouvement:

Modéré: Une Chaconne Rococo

Susie Vaughan

Modéré ♩ = 90

Flûte Traversière Baroque

Violon Baroque

Basse de Viole

Clavecin: 8'+8'
Keep Upper and Lower Manuals coupled throughout

Le Chardonneret s'envole de sa branche peinte dans la Musique!

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